ONE WORD, ONE BODY, ONE VOICE

STUDIES IN APOPHATIC THEOLOGY AND CHRISTOCENTRIC ANTHROPOLOGY

IN GREGORY OF NYSSA

A SUMMARY WITH AN INTRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The thesis consists of five international congress papers and a summary with an introduction. The overarching aim of the studies and the summary is to examine the inner coherency of the theological and anthropological thinking of Gregory of Nyssa (331-395). To the issue is applied an ‘apophatic approach’ with a ‘Christological focus’. It is suggested that the coherency is to be found from the Christological concept of unity between ‘true God’ and ‘true man’ in the one person of Jesus Christ. Gregory is among the first to make a full recognition of two natures of Christ, and to use this recognition systematically in his writings. The aim of the studies is pursued by the method of ‘identification’, which is a combination the modern ‘problematic method’ and Gregory's own method of ‘following’ (akolouthia).

The preoccupation with issues relating to the so-called Hellenization of Christianity in the patristic era was strong in the twentieth-century Gregory scholarship. The most discussed questions have been the Greek influence in his thought and his philosophical sources. In the five articles of the thesis it is examined how Gregory's thinking stands in its own right. The manifestly apophatic character of his theological thinking is made a part of the method of examining his thought according to the principles of his own method of following. The basic issue concerning the relation of theology and anthropology is discussed in the contexts of his central Trinitarian, anthropological, Christological and eschatological sources. In the summary the Christocentric integration of Gregory's thinking is discussed also in relation to the issue of the alleged Hellenization.

The main conclusion of the thesis concerns the concept of theology in Gregory. It is not indebted to the classical concept of theology as metaphysics or human speculation of God. Instead, it is founded to the traditional Judeo-Christian idea of God who speaks with his people face to face. In Gregory, theologia connotes the oikonomia of God's self-revelation. It may be regarded as the state of constant expression of love between the Creator and his created image. In theology, the human person becomes an image of the Word by which the Father expresses his love to "man" whom he loves as his own Son. Eventually the whole humankind, as one, gives the divine Word a physical - audible and sensible - Body. Humankind then becomes what theology is. The whole humanity expresses divine love by manifesting Christ in words and deeds, singing in one voice to the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
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It may seem unusual to find a Finnish name on the title page of a doctoral thesis on a Greek Patristic theme. And, it is only possible now, due to the fact that many people have contributed to making this dissertation work a reality.

I owe thanks to many people. First of all, to Professor Emeritus Tuomo Mannermaa (Ecumenics, University of Helsinki) and Professor Gunnar af Hällström (Orthodox Systematic Theology and Patristics, University of Joensuu). Under their supervision, I completed my graduate studies in Ecumenics, and my master’s thesis on a Patristic theme. After finishing my master’s thesis on the theological anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa in 1997, they both encouraged me to continue my studies in this area. In the year 2000, I had the opportunity to begin this doctoral project, which has now finally come to its conclusion.

Professor af Hällström and Professor Risto Saarinen have been the official supervisors of this project. Their patient support and instruction during my long labour, and Professor Saarinen’s exemplary care for his students at Helsinki University have made my work possible, and I owe them my sincerest thanks.

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The work now being presented for public discussion in the University of Helsinki is the result of a process which has been carried out through active encounters with members of the international society of Gregory scholars. They meet in colloquiums arranged on a regular basis to concentrate on the work and thought of this Cappadocian Father. I have been very fortunate in being able to participate in this modern scholarly tradition, which, it is safe to say, is one of the finest and most seminal of them all. The first meeting of Gregory scholars took place in 1969 in Chevetogne, and to date, ten meetings have been held throughout Europe. I
have been honoured to participate in the last three, which were held in Paderborn (1998), Athens (2000), and Olomouc (2004).

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The significance of the meetings with other Gregory scholars, in Gregory Colloquiums and during other occasions, has been essential in the preparation of this dissertation. During my studies, the substantial critical support and supervision provided by the members of the academic collective of Gregory scholars was of vital importance. With my work now accomplished, I feel like a son – however stubborn and poorly gifted – of that collective, to which I owe my great thanks.

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Nordic cooperation has enriched my studies greatly. I am especially grateful to Professor Samuel Rubenson for his indispensable energy and willingness to work constantly for the benefit of Nordic Patristic scholarship and its junior members. Without him, I would never have had the opportunity to study themes of Christian antiquity in Alexandria for two weeks, in the pleasant and inspiring company of good friends and colleagues from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. We even made a trip to Sinai where we climbed the mountain! After the excellent post-graduate course in Alexandria, I was very pleased to be able to visit The Centre for Advanced Study in Oslo. This was thanks to Professors Tomas Hägg, Jostein Børtnes, and Samuel Rubenson, who arranged a Patristic workshop for Nordic research students there. Besides being able to continue working with my Nordic colleagues, during the workshop I had the opportunity to meet Prof. Andrew Louth. This was very fortunate: at the moment, I was preparing my Oxford paper on apophasis in Gregory. I thank Prof. Louth for his valuable critical comments and advices.

I owe to Prof. Stuart G. Hall many thanks for taking the trouble of helping me correct the English in the introduction and summary of the thesis. He also spotted some (hopefully all) mistyping in the Greek of my manuscript. I am, of course, responsible of whatever mistakes one may find in the English or in the Greek texts of this final version. I am grateful to Prof. Brian Duvick for his excellent, but to my knowledge yet unpublished, English translation of Gregory’s Trinitarian treatise Ad Ablabium. I have had the fortune of being able to use it as a resource, in addition to the NPNF translation, when discussing the treatise in my summary. Because I did not exactly follow either one of the previous translations, I must claim the translation here as my own. My debt to Prof. Duvick’s version however, must be acknowledged while, at the same time, I take sole responsibility for any possible errors that may exist.

For over two years I have had the fortune of working as a member of the Finnish Graduate School of Theology. Emil Aaltonen Foundation, Oscar Öflund Foundation, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, and the Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East have also offered their financial assistance for this project. I am very grateful for their support. The University of Helsinki has also greatly contributed to making my project financially possible. The Chancellor of Helsinki University has financed most of my travels abroad to conferences, and I have enjoyed the Rector’s financial support for the completion of the dissertation work. I hope this final work proves worthy of the generosity of its financers.
In the end I hope I am allowed the possibility to very humbly say, that the academic society of Gregory scholars ought to be proud that I thank it for its “parental care”. This is not because I consider myself its son per se, but because I hold high standards for parenthood, due to the example of my own parents Kerttu and Taisto. To them, in the end, I owe all that I have. I cannot find words for thanking them enough for their lifelong care and support. I can only say to them: Your love never fails. I thank also my mother-in-law, Rauni, for her help and support.

Worry and grief about the quality of my own parenthood in the midst of my academic endeavours, adds to the seriousness to my words here. My three beautiful daughters, Ella, Heta and Miitta are the joy of my life. However poor I might be as their father, they make me so proud to be their dad. Each day they bring to my life, reason and the touch of unconditional love. To them I say: You are wonderful!

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CONTENTS

Abstract iii
Acknowledgements iv

I

INTRODUCTION

1. The current state of Gregory of Nyssa research and the process of ‘rethinking’ 11
2. The problem of coherency in Gregory in the light of current research 18
   2.1. The diversity of the research 18
   2.2. Akolouthia in Gregory 33
3. The agreement and the issue: apophasis and Christocentricism 44
   3.1. ‘Apophatic theology’ in Gregory 44
   3.2. ‘Christocentric anthropology’ in Gregory 50
4. The thesis 56
   4.1. The aim 56
   4.2. The method: identification 56
   4.2. The plan of study 60
   4.4. The procedure and the main sources of the study 63

II

THE ARTICLES

(Place and year of presentation/publication, and pages; cf. bibliography)


III

SUMMARY

IN LOVE WITH CHRIST

1. Introduction 70
   1.1. ‘Theology’ in the two first waves of the ‘re-thinking of Gregory of Nyssa’ 71
   1.2. Breaking waves: suggestion for the biblical mould of ‘theology’ in Gregory 88

2. One Word – One Man – One Voice: theologia and homologia in Ad Ablabium 105
   2.1. The treatise and the problem 105
   2.2. Qeologiâ as ‘divine speaking’ in Ad Ablabium 118
      2.2.1. Hear, Israel: ‘Lord your God is one Lord’ 120
      2.2.2. Hear, man: Lord your God is one Lord 129
      2.2.3. Hear: Lord our God is one Lord 135
   2.3. Hearing ‘qeoû’ in ‘loûgoû’ 146
   2.4. The heart of qeologiâ 153
   2.5. One man – one Voice 163
      2.5.1. Qmologiâ as qeologiâ in Ad Ablabium 163
      2.5.2. Qeologiâ as êkqemologiâ 169

3. One Nation: Imitations of Christ in De perfectione and De vita Moysis 174
   3.1. The treatises 174
   3.2. Living history of God’s people 175
   3.3. Image of a Mountain – up and down 179
   3.4. Riches of the barren princess and the Emperor’s new clothes 182
   3.5. Christian lover of wisdom – a lover of Christ 186

4. Conclusion 193

Bibliography 197
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

1. The current state of Gregory of Nyssa research and the process of ‘rethinking’

Gregory of Nyssa is a Church Father of exceptionally great current interest. Recently a theological journal titled Modern Theology\(^1\) dedicated a whole issue to articles examining the thought of this ancient Christian author. In 2003, the collection of essays was republished under the title Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa. In the Introduction the editor Sarah Coakley writes:

No one who works in systematic theology, let alone in patristic studies, can have failed to notice the recent upsurge of interest in the work and thought of Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–c.395), the youngest of the so-called “Cappadocian Fathers”, in many ways the most subtle and intriguing. The reasons for this renewed interest are arguably three-fold. First, it corresponds to the notable resurgence of trinitarianism in post-modern theology in general, and hence to a re-examining of the place of Nyssa [Nyssen] in the supposed founding of distinctively “Eastern” Christian trinitarian tradition. Second – and for the most part so far in disjunction from this first focus – there is the interest spawned by Nyssa’s [Nyssen’s] fascinating views on asceticism and desire (matters which now often fall under the rubric of “gender theory”). And finally – and again in somewhat problematic connection to the other two loci – there is a new appreciation on Nyssa’s [Nyssen’s] distinctive apophaticism, another theme re-invigorated by the interests of post-modernity. By and large, however, these three interests have tended not to find integration in any one author: they are “fragments” that the post-modern theologian has gathered into her basket \textit{ad libitum}, whether in search of the doctrinal renewal of “orthodoxy” (at one end of the spectrum) or of the destruction of repressive “gender binaries” (at the other).

It is in this rather confused situation that this collection of essays on Gregory has been brought together to mark a new moment in the interpretation of his \textit{oeuvre}, one that the contributors believe holds creative promise both for the patristic exegete and for the systematician.\(^2\)

In another recent introduction to the thought and work of Gregory of Nyssa, Anthony Meredith asks in a more cautious tone:

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1 Blackwell Publishing 2002, vol. 12, 4
[I]s Gregory simply an interesting fossil from a theological cabinet but of no permanent interest, or has he something of interest and value to say to us now?\(^3\)

Coakley succeeds well in describing the present situation, the reason why there is a sense in which Gregory can be regarded not only as an interesting fossil, but also as a ‘theologian of our day’. For one thing, Gregory’s thinking has been found relevant in many related and unrelated contexts of discussion where his ancient notions are listened to and taken into account in the (post)modern context. But secondly, the ‘fragments’ are asking for some kind of integration in our time. There is an expectation that there is actually a single author – Gregory of Nyssa – in whose mind such elements as do not easily combine, can be found integrated in their ancient form. Finally, as Meredith says after addressing Gregory’s encounters with his contemporary Greek philosophy and culture: ‘[T]he need to find *modus vivendi* with new scientific discoveries and more empirical philosophies still challenge the Church. It may be the case that the study of Gregory’s coming to terms with his age may shed light on the way we might come to terms with our, in many ways, very different age.’\(^4\)

It appears that in the context of our experience of fragmented reality, well described by Coakley, Gregory of Nyssa represents a kind of ancient ‘image’ or ‘type’ of the post-modern theologian who has *overcome* the fragmentation existing in time and succeeded in attaining ‘peace of mind’. It is expected that we would we now together find something of the same peace, indicating not only individual integrity of thought but also agreement between several confronting, even conflicting groups of people.

It would be interesting to know what is the key that the ancient Father has found to his unique integration of Trinitarian, anthropological and apophatic thinking. There is, however, a critical question which calls for discussion: has the Bishop of Nyssa really succeeded in integrating these elements in the level of *thought*, not just as views and ideas held by *one person*? Is it not rather the case that inconsistency is the

\(^3\) Cf. A. Meredith 1999, 130.
\(^4\) Ib.
Achilles’ heel of this intriguing Greek Christian and ancient theologian? Meredith addresses three questions which past research has above all been occupied with: Gregory’s literary character, his originality and self-consistency. The ‘key’ to his thinking – insofar as there is in the end one key to open all the ‘locks’ of his thinking – still appears to be missing. What we continuously ask, according to Meredith, when studying Gregory’s texts, is: what is his ‘centre’? What distinguishes him from other authors of the same period or earlier – and finally, why is he either important or interesting for us now? Or is he indeed an ancient type of ‘post-modern theologian’ in the negative sense of the word: a person just gathering fragments into his basket ad libitum?

The merits of Coakley’s Introduction to Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa are undeniable. Coakley appropriately addresses the expectations that today surround Gregory research. However, one may find the introduction of A. Meredith more helpful for grasping the background for our present questions. Meredith importantly draws attention to the acute question of the ‘centre’ or ‘key’ of Gregory’s thought and provides us with a fuller understanding of the recent history of modern Gregory research. Meredith gives an account of why Gregory’s sources have awakened much interest not only most recently but especially within the last sixty years. He remarks that in comparison to Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa’s ‘greater

5 Ib., 129-130
6 This being said, one has to acknowledge that the most recent research, represented by ‘Re-Thinking’ itself, has begun to pay attention to times that go further back in research history than Meredith’s account does. One of the contributors of ‘Re-Thinking’, M. R. Barnes, has already elsewhere addressed, like A. de Halleux (1990) before him, problems that relate to so-called ‘de Regnon paradigm’ suggesting a difference in the Cappadocian (still ‘patristic’) and Augustinian (already ‘scholastic’) Trinitarian solutions. This suggestion presented in the study of T. DE RÉGNON (1892), has had a strong afterlife in twentieth-century discussions and textbook accounts of Trinitarian orthodoxy. They commonly build upon the notion of distinctively ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Trinitarian solutions and the subsequent Trinitarian traditions. For a long time, there has been no acknowledgement of the historical origin of the notion according to which the East ‘starts from the three and proceeds to the one’ (whereas the order would be the reverse in the West). Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian tractate Ad Ablabium, with its so-called ‘three-man analogy’, has been regarded, in the textbooks, as the very source which provides us with a clear vision of the Cappadocian origin of this ‘distinctively Eastern’ Trinitarian approach. Cf. M. R. BARNES 1995, 51-79. For discussion in ‘Re-Thinking’, see Coakley’s Introduction (p. 2-5), and the articles of L. AYRES (15-44), M. R. BARNES (45-66) and L. TURCESCU (97-110).
7 Cf. MEREDITH 1999, 27; 129-138.
speculative boldness and his [supposed] greater indebtedness to the Platonic tradition have made him a subject of great fascination to many.’ This, indeed, is true, and some problems may relate to this very distinctive motivation of modern Gregory research – even if also many steps ahead have been made motivated by such fascination. Meredith further points out that we now possess better texts of the youngest one of the Cappadocians, thanks to the work of Werner Jaeger and his successors. The first pieces of Gregorii Nysseni Opera (GNO), edited by W. Jaeger (Contra Eunomium, GNO volumen I & II), appeared in 1921. The German classical scholar can with good reason be regarded as ‘the godfather’ of the modern ‘Gregory renaissance’: new critical editions of Gregory’s works have guaranteed the scholarly attention to his thought throughout the twentieth century – and they will guarantee it in years to come.

When following Anthony Meredith’s introduction to Gregory research, one may notice that the re-thinking of Gregory of Nyssa did not began yesterday with the appearance of the collection of essays called ‘Re-Thinking’ but the day before: modern Gregory research as we now acknowledge it, as a tradition with manifest and dynamic continuity and universal recognition, is still relatively young and recent. From the very beginning it has been characterised by its high quality – but it is still a developing field of study. Gregory is nowadays very popular, but still in 1942 one of the pioneers of the ‘Gregory renaissance’ Hans Urs von Balthasar, could write in his Présence et Pensée\(^8\) in a following way:

Only a very small number of initiates have read and are aware of Gregory of Nyssa, and they have jealously guarded their secret. Scarcely a handful of studies, and quite austere ones at that, have appeared on him (…)From the critical point of view, the text of his works is the most neglected of the whole patristic era. Who would suspect that under this unprepossessing exterior we are

\(^8\) H.U. VON BALTHASAR, Présence et pensée; Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse. Paris 1942. Von Balthasar’s study is the first classic of the modern Gregory renaissance.
to find the most profound Greek philosopher of the Christian era, a mystic and incomparable poet besides?\(^9\)

A few lines later von Balthasar explicates in what business he considers himself to be: ‘reviving and rethinking the work of Gregory.’

It is only, we believe, in emphasising this twofold character that is at once dramatic and conceptual, “existential” and “essential”, that we shall succeed in reviving and rethinking the work of Gregory.\(^10\)

When considering, ‘what the governing principle should be as we embark on this odyssey across the landscape of Gregory’s thought’, the principle that would serve us as a guide and compass on this journey’, von Balthasar presented as his firm belief that this is none other than Gregory’s very Christianity. Although it is possible that there may be influences drawn from the mysticism of Philo or Plotinus, especially with regard to the idea of infinite desire and eternal progress in the knowledge of God, above all else there is Christ, the living way.\(^11\)

With Jean Daniélou,\(^12\) von Balthasar became the pioneer of what he called the ‘odyssey across the landscape of Gregory’s thought’. ‘Odyssey’ is a very fitting, almost prophetic definition of what the future ‘journeys’ of several scholars would usually look like: a running commentary of the Greek influences in his thought. However, both von Balthasar and Daniélou defined the ‘governing principle’ of Gregory’s thought as his Christianity, pointing out the same Landmark in Christ.\(^13\) In this light, one senses some underlying problem in the way our present, very trustworthy guide into the Gregorian

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\(^10\) Ib., 16.

\(^11\) Ib., 18

\(^12\) Cf. J. DANIÉLOU Platonisme et théologie mystique; Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse. Paris 1944.
‘landscape of thought’, Anthony Meredith, defines our question in the light of Gregory’s sources: ‘What part in Gregory’s scheme is played by the person of Christ?’  

Why do we need to ask such a question? Somehow it seems that what in the beginning of the Gregory renaissance appeared quite clear has become fuzzier during the last sixty years, as more studies on his thinking have appeared. Sarah Coakley, too, when describing the future challenges for Gregory research, lists sixth ‘the importance of bringing Gregory’s (unduly neglected) christology in relation with his trinitarianism’. Why do we need to bring Christology into this relation? Is the relation not manifest already in the sources?

What at least is clear, is that ‘rethinking of Gregory of Nyssa’ is an ongoing process now at the stage where the issue is no longer the ‘reviving of Gregory’s work’ but keeping up the good work of rethinking – which is what critical research is all about. The title of the recent collection of essays, ‘Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa’, is very clever if it is understood to indicate a moment in the interpretation of his oeuvre, not the very moment, the very beginning of serious rethinking. The Gregory research of the past sixty years has in general been opposed to the paradigms that originate from the end of the nineteenth century – like that of the ‘Hellenization of Christianity’ in the patristic era. Simultaneously it is not unfair to say that the research has also been imprisoned by these paradigms. This twofold character of Gregory research is a natural consequence of the general nature of the scientific research: it takes time and many

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13. The basic assertion of ‘Gregory’s Christianity’ has been the permanent and repeated conclusion of the studies during the ‘Gregory renaissance’. It is no longer Gregory’s Christianity which is the issue in the research but the extent and character of the classical influence in his Christian thought.


15. S. Coakley 2003, 5. Coakley sees this issue as being especially important ‘in connection with the supposed “clarification”’ [Gregory] brought to bear – trinitarianly – on the meaning of “person”’. She also once more reminds of the ‘the crucial significance of taking Gregory’s apophatic sensibilities into account in the re-reading’ of his views on ‘personhood’. Cf. the Christological article in ‘Re-thinking’: B. E. Daley, Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology (p. 67-76).

studies in several fields of study to overcome something that has become the universal paradigm of study, even if there is something wrong with the paradigm.

Twentieth century Gregory research in particular has been a Western Goldrush to an East-side river: ‘the Father of Fathers’ has not really ever been lost in the East. Perhaps the largest pieces of gold causing the gold-fever in the West had already been found at the beginning of the golden times of academic Gregory research. The river, however, seems inexhaustible in its treasures. We still search, and not without reason: there still remains much to be discovered.

In my journey ‘across the landscape of Gregory’s thought’, I shall pay special attention to an obscure stone on the riverside, one dragged up from the running water already by the first goldminers, von Balthasar and Daniélou. This Rock has been on the map of all three generations of goldminers ever since: it is none other than Christ, ‘the stone which the builders rejected’ (Matt 21.42). Modern academic research has by no means totally rejected the notion of the central importance of Christ in Gregory’s thinking. Nevertheless there have been obvious difficulties in fitting in this outstanding rock as the very cornerstone of the whole ‘building’ of his thought. The building has been mostly imagined as constructed according to the classical blueprint of Greek Academy of education (paideia) instead of the Judeo-Christian biblical form of House of Israel upbringing children (paideia), ultimately, according to the New Testament form of Church as one living body with Christ as its head. But perhaps it has become commonplace to try to fit the right cornerstone into the wrong kind of construction. The problems of relating Gregory’s Christological considerations to the general whole of his thought may result from our prevailing idea of the ‘Greek mould’ of his theological thinking.

The concept of paideia already belonged to the Septuagint tradition of the Greek-speaking Jews. It also most certainly belonged to ‘authentic Christianity’ to regard Christ as a teacher – indeed, the very Teacher who ‘taught as an authority’ (Mt.7.29). Yet the blueprint of Gregory’s theories has become commonly identified as ‘Greek paideia’ because it existed before the Christians explicated the idea of the
The presumption that the Fathers adopted all their pedagogical ideas and moulds from the Greeks because they knew classics and used the word *paideia*, is easily supported by a mere reference to the historical order of appearance of Greek philosophy and Christianity. This may have been one of the central problems in the way previous research has been able to appreciate the inner theoretical coherency of Gregory’s thinking. In the historical process of re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa, the time is right, I think, to approach and examine Gregory’s thought without this presumption. We might want to put it aside for a moment – and concentrate on following Gregory’s discourses without searching for the right interpretation of his thought from the works of Plato.

2. The problem of coherency in Gregory in the light of current research

2.1. The diversity of the research

Trinitarian theology and anthropology are traditionally held as the two *Schwerpunkte* in Gregory’s thinking. Equally ‘traditional’ is the suspicion that they do not, eventually, properly integrate and constitute a coherent whole. This common suspicion, however, might tell us more about the research history than about any actual problem in the author’s thinking. In the twentieth century research, there have been two main lines of interpretation, ‘philosophic’ and ‘theological’. Within the theological line of

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17 For the appearance of the Christian concept of ‘paideia of Christ’, cf. W. Jaeger 1961, 11-12; 24-26. Jaeger thinks that every innovation in how the Christians proclaimed their Lord for the Greco-Roman world in Greek language was based on the previous philosophical innovations of the Greeks. In Jaeger’s view, all ‘Christian innovations’ were actually adoptions from the classics: they were ‘innovative’ when being applied to the new context of Christian religion.


19 Cf. G. May 1981, 91, accounting the history of what he fittingly calls *Gregor-Renaissance*. The philosophical line of interpretation was represented by Werner Jaeger who introduced Gregory ‘den Schöpfer einer großartigen Synthese von Griechentum und Christentum’, a Christian humanism, after the classical idea and ‘mould’ of *paideia*, ‘education’ or ‘formation’ of man. The theological line was represented by H. U. von Balthasar and J. Daniélou. The latter line elaborated the mystical dimensions of Gregory’s theological spirituality or spiritual theology, and presented Gregory as ‘Mystiker und
interpretation, there have been two main lines of study: ‘spiritual’ and ‘dogmatic’. The two theological lines – ‘theological anthropology’ and ‘theology proper’ – have had a common issue in the philosophical concept of divine infinity (ἀπειρο ἡμῖν). According to Gregory, God is essentially infinite – hence the infinite ascent of the soul (ἐπιτέλεσις, cf. Phil 3.13). This obvious link between theological and anthropological thinking, however, has not solved the problem of the supposed inconsistency between dogma and theoria in Gregory. In a sense, it has underlined the problem. Indeed: how does the so-called ‘three-man analogy’ – the idea that Peter, James and John are ‘one man’ as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are ‘one God’, presented in Ad Ablabium and elsewhere in Gregory’s dogmatic sources – relates to the individual ascents and theoria of the ‘solitary man’ Moses in the spiritual context of De vita Moysis?

There has been some notable suspicion that Gregory’s inmost personal interest was not in the Trinitarian issues but in the anthropological theme of the soul’s striving for the knowledge of the divine essence. Gerhard May, who correctly points

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Theologen des geistlichen Lebens’ who transformed the Greek forms, adopted from the Neoplatonic context, into a genuine Christian philosophy. These two initial lines of interpretation had in common a ‘spiritual’ orientation.

20 This distinctiveness within the ‘theological line of interpretation’ corresponds with the difference between the two central and profitable Gregory studies: J. DANELOU, Platonisme et théologie mystique (Paris 1944) and E. MÜHLENBERG, Die Unendlichkeit Gottes (Göttingen 1966). In his study Mühlenberg took issue with Daniélou’s interpretation of Gregory as a ‘mystic’: for the same reason, he was critical also of von Balthasar 1944 and W. VÖLKER 1955. Mühlenberg’s view attained support in R. HEINE 1975. M.CANÉVET, Grégoire de Nysse et l’hermeneutic biblique (Paris 1983), with a good deal of critical distinction from both Daniélou and Mühlenberg, was perhaps the first universally recognised study to present a view where the ‘spiritual’ and ‘dogmatic’ aspects of Gregory’s thought found some manifest balance. The good work has recently been continued in T. BÖHM 1996 (Theoria-Unendlichkeit-Aufstieg – the title of the monograph is very telling). Another important study balancing the views that were mainly seen as contracting each other until the 1980’s is F. DUNZL 1993. Characteristic for the ‘third generation studies’ since the dawn of the ‘Gregory renaissance’ after the Second World War is the attempt to reconcile the findings of the two previous generations of Gregory scholarship.

21 In many ways, this ‘suspicion’ – or, on the other hand, expectation – has made the difference between the ‘philosophic’ line (Jaeger) and the ‘theological-spiritual’ line (von Balthasar, Daniélou) of interpretation shallow, in a more manifest contrast to the later ‘theological-dogmatic’ line (Mühlenberg) of interpretation. Hence the following words of A Meredith: ‘Important though the differences between them were, both Jaeger and Daniélou saw in Gregory a continuator[...]of the Platonic tradition’. Cf. A. MEREDITH 1993, 59. The difference between the ‘Platonizing’ interpretation of Jaeger and the ‘Christianizing’ interpretation of Daniélou, however, is very significant – even as the both scholars emphasised Gregory’s upward-tending spirituality. Meredith is pointing out in the context of his remark Gregory’s distinctive emphasis on the notion of Incarnation: when taken seriously into account, it would seem not only to ‘transform’ the Platonic model provided by the ‘simile of the cave’ into something that is characteristically Christian, but to turn it on its head, and challenge it totally.
out that ‘unanimous, canonical picture of Gregory does not exist until now’, 22 has expressed this suspicion by arguing that in Gregory, it is the infinite divine essence the soul reaches out towards: ‘not the Trinity’. May asserts that even when Gregory identifies the ‘Beloved’ of the Song of Songs as Christ, the highest object of the Sehnsucht is still the knowledge of the infinite divine essence. He further points out that Gregory does not so often speak ‘personally of God’ as about the Divinity (theion) – which is what any Platonist would do. 23 May’s intention is to address Gregory’s probable Neoplatonic philosophic motives: ‘soul’s ascent’ in general and soul’s ‘ascent to One’ in particular would be typical Neoplatonic themes. 24 It is mainly because of the appearance of these central themes of Neoplatonic mysticism that Gregory is often identified as a ‘Christian Neoplatonist’ in the research literature. 25

22 G. May’s account is very helpful – and, one senses, trustful – introduction to the atmosphere and the standings of Gregory research until the 1980s. For a good estimation of this ‘fine synthesis’, cf. A. M. Ritter 2005. May’s account is not out of date even as much has taken place in the research since the 80s. One shares the concern which Ritter for ‘an unlimited respect as to the litera (or the text in its Gregorian context) as well as to its ‘spiritus’ (or meaning)’ of Gregory’s writings’.

23 Cf. G. May 1981, 101. One may not find the argument based on a contrast between ‘Divinity’ and “Trinity” very convincing. It can be said that for Gregory, the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is what is meant by ‘Divinity’ and vice versa. As P. Mar Gregorios 1988, 227 has pointed out, Gregory’s concept of the Trinity as ‘Three-in-One’ is not identical with the Greek concept of the divine Trias, i.e. the One as the simple Cause behind being not admitting any plurality, the Nous as Being that is ‘one-and-many’, and the Psyche as the World-soul.


25 It is not necessarily true that Gregory’s discussions of the divine ascent (anabasis) reveal his Neoplatonic motivation. Insofar as there is sense in conceiving Gregory’s motivation as distinctively Neoplatonic (instead of ‘universal’, for example), there is nothing to prevent one asserting, instead, that his motivation was distinctively biblical. In the Septuagint especially Exodus 19 discusses the ascent of Moses in the Mountain of God in terms of anabasis. The nineteenth chapter begins with a general description of what took place after ‘the children of Israel’ had arrived and made a camp at the foot of the Mountain: ‘Καὶ ἦλθε Ναμύς ἰδιὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ’ (Ex 19.3 – the original Hebrew verb for ‘ascending’ is ‘alah). According to the Exodus narrative (cf. Ex 19.20-21), the divine mountain of Moses’ anabasis was also the mountain of the Lord’s katabasis, and Moses’ encounters with God culminated at the top of the mountain: ‘Κατέβη δὲ Κυρίος οἱ θεοὶ τὸν θρόνον τοῦ Θεοῦ’. The calling and invitation of the Lord was the reason for the ascent of his servant – ‘καὶ ἐλέησεν Κυρίος Ἡ ἡ χεῖρ τῆς θείας εἰς κατάβασιν Ναμύς’ – and Moses ascended up to the top: ‘καὶ ἐλήφθη Ναμύς’. At the top of the mountain, the servant was given divine instruction as God spoke to him: ‘Καὶ οἱ ὑψίσται τῶν θεῶν’. When discussing the inmost motives and patterns of Gregory’s teaching of the divine ascent, it is necessary to relate the considerations to the attention and the emphasis Gregory gives to the Lord’s katabasis in the context. It then becomes highly
The classical influence in Gregory’s thought has been the favourite theme in Gregory studies for over a century now, exceptionally dominant and acute when compared with the research on any other patristic author. It is no exaggeration to say that preoccupation with the questions of ‘Hellenization’ has been the most outstanding characteristic of the modern Gregory research – already before, but no less after the beginning of ‘Gregory renaissance’. This, too, could tell us more of the historical moment of the rediscovery of Gregory than of his thinking. The time was full of both tendencies and tensions caused by von Harnack’s thesis: to be rediscovered as an ‘intriguing mystic’ and a ‘Christian philosopher’ occupied with dogmatic issues at that particular time was to be rediscover under strong predetermination. The fact that in practice the question of Greek influence has been the most frequently discussed issue in Gregory research, has clearly created an impression that this very question is, in fact, the most relevant one to be asked of Gregory's sources.

Research has come to a point where it is commonly agreed that Gregory of Nyssa succeeded in combining Christian and Greek elements in an exceptionally creative way without betraying Christianity. However, the remaining inconsistencies and obscurities in his thinking, it is believed, are largely due to this very effort. In Ad Ablabium this problem is found manifest in the way Gregory, when composing a defence against the charge of tritheism, improvised the idea of ‘concrete universal’ – ‘a sort of uncomfortable amalgam of Platonist realism and Aristotelian abstraction’.

questionable that his motives and patterns are to be called Neoplatonic. As A. Meredith has pointed out, the distinctive feature of Gregory’s De vita Moysis is the centrality which is given to Incarnation. Surely this is not a sign of Neoplatonic dependence. Cf. A. MEREDITH 1995, 71-78

The identification of Gregory as a Neoplatonist also largely determines how Gregory’s thinking is approached in the research, it is, with a ready-made conviction that he will provide us a Neoplatonic interpretation or modification of Christianity. This is a methodological problem because it determines the questions most commonly asked of Gregory’s texts and also readily suggests what solutions there are to be sought and found. There is a considerable danger that the original questions of Gregory, as well as their solutions, escape attention and are too easily passed by.

27 This is how A. MEREDITH 1999,133 summarises the common verdict. Meredith’s characterisation follows closely that of J.N.D. KELLY 1975, 267. Kelly calls Gregory’s human analogy ‘unfortunate’ for its ‘inescapably tritheistic’ implications, arguing that Nyssen succeeded in giving homoousios a sense that is only ‘generic’, not ‘numeric’. Kelly’s evaluation is dependent of the argument originally presented
Put shortly, it seems that Gregory conceived the divine persons as three Existents (hupostaseis) who are one Being (ousia) which we abstract and name ‘God’, in some kind of resemblance and analogy to three (many) human persons sharing one and the same human nature which we abstract and name ‘man’. ‘Man is one’ in many human individuals, Gregory claimed, and asserted that – while it is possible – it is actually illogical and improper to say ‘many men’ because there is one human nature. This claim was offered as an argument supporting the notion of the oneness of God: one should never say ‘three Gods’ because God is one in the three persons in one divine nature.

It would seem that the names ‘God’ and ‘man’ assign, in Gregory, what Aristotle in his Categories calls second substances: ‘universals’ that we abstract in ‘particulars’ which exist. Yet the universals are not just abstractions in Gregory: they are ‘concrete’, real in a manner that Plato’s ‘universals’, the ideas – or Aristotle’s particulars, on the other hand – would be. But how can this be, it is wondered. What Gregory has to offer to us, seems to be an odd and somewhat embarrassing mixture of Platonic ontology and Aristotelian logic.

Interestingly, and problematically, in his Trinitarian discourses Gregory does not seem to grant ontological priority to either the ‘universals’ or the ‘particulars’. In Ad Ablabium he uses both Platonic and Aristotelian arguments and

by TH. ZAHN 1867 (cf. p. 87) who was followed by A. VON HARNACK 1887 in calling the Cappadocians ‘Neoniceans’ failing to preserve the numeric sense of the original Nicene concept of ‘homoousios’. Cf. also discussion in A. M. RITTER 1965, 270-292.

28 Both ‘modalistic’ and ‘prosopic’ interpretations of Gregory’s ontological standpoint have been offered as solutions for the question whether ‘essence’, cf. G. L. PRESTIGE 1959, 264-265 and J.N.D KELLY 1975, 267-268, or ‘person’, cf. J. ZIZIOULAS 1985, 41, is the initial ontological principle where being could be traced back to. The modalistic interpretation subordinates the persons to the essence, rightly emphasising, like Prestige (p. 234), that in Gregory ‘the Trinity was in a real sense a single Object’. This is true, but yet it seems that the modalistic interpretation does not quite capture the whole of Gregory’s intention. It is a plausible suggestion that Nyssen conceived ‘being’, as revealed fully in Christ, as a ‘communion’. ‘Being as Communion’ is the clever title of Zizioulas’ book – but neither would Zizioulas seem to be ‘wholly right’ in tracing being back to person. The discussions of the issue are continuous. To me it seems that in Gregory, no ‘principle of cause’ applies to the being of God which – quite simply – is ‘communion’ identical with that which is ‘really real’. The eternal Being would be, according to Gregory, something beyond our logical comprehension: what is revealed in Christ cannot be made a ‘scientific fact’. There is some attractiveness in the idea that by his ‘three-man analogy’, Gregory argued for a social analogy between the Triune God and many people – which is what C. PLANTINGA 1986, for example, has suggested. There are, however, limitations in Gregory’s analogy when it comes to divine and human

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definitions of ‘nature’ and its unity to support his ontological position. According to G. C. Stead, the interesting feature of the treatise is that it ‘seems to argue for a unity of nature in three human individuals which goes beyond the generic unity which is commonly admitted’. It is, however, ‘tantalizingly difficult to determine what Gregory has in mind’. In Stead’s opinion, Ad Ablabium, eventually, ‘remsembles an accomplished conjuring trick more than a valid theological demonstration’. A. Meredith is more positive about the treatise: he gives Gregory much credit for his ‘bold attempt’ to provide some answer to the intractable problem, but admits that the author’s philosophic shortcoming is that he ‘endeavours to operate with an idea of substance which belongs neither to Plato nor to Aristotle’. On the other hand, D. Balás has argued that Gregory’s teaching on the unity of nature in many individuals is neither simply

29 G. C. STEAD 1990, 152.
30 G. C. STEAD 1990, 149. There are problems in Stead’s far too anthropocentric and kataphatic reading of Gregory. V. DRECOLL 1995, 325 has criticised Stead that in his logical analysis he does not take into account, firstly, that in Gregory qeot hj is not a name derived from God’s fu/sij but from his e)ne/rgeia instead, and, secondly, in what sense the ontological unity of the three divine persons is not comparable with the unity of man. Stead’s account of Ad Ablabium, however, has its own merits. Even as in the end Stead obviously feels that he can but conclude (p. 161) that ‘Gregory’s logic…gets us no further than generic unity’, the great value of his investigation is that it does invite us to question our interpretation of Gregory’s ontological conception of unity in terms of either ‘numeric’ or ‘generic unity’: Gregory might have ‘had in mind’ something we have not yet quite grasped. After Stead’s discussion one still needs to know, what is it, actually, that Gregory has in mind? To this question, his article Why Not Three God’s? (1990) provides no solid answer. All Stead has to say is that Plato, and certainly not Aristotle, would have been too happy about Gregory’s Trinitarian teaching. In other words he establishes an argument that ‘Trinitarian theology’ as presented by Gregory cannot be reduced back to the systems of either Plato or Aristotle. This, however, is not an irrelevant piece of information on the way to some final suggestion of what Gregory had in mind.

Elsewhere, cf. G. C. STEAD 1988, Stead is able to provide more definitive instruction when he concludes (p. 319-320) that Gregory and his brother Basil followed in the track outlined already by Justin Martyr who thought that ‘the Father of all’ has actually no name. He regarded words such as ‘Father’, ‘God’, ‘Creator’, ‘Lord’ and ‘Master’ as ‘appellations derived from his beneficent actions’ (cf. Apol 2.6.2.). In this respect, Stead says he has ‘no fault to find’ with Gregory and Basil, even as he is uneasy with their assumption that perfectly simple being can exercise a plurality of operations or energies. Stead writes: ‘I can see no way of construing the term ‘simple’ which would make this intelligible, let alone squaring with the Biblical tradition.’ One cannot be quite sure whether Stead in the last words of his article reflects his own thoughts or those of the Cappadocians – but in reference to Gregory at least, in the closing there is a relevant suggestion for deciding what Nyssen actually might have had in mind: ‘Possibly the nature of divinity itself requires that it should not be answerable, and we must end by confessing, omnia exeunt in mysterium.’
'Aristotelian logic’ nor ‘Platonic ontology’. He suggests that Nyssen’s conception of miá ouşı́a is ‘original Christian transformation of Neoplatonic (Porphyrian) logic and ontology’. R. Hübner has argued against any significant Platonic influence in Gregory. In his view, Gregory sought support for his biblical conception of human unity – something that Hübner calls der Leib-Christi-Theologie – mainly from Stoic philosophy, and discussed the particular issue of one essence in the Trinitarian context by Aristotelian logical means. Hübner and Balás hence disagree on the issue of the distinctively Platonic influence in Gregory, but agree in emphasising the genuinely Christian intention of his ontology.

In his recent study on the theory of human nature in Gregory of Nyssa, J. Zachhuber has attempted, as he says, ‘to give answer to the controversial questions’ concerning the philosophical background and theological significance of Gregory’s theory, ‘by following those lines that were seen to emerge equally from Hübner’s and Balás’ studies’. His conclusion is that the philosophical background of Gregory’s theory is, in a word, ‘multiple’. According to Zachhuber, in his primarily logical use of the theory in Trinitarian theology, Nyssen can be shown to ‘draw on late ancient interpretations of the problem of universals in Aristotle’s Categories’, with Stoic and Neoplatonic ingredients. On the other hand, Gregory’s cosmological use of universal nature ‘revealed substantial parallels to Neoplatonic theories of phusis’.

Zachhuber takes the middle course between Balás and Hübner. He is not very happy with Hübner’s angry rejection of all Platonic influence in Gregory. Instead, he wishes to defend even the (apparently) one-sided Platonic interpretation of A.

31 D. BALÁS 1976, 279-280. The italics are mine.
35 Cf. J. ZACHHUBER 2000, 240. Zachhuber would not recommend us to put too much weight on Ad Ablabium when trying to grasp a proper understanding of Nyssen’s teaching on human nature. In his opinion, it is in this particular writing of all Gregory’s minor dogmatic works that the problem of consistency is most manifest – perhaps for the reason, Zachhuber suggest, that it is a late and not very concentrated comment upon a topic more minutely discussed during the more demanding years of the Trinitarian controversy. Cf. J. ZACHHUBER 2000,118.
Cherniss,\textsuperscript{36} presented some time before the appearance of the seminal studies of von Balthasar and Daniélou.\textsuperscript{37} Zachhuber finally agrees with Hübner in concluding that in his Trinitarian works, Gregory was offering basically an Aristotelian kind of solution for the Christian kind of problem. The solving of the philosophic problem according to the underlying theological idea would have been Gregory’s priority: the philosophic tools for its expression were secondary. Not unlike either Hübner or Balás – and not unlike Gregory scholars nowadays in general – Zachhuber concludes that while Nyssen’s ‘philosophical interest was considerable’, his ‘theological interest was predominant’. He says that there is ‘no evidence that Gregory ever ventured on an elucidation of ‘the problem of universals’ independently of theology’. Zachhuber gives a perfect expression to the prevailing scholarly notion of Gregory’s character as a creative Christian theologian well versed in the arts and attempting to apply the tools provided by the Greek intellectual tradition to further the cause of Christianity. As a rule,[…] inconsistencies should be seen as resulting from difficulties inherent in this attempt rather than from basic limitations of Gregory’s abilities.\textsuperscript{38}

While not wishing to overdo the distinction, Zachhuber nevertheless distinguishes between the philosophic tradition of the Greeks and the Christian theological tradition, the ‘cause of Christianity’, which evidently was Gregory’s first concern. In other words Gregory would not have sought so much to be a continuator of the classical tradition as, first and foremost, that of his own. Scholars would generally agree that there was a Christian intention behind Gregory’s ‘Greek’, \textit{i.e.} philosophic, endeavours: a distinctive theological motive which cannot be detected from the authors of the classical tradition. Gregory’s ‘Christian intention’ is quite unmistakable: as D. Balás has pointed out, even A. von Harnack had to admit that Gregory was not only a Platonist but also a biblical Christian.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] Cf. H. Cherniss 1930.
\item[38] J. Zachhuber 2000, 241.
\end{footnotes}
That Balás appeals to von Harnack’s notion of Gregory as a ‘biblical Christian who was not only a Platonist’ is, in a way, revealing for how the paradigm of Hellenization has dominated – ‘imprisoned’ – the twentieth century interpretations of Gregory’s thought. When some of the central elements of von Harnack’s thesis are ‘approved’ with a good deal of critical distinction and seen in a light more favourable to the Fathers according to their distinctively Christian intentions, a figure like Gregory of Nyssa may be seen as a Christian transformer of the original Greek, Platonic form. Then, as in Daniélou’s interpretation, the final outcome is no more ‘Platonic’ in that it does not preserve the original philosophic intention of Platonism.\(^{40}\) However, what would be important if not necessary still to recognise when interpreting Gregory, were the adopted Greek philosophic forms that underlie their Christian metamorphosis. The idea would be that the better one is able to recognise Gregory’s philosophic sources, the more able one becomes, consequently, to understand his thought. The study of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus is highly recommended, perhaps even required. The approach is quite legitimate. However, the suggestion that Gregory is to be read in light or with the aid of the classics is distinctive – even if it is believed that the classical thought does not exhaust what Gregory has to say.

A revealing example of the ‘arresting dominance’ of the paradigm of Hellenization is provided by R. M. Hübner’s planned attack against it, his angry attempt totally to dismiss it at least when it comes to Gregory of Nyssa. More precisely, Hübner attacks the notion of the alleged Platonic physischen Erlöhsungslehre in Gregory, by rejecting all notion of any particularly Platonic influence in his thought. There is something ‘traumatic’ in Hübner’s approach, even if his study turns out to be a true contribution, indeed shaking the foundations of von Harnack’s notion of Hellenization as allegedly conducted by Gregory, as well as the whole position of ‘Hellenization’ as a far too unquestioned paradigm of Patristic studies in general. However, even Hübner’s own study, it is not unfair to say, is still arrested by the very paradigm it aims to refute.

\(^{40}\) This is how W. Jaeger, who himself thought that Gregory’s Schoolmaster in philosophy was Plato, has characterised the interpretation of J. Daniélou. Cf. W. JAEGER 1965, 71 (note 1).
Polemics evidently infuses the method: it is hence only likely to produce results opposite to what the scholar has chosen to oppose. This lessens the force of Hübner’s argument. The target of his anger receives a major blow but is not fallen: Hübner’s study is heavy as a rock, but his Goliath still stands after the blow.

Arrested – in a similar manner as the study of Hübner, by taking a polemical position against philosophic influence – would also be E. Mühlenberg’s thesis *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes* (1966). Mühlenberg takes J. Daniélou’s interpretation of Gregory as a mystic as his especial target to be shot down. The same desire which is manifest in Hübner, to declare that Gregory was not influenced by (Neo)Platonic thought in what makes him unique, and uniquely Christian, leads also Mühlenberg’s way. Consequently, Mühlenberg over-stresses the philosophic originality of Gregory’s notion of divine infinity in contrast to Plotinus, and alienates Gregory’s thought from any notion of ‘mystical experience’ which is characteristic to Platonic mysticism. Thus Mühlenberg’s important study appears ‘traumatic’ somehow.

Hübner and Mühlenberg may or may not be right in their assertion that there is no decisively significant Platonic influence in Gregory in what makes him particularly important for the development of Christian thought. They are nevertheless still arrested by the very thing that they try to say does not exist, because they fight against it. In this respect, the more recent studies on the subjects previously discussed by Hübner (cf. esp. J. Zachhuber 2000) and Mühlenberg (cf. esp. T. Böhm 1997) are methodologically more convincing and balanced, as they do not pick targets to oppose and attack but patiently examine the issues that have been controversial. The recent

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41 Mühlenberg, on the other hand, thought that Gregory knew Platonic as well as Aristotelian teaching like his own two pockets – but was critical against the classical metaphysics.
42 In this respect Mühlenberg’s argument is improved by R. H. Heine 1975.
43 In order to make further progress in the issue, one would need to define the concepts of ’mystical’, ‘experience’ and ‘mystical experience’.
44 Böhm’s excellent monograph applies to Gregory’s sources a method of ‘philosophischen Implikationen’ instead of mere ‘philosophischen Interpretation’ – which Böhm regards as a too one-sided for a proper approach. Cf. T Böhm 1996, 24. Böhm hence criticises the traditional approaches of Gregory research. In his view, it is problematic to expect that Gregory’s thinking would become best exposed by noticing the philosophic influence or its rejection in him. What ‘Gregory’s philosophy’ is, by implication, is a more revealing approach which enables one also to make comparisons between Gregory.
studies most often conclude with similar notions that the previous ones sought to achieve when pursuing for a proper appreciation of the uniquely Christian character of Gregory’s thought.\(^45\) One may remark that in this pursuit Mühlenberg is not far from von Balthasar whose interpretation he much opposes. We may recall von Balthasar announcing as his ‘firm belief’ that the ‘principle’ which would guide us best when examining Nyssen’s thought is ‘none other than Gregory’s very Christianity’. So Daniélou also believed, not unlike Mühlenberg. Indeed: it is what most studies – and, importantly, especially the most prolific studies – on Gregory’s thought have been telling us for over sixty years.

One may wonder, what is the mechanism behind the peculiar problem of Gregory research: the repeating of Gregory’s Christianity as if it was something that must be proved again in each new study? The point is made clear, why cannot we just move on?

Here is one suggestion for the mechanism.\(^46\) There are three levels relevant to a scientific research on a body of texts of some author: the level of a paradigm, the level of (individual) interpretation(s), and the level of the actual sources which is, in real, the primary level always remaining the same. The truth about the author’s thinking, whatever it is, lies there in the sources – of which the research provides interpretations. The problem the modern Gregory scholarship has been constantly struggling with, lies in the obvious tension between the general paradigm of study as the ‘formal cause of interpretation’ of the author’s thought – implanting into the interpretations the idea that Gregory was a Hellenist, or a Platonist – and Gregory’s

and the philosophers of the classical tradition. Böhm’s monograph is a good example of a study that is no longer ‘arrested’ by the paradigm of Hellenization.

\(^45\) On the other hand, it is only fair to say that the recent studies are privileged in comparison to the previous ones, in that they may build syntheses on the foundation of the previous theses and their subsequent antitheses. It must be noted that the polemic approaches of Hübner and Mühlenberg are understandable when they are seen in relation to their original historical context in the midst of heated twentieth century scholarly discussions – but this does not mean that they would ever become unproblematic in relation to what they pursued to achieve.

\(^46\) The suggestion is not very different, in its intention to present the paradigm of Hellenization in problematic light, from that of R. M. HÜBNER 1974 (presented in reference to the alleged ‘physical doctrine of salvation’ in Gregory). Unlike in Hübner, however, the suggestion here presented does not lead into a polemical stand but only addresses the possible problem, with serious doubts.
actual texts as the ‘material cause of interpretation’. The latter cause reminds us that, after all, Gregory was a Christian, and there is no way round that fact.

The material cause has made some scholars ask, against the formal cause, whether it is reasonable to regard Gregory as a Platonist at all. The individual interpretations of Gregory’s thought have oscillated between the two extremes, depending, whether the fact that the development of Christian doctrine did take place in encounters with the Greek culture, or whether Gregory’s manifestly Christian intention has been emphasised. The mainstream has kept close to the middle, maintaining the ‘formal correctness’ by calling Gregory either a ‘Platonic Christian’ or a ‘Christian Platonist’. As controversial as the issue has actually been in research when seen as a whole, it has become also ‘politically correct’, somehow, to repeat the notion of Gregory’s ‘Platonism’ in the present context of the still prevailing paradigm. Whether or not correct, the idea of Gregory as a Platonist has kept on cumulating in the studies throughout the twentieth century.

The problem is manifest in how the textbook accounts, and such studies that use Gregory only as a quick point of reference, repeat over and again the notion of ‘Gregory’s Platonism’ without much responsible reflection upon what is then actually said. Up until the recent, the very first thing that any new student of Gregory most probably learnt about the author from the textbooks, was that he is to be thought of as a Platonist. A. Meredith’s two recent introductions to the thinking of the three Cappadocians and Gregory individually are a true contribution in bringing some new distinction to the issue. Like Meredith says in reference to the actual situation in the

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47 Cf. D. TURNER 1995, 17 shortly referring to Gregory as the ‘most Platonic of Old Testament exegetes’ after having trouble in deciding whether Gregory was a Platonic Christian or a Christian Platonist.

48 A. MEREDITH, The Cappadocians (1995) and Gregory of Nyssa (1999). On the other hand, Meredith’s introductions also embody the whole oscillation of the previous Gregory research. This aspect, however, is fortunate in the sense that it manifests what is problematic in the research: it is very common that the individual studies assert for both Gregory’s ‘greater indebtedness’ to the Platonic tradition and his exceptional independency of the same tradition. Cf. A. MEREDITH 1999, 129; 138. What also appears problematic – and is evident in MEREDITH 1995 (cf. p. 110-114) – is how the modern Patristic scholarship has obviously decided that whenever the ‘Cappadocian Christology’ is discussed, Gregory of Nazianzen is to be given the credit of having the deepest vision. Yet the Christological emphasis is most distinctive in Nyssen and there are no such notions that would have belonged to Nazianzen but did not appear in the writings of his younger namesake. One suspects that the preference of Nazianzen over Nyssen in
Gregory research, in order to answer the question ‘was Gregory a Platonist?’, one would first need to define what is meant by ‘Platonism’. Meredith’s move is ingenious because it calls us to self-criticism before labelling Gregory: what is it that we are trying to fit into the author’s thought, or into what mould we try to fit him, when we wish (or do not wish) to call him a Platonist?

The modern renaissance of Gregory research has given us much ‘material reason’ to question whether his sources are best approached with the question of his alleged ‘Platonism’ or more generally ‘Hellenism’ as the first thing in mind, when trying to grasp his thought according to his intention. As problematic as it would be for anyone to claim any final success, would not the author’s intention, nevertheless, be the most important thing to be respected, and the most central question to be interested in, when evaluating the coherency of the author’s thought? Quite generally speaking, do we not first need to try to grasp some thing said as intended by its author, before our judgement of its inner character or self-consistency? The general question in the particular issue of this study is this: does not the paradigm of Hellenization invite us to do a judgement about the character Gregory’s thought already before we have ‘heard a thing’, that is, read a line from Gregory himself?

Given the fact that Gregory’s thought has mainly been investigated in twentieth century research in light of the classics, one might want to plan a study where the traditional Christology is artificial – a scholarly routine due to the fact that the seat of the ‘Christologian’ was already occupied by Gregory the Theologian when Nyssen was finally brought into the spotlight as an ‘intriguing ascetic’. Besides, when it comes to the Platonic tradition, is not the ‘greater indebtedness’ true in reference to Nazianzen rather than to Nyssen, who was able to provide an independent modification of the Origenian intellectual heritage of the Cappadocians?

49 Cf. A. MEREDITH 1999, 138. According to Meredith, ‘if the term is taken to imply the restless upward movement of the created spirit towards the uncreated infinite spirit of God, who perpetually eludes our grasp, then Gregory is most assuredly a follower of Plato’. This definition, however, is problematic: clearly, it far too straightforwardly harmonises Gregory and Plato, intimating as it does many concepts and ideas (infinity, created-uncreated distinction, the possibility of ‘grasping God’) that in a closer analysis actually separate the two authors. The ‘upward movement’ is the only notion which is not immediately problematic – but it, too, becomes problematic as soon as Gregory’s distinctive emphasis on the notion of Incarnation in De vita Moysis (discussing this ‘upward movement’) is recognised together with the upward movement. In fact, then there would be ‘Meredith against Meredith’: he has much contributed by underlining the centrality of the notion of Incarnation in De vita Moysis. Cf. A. MEREDITH 1995, 67-78.
question of ‘philosophic influence’ is not a thing in mind when examining his thought. It would not infuse the method when approaching his sources with an intent to find out whether the author’s thought is coherent under the premises he himself hands out to be respected.

All hostility against the idea of philosophic influence would be quite unnecessary. One could just take it as a fact that there obviously is influence of some form, kind and extent: a good notice, at least. The use of reason is a phenomenon that is universally human: it is not invented by the Greeks. But Gregory did not reason in a vacuum. It is only evident that there is much in his rational argumentation that comes directly from the classics, often called ‘common notions’ (koinai ennoiai) by the author himself. But the particular question of philosophic influence and its extent could be as it may. The only concern during the studies would be the issue of the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought – the observation, namely, how Gregory’s thinking stands on its own right, on its own two feet on the foundation of its own given principles. Accordingly, the conclusion of the study would concern the question of the inner coherency under his own given principles.

When summarising the results of the investigations, however, the prevailing general paradigm of Hellenization could be commented upon in the light of the results. It would be reasonable to approve it, if the studies that were conducted without the conditions of the paradigm had lead to similar conclusions to those of the previous approaches conditioned by it, addressing a problem of inconsistency in Gregory. In such case, the different approach would have brought to light nothing new for us to consider. It would be hard to explain the inconsistencies in Gregory’s thinking in any other than the usual way, as ‘difficulties inherent in his attempt’ ‘to apply the tools provided by the Greek intellectual tradition to further the cause of Christianity’.  

50 As J. ZACHHUBER 2000, 241 expresses the most commonly upheld view. It must be remarked that by this sentence, Zachhuber has not purposed to either promote or nullify the idea of Hellenization. In general, Zachhuber’s study has the great merit that in order to find systematic consistency, it examines and compares Gregory’s own applications of the universal human nature in the different contexts of his thought. The expectation, however, that Gregory purposed to present such a Christian theory of nature, for which some classical conception of being and nature would have provided a model, underlies Zachhuber’s endeavours. In Zachhuber’s view, as a representative of his Christian theological tradition,
The prevailing general paradigm could also be criticised if necessary. It would be necessary if a better recognition of the inner coherency of Gregory’s thought was attained without it.

Much emphasis needed to be given to how Gregory himself wished himself to be identified, and to the inescapable historical fact that he was a Christian. The ‘part which is played in Gregory’s scheme by the person of Christ’ – a question which A. Meredith has reported as being still unclear – would naturally be of especial relevance. H. U. von Balthasar emphasised Gregory’s ‘very Christianity’ as the guide in the ‘Odyssey across the landscape’ of his thought. His ‘firm belief’ was that ‘above all, there is Christ, the living way’. Whether this actually is the case, and what it can really mean, would belong to the central interests of the studies. A good general hypothesis could be that the ‘part’ played by the person of Christ in ‘Gregory’s scheme’ is central, indeed, the leading role. The ‘play’ we may follow on the scene of Gregory’s theatre might not follow the manuscript of Homer’s Odyssey: the unforgettable lines that stand in the manuscript, put in the mouth of the leading character, in any case, sound like this: Come, follow me!

Whether or not Gregory was an inconsistent thinker, part of our problem is that we tend to analyse the details of his argumentation too hastily, without taking notice that Gregory was a writer who used a method when expressing his thoughts. Coherency was one his own concerns: when judging him in the issue, it is of vital importance to take notice of his method and consider how exactly his argumentation is to be approached in order to reach the point of making a right judgement. In fact,

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Gregory just could not find any, and hence did not succeed in his effort: this would be the reason why his argumentation remained inconsistent, not least when he attempted to accomplish his effort with the aid of the three-man analogy in Ad Ablabium. Zachhuber may be right. However, the general parading of Hellenization is never really questioned by him: his conclusion can motivate one to such questioning, in order to see whether any further progress in the issue can be achieved by a different approach.

51 The historical fact that Gregory was a Christian would be treated, rather than as a ‘scientific paradigm’ open to scientific criticism, quite simply as it is: a historical fact to move on from and to move on with.
53 This is the invitation of Jesus to his disciples, recorded as ‘ακολουθεῖ μοι’ in the Greek manuscripts of all four Gospels – and there is great drama in the play. The leading person utters his invitation to all, the poor and wealthy alike: the poor and ‘simple’ fishermen follow immediately whereas the rich and ‘clever’ young man finds it hard to follow. Nevertheless, he, too, is addressed in the invitation.
Gregory’s method already suggests that the coherency of his thought is of a Christological character. What at least one can safely suggest is that the most proper way of perceiving the inner coherency of Gregory’s thought is to become intimate with his own method of philosophical and theological reasoning: akolouthia, following.

2.2. Akolouthia in Gregory

Gregory is famous for developing a comprehensive scientific method of all reasoning, known as ἀκολούθια, ‘following’ or ‘following up the sequence’. The developing of this method – used, by him, in biblical exegesis, logic, cosmology and history, in moral philosophy and ethics – is commonly regarded as one of Gregory’s most outstanding philosophic contributions. When developing his method, Gregory clearly

55 Cf. H. R. DROBNER 2000, 87 summarising the findings of Daniélou who pointed out that Gregory used the term in logic, in the sense of a logical sequence of thought and a necessary connection or dependence of two arguments; in cosmology as a term describing the necessary sequence of phenomena determining the order of the universe, often together with the terms τά λόγια (order) and ἔδρα τύχης (sequence); in history to describe the inner correlation of historical events; in trinitarian doctrine as a term to explain the order of the three divine persons; and in biblical exegesis as a description of the sequence of texts, order of arguments, or train of thought. In agreement with Daniélou, Drobner writes: ‘ἀκολούθια is not simply one of many philosophical terms Gregory uses, but rather the core of all his reasoning’. In reference to Drobner’s account, one must note that his expression that ἀκολούθια ‘is rooted in the very essence of God’ is all too loose, indeed, incorrect if taken literally. The notion of P. Mar Gregorios is important: ‘Gregory’s point is that akolouthia or order and sequence belongs only to the created order and not to the Creator.’ Cf. MAR GREGORIOS 1988, 49.
56 The moral akolouthia is emphasised by P. MAR GREGORIOS 1988, 47-63 (discussed by Daniélou under the historical akolouthia). Mar Gregorios connects Gregory’s original interest to akolouthia as ‘logical sequence’ with the Stoic application of the term (noticed also by Daniélou). Further, for Gregory, who noticed that there is akolouthia in both good and evil, ἀκολούθια was a central moral term – as for the Stoics. For them, ἀκολούθια was a central moral term – as for the Stoics. For them, ἀκολούθια τῆς ὁμολογίας meant living morally right ‘according to the nature’, that is, in accordance with the Logos that indwells the cosmos and all things in it. Likewise Gregory saw that the right and virtuous living consists of ‘following the Logos’. One suspects, however, that Mar Gregorios is not right when he says that ‘Gregory must have taken the term from the Stoic sources’ – provided that he does not actually mean that ‘Gregory must have taken the term’, as a technical term meaning logical sequence, from the Stoic sources. Then he might be right. But otherwise, the idea of historical-moral following in particular, possibly with quite original pedagogical implications, is far too central and distinctive in the Gospels for Gregory to have needed to take the term from any other source than his own Bible.
acknowledged how the traditions of Platonic and Neoplatonic, Aristotelian and Stoic philosophical schools had, in different ways, utilised the term *akolouthia*.\(^{57}\) Scientifically, the method is based on the notion of the ‘necessary sequence’ (ἀκολουθία) between the cause and the effect, and the connectedness of things, phenomena or arguments.\(^{58}\) Importantly, *akolouthia* was the method Gregory used both for *exploring* the logical sequence and connectedness of thoughts and for *expressing* thoughts in a logical coherent manner in his writings\(^{59}\): the same methodological principles – of which Gregory is very conscious – apply in both cases. For this reason, when aiming to analyse and interpret Gregory, as far as possible, *according to his intention*, it is important to become intimate with his method and its principles. Intimacy with Gregory’s method, one may assume, is the most proper way to become intimate with his intention also.

When wondering, what might have made the Christian philosopher Gregory *in particular* to show interest and emphasise *one particular* concept with a good Greek resonance (out of the many candidates more readily at hand) one might want to call in mind, once more, von Balthasar’s ‘firm belief’ about the instructiveness of ‘Gregory’s very Christianity’. Gregory was developing a notion actually well known amongst his fellow Christians. The insistence on ‘following the Word’ was characteristic for the Christian tradition in the ‘succession of the Fathers’, and it was central, for example, in Irenaeus and Origen.\(^{60}\) ‘Above all else there is Christ, the living

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\(^{57}\) As J. Daniélou pointed out, the analysis of Gregory’s descriptions of his method ‘will permit us to approach the difficult question of Gregory’s philosophic sources’ What one must notice, however, is that ‘Gregory has given the word a fullness of meaning which it did not have before him’. Cf. J. Daniélou 1970, 42

\(^{58}\) As a scientific systematic method of logical reasoning, *akolouthia* stands on an Aristotelian basis. With reference to Gregory’s similar use against Eunomius in the Trinitarian context, H. R. Drobnar 2000, 88 (following J. Daniélou 1970, 43-44) writes: ‘In *De Interpretatione* Aristotle often uses the term ἀκολουθία...[in 22a14ff] he asserts that “the truth of a proposition has as necessary consequence the negation of the counter-proposition”’, and further: ‘In *De generatione animarum* 784a27 Aristotle uses ἀκολουθία to describe the causal connection between two phenomena, a usage which Gregory takes up time and again in his *Hexaemeron* [PG 46,100 B, 108 D, 113 A]’.

\(^{59}\) Cf. P. Mar Gregorio 1988, 48: ‘For Gregory, it becomes of the utmost importance to understand things in their proper sequential order, and then to state what is understood in the right sequential order. Good discourse is what manifests good *akolouthia*.

\(^{60}\) In reference to *akolouthia*, it is as commonplace as it is correct to point out like A. Meredith 1995, 54: ‘In one particular feature of his exegetical technique Gregory exploits a tool [=*akolouthia*] employed
way’, asserted von Balthasar. When talking about ἀκολούθια, besides the ‘Greek resonance’, one must recognise the central biblical significance of this particular word. It is the very form of Jesus’ invitation to his disciples as reported by all the Evangelists: ‘ἀκολούθει μοι’, follow me!62 Was Gregory so well aware of all the various uses of the term ἀκολούθια in the classical tradition, he surely was not unaware of its central use in the New Testament. In the midst of all ‘philosophic influence’ – in the very centre of the idea of akolouthia which comprehends also much of what Gregory found philosophically relevant in the classical tradition – there would also seem to be Christ, the living way, calling people on the ‘way of following’.63

The motive of following the Word (ὁ λόγος) that in the discourse (ὁ λόγος) of the Scripture instructs the soul in the Holy Spirit is evident already in Gregory’s early works, the sermons on the Beatitudes (De beatitudinibus)64 and the commentary on the Book of Psalms (In inscriptiones Psalmorum).65 Originally, akolouthia was a hermeneutic approach in Gregory, used for interpreting the Scripture. Its further systematic aspects were developed on the foundation of its previous use and

indeed by Origen, but to a far smaller degree’. The name of Irenaeus, however, should also be mentioned: his Adversus haereses is all about following. The basic question of the treatise is who or what is followed; the idea of a ‘necessary consequence’ of the previous assertion is used in a systematic manner when showing an error in the adversaries’ theories – and the necessity of ‘following the Word’ is emphasised.


62 Cf. for, example, Mt 19.21, Mk 2.14, Lk 9.59, Jh 1.43: the invitation appears in the Gospels sixteen times. The biblical motivation of Gregory, while noted, has not received in previous research the attention it deserves. Cf. J. DANIELOU 1944, 19 (note 3).

63 It is hardly surprising if the Christian philosopher Gregory heard in the invitation of Jesus to follow after him the universal call of the very Logos and the very Sophia of God. This call was something that ‘even’ the Greek philosophers would have considered ‘inviting’ in several ways, because ἀκολούθια was, in several ways, a philosophically relevant term for them all. But they were like the rich young man of Lk 10.21, finding it hard to follow – because of their ‘riches of reason’.

64 The idea of being a ‘disciple of the Word’ in the mountain of the Lord (Is 2.3) where ‘God the Word opens his mouth and teaches us the things which it is blessed to hear’ begins the first Homily. The Lord ‘goes up to the mountain’: so must we too ‘run the upward path’, ‘accompanying him to the height’. Cf. Beat 1 GNO VII/II 77-78.

65 In Gregory’s view, the whole Book of Psalms is the Word’s activity. The Holy Spirit who communicates the Word – in a sequence which does not always, for pedagogical reasons, accord with the historical sequence – is identified as our ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλος): ‘just as the Lord says (in Jn 14.26), He will teach you all things’. Cf. Gregory’s discussion of the meaning of the word diapsalma in Inscr II X-XI GNO V 108-109.
development\textsuperscript{66} as an exegetical method.\textsuperscript{67} The development of the method simulated the historical course of Gregory’s life. When he became a participant in the Trinitarian polemics, he did not need to ‘invent the wheel’ again but developed his exegetical method further in the new dogmatic-polemical context. Akolouthia hence grew into an analytical method where ‘systematic’ and ‘hermeneutic’ potencies coincide as two dimension of one and the same method. Whatever distinction one might or might not find applying between Gregory’s ‘dogmatic’ and ‘spiritual’ sources, this approach, at least, should connect them.\textsuperscript{68}

There is an important point here to make. When analysing the logical sequence of Nyssen’s argumentation in the Trinitarian context, as in any other, the principles of his own method may well be used as instruction for the coincident hermeneutics. There can be no ‘pure’ analysis of argumentation, anyway, that would not apply some kind of hermeneutic frame, approach, condition or suggestion to the discourse that is analysed.

As a hermeneutic device, Gregory’s akolouthia can be characterised as an aim intellectually to ‘hear’ the text, the discourse authorised by someone else, according to the author’s intention. Whatever questions might arise in the mind of the ‘listener’ whose purpose is to understand the intention of the ‘speaker’, they are addressed back to the text: the answers are sought from the sequence of the discourse with a conscious intention not to interrupt it. The ‘listener’ is bound with the text: there is no other way to approach the intention (boulesis) except by aiming to hear the whole discourse according to the meaning (dianoia) of the used words and arguments that explain each other in their sequence.

\textsuperscript{66} The further development in the exegetical context is manifest in \textit{In Hexaemeron} and \textit{De hominis opificio}.

\textsuperscript{67} Cf. A. Meredith 1995 54-55. The scholarly discussions after Daniélou’s discovery have concentrated on the question, when exactly, and in which source, Gregory’s ever-central notion of akolouthia can be regarded as being developed into a scientific method systematically used and controlled by him. Undoubtedly, however, akolouthia was an exegetical approach employed by Gregory already in his early works. The developing of akolouthia into a comprehensive method of all reasoning was a gradual process which culminated in the context of the Trinitarian debates. For discussion, cf. J. Daniélou 1970; M. Alexandre 1971; M. Canévet 1983.

\textsuperscript{68} Cf. A. Meredith 1999, 133-134.
Gregory’s method takes into account that the same individual words – even arguments – can be used for different purposes.\textsuperscript{69} One must therefore be patient in observing what kind of sequence the words used and the things said belong to, before moving on to comparisons or final judgements about the thing received. Any saying or argument can be grasped according to its intention only in relation to its own and original sequence and discursive context. When following the sequence (\textit{akolouthia}) of a discourse (\textit{logoi}) in order (first) to understand rather than (immediately) to compare or dispute, one must recognise its \textit{aim} (\textit{skopos}) and \textit{goal} (\textit{telos})\textsuperscript{70}, identify the \textit{principles} (\textit{afortia})\textsuperscript{71} that determine the sequences logically following from them, and notice how the arguments connect to, and are dependent on, each other in the sequence. Gregory took notice that the utterances of the ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’ often appear logically obscure, contradictory and inconsistent to our intellect.\textsuperscript{72} This would also remain the case if the hearer of its words misses the \textit{skopos} of the whole or of some particular book in it, does not recognise the \textit{telos} of its instruction, or neglects the intention (\textit{boulhema}) behind the things proclaimed in it according to the will

\textsuperscript{69} The notion concerning the problematic character of human communication by means of language is the starting point of \textit{Ad Ablabium}.

\textsuperscript{70} Cf. Gregory’s introduction and the first chapter of \textit{In inspectiones psalmorum}, GNO V 24-26. A good introduction to the issue and to the discussion of the significance of \textit{skopos} and \textit{telos} in Gregory is in R.E. HEINE 1995, 29-45.

\textsuperscript{71} Cf. H.R. DROBNER 2000, 89 who (following J. DANIELLOU 1953=1970, 18-50) points out that Gregory’s idea of the relation of the first principles and logical sequence is the same as that of Plotinus’ in \textit{Enneads} III 2,10: ‘When the first principle is given, the consequences follow automatically, but on the condition that one observes the sequence of ensuing arguments.’ This notion concerns the way logical reasoning functions universally: for Gregory it was natural to hear the suggestions of the Greek philosophers on issues concerning the universal sequences of the created order. The marked difference between Gregory and Plotinus is that for the latter there was no divinely inspired Holy Scripture in the sense as there was for the former. Cf. T. BÖHM 1995, 224. Just as Plato was called ‘divine’ by the Neoplatonists, and his works were regarded as a necessary point of reference, the Platonic tradition never lost its fundamental belief in the divine origin of the human soul. Hence it was self-sufficient – that is, in no need of any especial divine self-revelation – for exploring the divine, by means of exploring its ‘self’ up until the point of the losing of the ‘self’, ‘suddenly’ (\textit{exaiphe}) in the divine rapture of \textit{ekstasis} when the soul became assimilated into the One. In Gregory, the soul was not divine by nature and hence not self-sufficient for making a divine ascent simply by penetrating deeper into her ‘self’: \textit{a self-revelation of God}, ‘the God-inspired Holy Scripture’, was \textit{necessarily} required. Accordingly, for the learning of the most ultimate principles of Being, the instruction of the Scripture was necessary in Gregory’s view. The notion of the ‘first principles’ becomes of especial importance in the Trinitarian context of discussion as the doctrines concerning God must follow from the ultimate principles handed down in the Scripture.

\textsuperscript{72} Cf. \textit{De hominis opificio} PG 44, 128 B; thereof, cf. H. R. DROBNER 2000, 84. A clear notice of this fact marks one of the decisive moments of the technical development of Gregory’s \textit{akolouthia} method.
(qel hma) of the authoritative speaker – who in the case of the Scripture, ultimately, is God.73

One of most central aspects of Gregory’s *akolouthia* is its self-critical, *aphairetic* character. The ἀφάιρεσις employed by Gregory74 is not simply ‘Aristotelian abstraction’ – while the Aristotelian technique of abstraction (ἀφάιρεσις) centrally belongs to its arsenal of analytic means.75 More comprehensively, the self-critical dimension of *akolouthia* is rather to be defined as an ‘askesis of the mind’, not least because of the ‘moral obligation’ of *akolouthia* to the intention of the discourse (logos) one is following.76 In the role of the ‘listener’, one must suspect and question one’s own

73 Cf. CE III/V 8-15 GNO II 163,1-165,20. However, the importance of taking notice of the aim of the discourse holds not only in the case of the biblical exegesis: the methodological point was used also in Trinitarian polemics. In the second book of *Contra Eunomium* Gregory writes in reference to Eunomius’ discourse: ‘It would be best, perhaps, before refuting what has been written, to consider the aim (σκοποῦ) of the exercise…’ For the quote and discussion that follows, cf. CE II GNO I 50-66 240, 10 – 245,17. Gregory finds Eunomius’ aim to be to degrade Christ by not granting the Son the same rank in divinity and in divine honour as to the ‘true God’, the Father. This inequality is made a principle in Eunomius, and it is followed by arguments that accord with it. The arguments establish a logical sequence – but it is a false sequence, indeed, evil, according to Gregory, just as the principle whence the arguments derive. There are notable polemical overtones in Gregory’s presentation, of course, but philosophically he is not wrong in his claim: one of Eunomius’ aims was to deny the ‘true divinity’ of the Son, in other words, to degrade Christ as ‘God’. Whatever polemical overtones one may correctly notice in Gregory, his claim of Eunomius’ ill-will, a moral corruption of intention in dogmatic issues, had a philosophical (not only polemical) base also, in his notion of *akolouthia*.

74 For an excellent recent treatment of the ἀφάιρεσις and the *aphairetic* dimension of *akolouthia* in reference to the allegorical language of the Scripture, cf. T. BÖHM 1996 (with reference to *akolouthia* esp. p. 217ff.). The problem that the present writes still senses in Böhms’s account, is that it does not distinguish between ἀφάιρεσις and κακατσίων in Gregory, but identifies them under the general title of abstraction (cf. p. 221; 268).

75 The Greek word ἀφάιρεσις – ‘removal’, ‘taking off from’ – connotes, in Aristotelian logic, the technique of abstraction, the removal of attributes from an object for the benefit of forming a conception of what is substantial in the contemplated object. Like negation (ἀποφάσις), it belongs to the negative, ‘apophatic’ manoeuvres of discourse and discursive thought while it works for a ‘kataphatic’ end, i.e. aims at a definition of a thing. The term *aphairesis* can also be used in reference to the moral *askesis*, to the removal of evil from the soul. For the classical development and use of ἀφάιρεσις as the term for ‘abstraction’, cf. R. MORTLEY 1986a, 124-158.

76 For the moral dimension of *akolouthia*, Cf. C. MORESCHINI 2000, 230(-231), citing M. CANÉVET 1983, 27(-28). The moral aspect of *aphairesis* as the technique of *akolouthia* is absorbed into the motives of the ‘intellectual following’ of the discourse as the listener’s moral responsibility to take into account, as far as possible, the intention of the followed discourse. It can be duly asked how well Gregory fulfilled his own ‘moral obligations’ as a ‘listener’ to the philosophic intentions of his adversary Eunomius’ discourses. This, in fact, is an important question to be asked in order to grasp the more objective dimension of Gregory’s polemical argumentation; the question deserves more careful and extensive clarification, especially as it would seem that Gregory did not grasp Eunomius’ intention when the latter used the term *‘akolouthia’* for connoting a ‘logical sequence’ – which was a use Nyssen most certainly knew.
For one thing, it is probable that Gregory did not have a manuscript of Eunomius’ *Apolo gia* in his use even as he criticised and quoted it. Obviously he relied on Basil’s quotations and the information provided by his subsequent discussion instead. Cf. R.P. VAGGIONE 1987 25-26. As Gregory reports in CE I 655-657 GNO I 214, 21-215.12, Eunomius complained that Basil and his associates, with their simple minds falling short of right reasoning, ‘miss the speaker’s meaning’ (ὑπεμονομένου διανοίας) when criticising ‘his’ notion (in *Apolo gia*) that ‘Ingeneracy follows God’. He had a good case against Basil, for the latter occasionally substituted the verb ἐπομαί (‘follow’ in a temporal or physical sense) for the original verb ἀκολουθεῖ (‘follow’ in a sense of logical sequence) when addressing critique against Eunomius. Cf. R. MORTLEY 1988b, 159; 175. Gregory defended his brother, asking, ‘what did he do wrong, if he deliberately attended to the meaning (dianoia) of what had been written?’ He suspected Eunomius’ own ability to express his intention (boulosis) in the meaning (dianoia) of his words: neither Basil nor he could have insight into the secret of Eunomius’ heart. They could judge only by what they heard: if they had not understood Eunomius’ intention, the reason was that they had only ‘guessed at the meaning (dianoia) of what was said’.

The distance (diastema), between the ‘intention’ of the speaker and the ‘meaning’ of the words gave plenty of space for much of Gregory’s polemics against his adversary – and it is fair to say that Gregory was not fair whenever he attacked this particular problem in Eunomius. Gregory well knew that he was grappling with the same problem himself. Accordingly, the same critique he addressed to Eunomius could, as it still can, be easily turned back against himself (as it was by his opponents): did he, then, succeed in expressing his intention in the meaning of his words? Or does the intention remain hidden ‘in the secret of his heart’? Such critique has been addressed to Gregory’s discourses – academically, without polemical additions – by some of his modern critics like G. C. STEAD 1990: ‘It is tantalizingly difficult to determine what Gregory has in mind’.

Polemics, in its aim to refute, is never quite ‘fair’. But when the polemic overtones of Gregory’s discourses are removed, the scientific, methodological aspects of his critique remain. Then it is not unfair to say, objectively, as Gregory indicated, that Eunomius’ intention (boulosis) which is identical with both his aim (skopos) and the meaning (dianoia) of his words, is to ‘degrade Christ’ – at least when compared to the consubstantial position of the Cappadocians and the Nicaeans in general. But it was not merely an ‘academic discussion’ Gregory and Eunomius were having according to the modern standards of objectivity, without coincident estimation of the moral value of discourses and reasoning. ‘Opinion about God’ had much to do with virtue and the moral disposition of mind in Gregory. Nyssen held his adversary as much as himself morally responsible to the skopos, di anoia and boulesis of the discourse (logos) of the Scripture. In the case of Eunomius who claimed to be a Christian, he thought that all compassionate concern for the adversary’s intention was ultimately out of question because the opponent’s intention was evil. In Gregory’s view, Eunomius’ doctrine was idolatry. It presented a case of ‘evil akolouthia’ as he had as his principle a notion of ‘created God’ beside the ‘true God’, and was calling people to worship them both as two different kinds of Gods. Gregory judged this to be against the Scripture’s demands of not worshipping creation nor reverencing any other God besides the ‘One God and Lord’ of Israel. In this sense, Nyssen clearly thought he had a moral responsibility for the Source that was the common point of reference to both his adversary and himself, to destroy Eunomius’ doctrine completely. This would mean ‘killing’ it – like Moses, according to the Exodus narrative, killed the Egyptian (cf. Ex 2.11). According to Gregory, the ‘killing’ of which the narrative gives an example is strictly intellectual, and in no circumstances physical. In his spiritual exegeses, Gregory removed all notion of any justification of physical violence and killing from the correct understanding of the instruction of the Scripture. Under this circumstance, Gregory identified the ‘Egyptian’ oppressing Moses’ countryman as a ‘foreigner in worship who is opposed to Hebrew teaching’, and explained, spiritually: ‘Moses teaches us by his own example to take our stand with virtue and to kill virtue’s adversary. The victory of true religion is the death and destruction of idolatry’. Cf. VM II 13-15. The interpretations of such scholars who wholeheartedly support the paradigm of Hellenization – like H. F. CHERNISS (1930), W. JAÉGER (1965) and, lately, C. APOSTOPOULOS (1986) – systematically neglect the distinctive moral aspect, and its implications, of Gregory’s ‘Christian philosophy’. This is a problem much effecting their interpretations.
understanding and conception when following a discourse authorised by someone else. The intention of the ‘speaker’ is concealed in concepts which the partners in conversation in principle share. Sometimes, however, the conception of the receiver can actually be the very thing that makes him or her unable to reflect the communicated thing ‘purely’ according to the author’s intention.

The problem of human conception is particularly acute in biblical exegesis when interpreting such utterances of the Scripture as concern God and his divine nature. According to Gregory, every human concept has its immediate reference in such phenomena as take place within the spatial-temporal, diastematic and corporeal context of creation: in *cosmos* or in human *soma, psyche* and *nous*. When any human concept is used with reference to the uncreated and incorporeal, undiastematic and infinite nature of the Creator beyond time and space, as soon as the mind either forms or receives a concept, it becomes a ‘body’ that conceals the intention it is intended to mediate and reveal.  

In order to reflect the divine intention (βούλησις) embodied in human concepts in the utterances of the Scripture, one must exercise ἀφαίρεσις: ‘strip off’ the ‘flesh’ of one’s own conception when reflecting the meaning of the divine message. In the process of following the *logos* of the Scripture, the observations of the aim, goal, the principles and other connected arguments of the discourse ‘purge the hearing’ of the follower of the *logos*.

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77 As A. A. Mosshammer 1990 has noticed, language, in Gregory’s view, belongs to the created, human corporeal order of reality, defined by ‘diastema’, distance. *Diastema* and *akolouthia* are the two sides of the same coin.

78 Cf. VM II, 38-41 where Gregory says that there is ‘something fleshly and uncircumcised in what is what is taught by philosophy’s generative faculty’.

79 Cf. T. Bohm 1996, 221: ‘Durch die Reinigung von allem “Fremden” (ἀφαίρεσις) ist eine Entdifferenzierung und Entzeitlichung des Denkens ermöglicht’. One agrees with the idea – but asks: is *Reinigung*, in all occasions (especially in intellectual and spiritual), the same as *aphairesis* in Gregory?

80 For example, the analogies of the generation of ‘the word by the mind’, ‘the ray by the sun’, ‘the fragrance by the perfume’, etc., should be used for the purging of each other - and together they should purge our conception when we hear of the generation of the Son from the Father. None of the analogies allowed by the Scripture is alone sufficient to present to our mind the ineffable mystery of the divine begetting – which our mind can only approach, never perfectly comprehend. Cf. Ref Eun 91ff GNO II 249, 18ff.

81 Especially illuminating is Gregory’s discussion concerning the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John. The sublime John who ‘proclaims the mystery of theology’ ‘prepares our ears’ and ‘purges our hearing’ and ‘conception’ from any notion of temporality, corporeality and fleshly passion relating to our
The ‘purgatory influence’ of the *logos* itself and the process of its following, enables the listener of the discourse to identify problems in his or her own conception. These problems would be thoughts, ideas or such usual routines of thought that stand on the way of understanding the intention of the discourse. Once identified by the mind that is made more pure (kaqāfσion) by the *logos*, they must be removed (αfkai̇resij).

The guarantee of the purity (kaqarofhj) of the theological reflection (qewriā) of the God-inspired utterances of the Scripture does not reside in its previous conceptual achievements. Instead, it resides in the unending process of following the *logos*: Gregory’s notion of ἐπεκτασιά, obviously, is an exponent and the culmination of his notion of άκολουθία.

In the process of following the divine discourse of the Scripture, one is not to be critical, really, against its ‘flesh of letter’ where the spiritual intention, communicated by the Holy Spirit and proclaimed by the Saints, has embodied. The letter of the Scripture, *i.e.* the words of the Saints, gives a sensible form to the idea of the ‘begetting’ of the Son, the ‘Only-begotten’ from the Father. The purging takes place, step by step, by the very sequence of John’s proclamation: we listen and follow it according to the order which is not haphazard but very much intended. Cf. *CE* II/II 16-23 GNO II 57, 4 – 59, 27.

Importantly, the notion of the purgatory working of the Word, when following it in the *akolouthia* of Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit, is very distinctive in Gregory’s early treatise on the Book of Psalms. Cf. *Inscr* II XI GNO V 115,10-118,19. Gregory there introduces the Word as a ‘sculptor’ whose work, in relation to the aim, ‘does not begin at once with the end’. When commenting on this idea of Gregory in his translation, R.E. HEINE 1995 (cf. p. 163, note 196) points out that Plotinus (cf. *Enneads* 1.4.9) also uses the illustration of a sculptor in discussing the shaping of the soul. He writes: ‘If Gregory has derived the illustration from Plotinus, however, he has modified in two significant ways. (1) Plotinus has no emphasis on the tools used by the sculptor and the order of their use, which is Gregory’s main point, and (2) in Plotinus, each person is the sculptor of his own soul, whereas, for Gregory, God is the sculptor who is shaping the soul. Gregory has, therefore, Christianized the illustration if he took it from Plotinus.’ As remarked few notes above, a similar difference between Plotinus relying on one’s ‘own soul’ and Gregory relying on the ‘Holy Scripture’ is identified applying also by T. BÖHM 1996, 224. For the development of the distinctive ‘religious aspect’ of Neoplatonism after Plotinus and the role of the *Chaldaean Oracles* in the later Neoplatonism cf. RIST 1967 (esp. p. 238-239); SAFFREY 1986; and the recent discussion in LAIRD 2004, 4-14. Laird (p.14) agrees with Rist (p. 245), who comments that ‘there is no real parallel between the Christian’s faith in Christ and the Neoplatonist’s reliance on the *Chaldaean Oracles*’.  

This, in short, is the distinction between *aphairesis* and *katharismos* that the present writer suggests applies in Gregory, and should be added to the account of T. BÖHM 1996. In the contemplation (qewfriā) of the allegorical language of the Scripture, ‘Abstraktion’ is something that a person may conduct himself. For the ‘Reinigung’ of the intellect, however, something from outside of the person’s ‘self’ is required, namely the logoj that is followed in the contemplation through the ištòrikaj of the Bible. This notion
conceptual body assumed by the Word: the letter is thus the *sine qua non* of the universal instruction of the Scripture concerning the divine nature after the genuine historical event, the ‘once’ of Incarnation. Gregory emphasized that his intention is not to promote ‘allegorical symbolism’ (τροπική ἅλληγρία) in biblical exegesis, but to follow intellectually, as far as his intellect would by its natural means reach, the spiritual instruction of the Scripture *through* the literal meaning (γραφικὴ λέξις) of its words. What one must be critical about, instead, is one’s own conception as the receiver of the divine instruction. Human conception is unable to circumscribe the nature that totally transcends all human thought and language, which belongs to the *diastematic* reality of creation. It is one’s own conception that may become the ‘flesh’ that turns the letter of the Scripture into a ‘letter that kills’ or, as Gregory says, makes the Scripture a ‘doctrine of death’.

In Gregory’s view, no human discourse is free from problems that relate to the vulnerability of human communication by the conceptual means of language – but there are different contexts where the faults and failures have more or less severe consequences. Theological context is the most delicate. Any theological discourse aiming to provide some notion concerning the *aδiαστατὸς φῦσις* is especially problematic in the above mentioned respect, including Gregory’s own. Theological discourse is also most liable to become misinterpreted against its own intentions, goals and aims. In Gregory’s view, the self-critical technical dimension of *akolouthia* should be active also when presenting a theory, theological, as well as any other. This means

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85 Cf. Gregory’s discussion in CE III/V 1ff GNO 160ff (for making Scripture (τὸ γράμμα) a doctrine of death (ὁναξίων διδάσκαλίαν), cf. 10 163, 26-27.) This, practically, was what Eunomius was doing, in Gregory’s view, by presenting his *akolouthia* of evil when circumscribing the essence of God with the flesh of his human concept of ‘Un-begotten’.
86 Gregory explains in Ad Ablabium that this is the reason why even in the Scripture the common habit of using the word ‘man’ in plural is allowed whereas the word ‘God’ is used only in the singular when the divine nature is addressed. Cf. Abl GNO III/1 41.10-42.3.
87 One of the central arguments of the ‘Re-thinking…’ edited by S. COAKLEY (2003), is that Gregory’s ‘three-man analogy’ is only one of the analogies Nyssen provides for approaching the question of the divine Being, not the one that he would offer to us as his ultimate solution to the puzzle. This is also one of the main arguments of the monograph of M. R. BARNES 2001.
that one must constantly question one’s own suggestion for a valid theory by asking such critical questions of reason as would seem to contradict it by a logical necessity. 88

In all reflection, especially theological, the human logos must subordinate itself to the divine logos of the Scripture. This overall attitude is perfectly expressed in reference to a reflection of the human soul, in a dialogue that Gregory composed in a manifestly Platonic form (of Phaedo), Anima et resurrectione. Gregory there has his sister Macrina to teach him the difference between the secular philosophers and the Christian. The secular philosophers can theorise freely as the sequence of their reasoning leads them, while the Christian make the Holy Scripture their canon and rule of all teaching: it is necessary to look that standard only, and accept that which agrees with the intention of the Scripture. 89

We have no reason to doubt Gregory in this description of the disposition of the Christian mind, and of his own mind as a Christian, no matter what form it chose to take when expressing itself. The motive to follow the sequence of the Scripture characterises Gregory’s ‘philosophic’ intention which we call ‘theological’. The notice of this Christian ‘theological intention’ is where it all took off at the dawn of the modern renaissance of Gregory research. It is where scholars have returned again and again during its time – and it is where we stand now. As J. Zachhuber has recently concluded: while Gregory’s ‘philosophical interest was considerable’, his ‘theological interest was predominant’. 90

It would make much sense to try to penetrate ‘Gregory’s theological interest’ or ‘intention’ as such, by appreciating his own means of theological reasoning. When approaching the troubling question of coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought with a view to his methodology, it might be a wise move to consider, first of all, what would serve the examinations as a comprehensive theological principle (arche) with power to create a sequence of ensuing arguments: what would qualify Gregory’s own approach to theological issues? One might also want to consider,

88 Cf. Hom op PG 44 128 A-B.
89 Cf. An et res PG 45, 64A-B
secondly, what would comprehensively define Gregory’s anthropological goal (telos) in organic relation to his overarching theological, Trinitarian aim (skpos)? There are two words that come to mind as a suggestion for the principle and the goal, one quite clear, the other not so clear: apophasis and Christocentricism.

3. The agreement and the issue: Apophasis and Christocentricism

3.1. ‘Apophatic theology’ in Gregory

As Deirdre Carabine has correctly noted, the use of the term ‘apophatic’ in the abstract is problematic, pointing out that the ‘descriptive use the term has not precisely the same meaning when applied to Plotinus, Proclus, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius and Eriugena’.91 When it comes to the root term ‘apophasis’, Carabine offers us a relevant abstract: ‘The principle behind the notion of the unknowability of the divine essence is traditionally known as apophasis, or apophatic theology’.92 As a ‘principle’, apophasis most certainly is present in Gregory’s theological discourse, although it is not there given any special name. There is hence a scholarly agreement that it is adequate to call Gregory’s theological thinking either ‘apophatic’93 or ‘negative’ in some sense or another,94 over a century before the explizite Terminus der Apophatischen Theologie in

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93 Apophasis in Gregory is commonly defined in Dionysian terms, i.e. in distinction to kataphasis, ‘affirmation’, or knowledge of God in his energies or powers. Cf. D. CARABINE, 1992, 79-99. Research is already moving beyond the point of discussing what kind of concept of ‘apophasis’ is actually applicable to Gregory’s thinking. This development is manifest in M. LAIRD 2004. In agreement with Carabine’s definition, Laird uses apophasis and kataphasis as two stable concepts giving distinction to his neologism ‘logophasis’: as a ‘human discourse divinized’, logophasis describes something that is in between the two ends and gives expression to an intuition the soul attains of God in the apophatic stage of faith, through the indwelling Logos.
94 Ever since the pioneering study of J. DANÉLOU 1944, Gregory’s apophaticism has been in the centre of the recognition of this fourth century author and his significance for the history of Christian thought. Daniélou regarded Gregory as ‘le fondateur de la théologie mystique’: after this recognition, the question has not been whether Gregory’s thinking is apophatic or not but whether or not his apophaticism is an exponent of his ‘mysticism’. For ‘apophasis’ in Gregory, cf. J. HOCHSTAFFL 1976; A. LOUTH 1981;
the works of the author known as Dionysius Areopagita. The procedure is found acceptable because apophaticism ‘postulates’ or ‘manifests’ itself in Gregory’s works. With the exception of his first known work De virginitate, the ‘three-fold manifesto of apophasis’, namely that God is spoken of as essentially unnameable, ineffable and unknowable, characterises all Gregory’s production. This is not any less true in the case of Ad Ablabium, the tractate which is commonly regarded as Gregory’s Trinitarian key-text, even as the very ‘testament’ of his theological convictions. However, despite the universal recognition of the apophatic character of Gregory’s theological conception, the apophatic premises of Ad Ablabium have not much affected the standard interpretations of his Trinitarian solutions as presented in the treatise. Instead, the treatise has been sliced into pieces of individual assertions in separation, and the pieces have been evaluated according to the categories of ‘Platonist realism’ and ‘Aristotelian abstraction’, as pointed out above. This is problematic. One thing is that the sequence of the treatise has been hence broken. Another thing is that neither of the categories that

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95 Cf. J. Hochstaffl, 1976, 109-151 (on Gregory and Dionysius). With some corrections, Hochstaffl supports the notion of E. MuHlENBERG 1966 according to which the concept of infinity of God is not only an exponent of a moment of negation but, importantly, is also an affirmation: ‘Gott ist Unendlich (άπέρον)’. Technically, Hochstaffl is more happy to call Gregory’s thinking ‘negative’ than ‘apophatic’, in order to make a distinction to Dionysius Areopagita.

96 Cf. R. Mortley, 1986, 144; 191: ‘[G]regory arrives at the crucial postulate of negative theology, namely that God transcends both thought and language.’ Mortley concludes, however, that ‘there is no science of negation’ in Gregory. When talking about apophasis with a reference to Nyssen’s thought, it is important to realise that we are not then talking about an epistemological method or linguistic technique of ‘negation’ but rather, as D. Carabine has defined ‘apophasis’ in its basics, about the principle behind the notion of the unknowability of the divine essence. The studies of Mortley (1986) and Carabine (1995), with their different approaches to the Greek and the Christian apophatic tradition complete each other in many of their valuable points. Mortley’s approach is more specifically linguistic whereas Carabine’s approach, as she points out herself, is more ‘open’ to what constitutes negative theology. Cf. D. Carabine 1995, ix.


98 Cf. B. Krivocheine1977, 76-104. Following M. R. Barnes as the leading figure, the contributors of S. Coakley 2003, in varying degrees, have criticised this assumption which Barnes would totally dismiss. Neither is J. Zachhuber 2000 too excited about the overall quality of Ad Ablabium.

99 Cf. G. C. Stead 1990, 149-163. For criticism of Stead’s position, cf. V.H. Drecoll 1996, 325 (note 111). The concern that without due appreciation of his apophatic standpoint, one might miss Gregory’s Trinitarian points is something that I unreservedly share with the contributors of the ‘Re-Thinking of Gregory of Nyssa’. 
have been elaborated for grasping the logic of Gregory’s argumentation is preconditioned by an apophatic principle according to which God as the ‘Real-Being’ is essentially unknowable. This, nevertheless, is how it is in Gregory. The expectation that Nyssen’s ontological solution ought to fall ultimately into one or other of the two basic classical categories in order to make any real sense, may not – and probably does not – do justice to Gregory’s intention and idea.

It is no less problematic to consider Gregory’s apophaticism as Neoplatonism: the ontological foundation of Neoplatonism lies in the notion of the One that transcends essence and being (ἐὰν ὁ οὐσία). This is a move that Gregory consciously did not approve, on biblical grounds, maintaining that ‘one true mark of divinity’ (ἡ γνώσις τῆς αληθείας κειμένης) is that He is. The Cappadocian argued that this is what Moses ‘lays down as a law’ in Ex 3.14, and aimed to show how all biblical saints affirm this in different ways. He argued that in light of the Scripture any kind of contemplation of the ‘non-existence’ (μὴ Ἀποφασισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ) of God would be unlawful and impious enterprise. There are three edges in Gregory’s argument when he discusses the issue in third book of Contra Eunomium:100 in the light of biblical testimonies, it is unallowable to think, firstly, that the Son (as Logos who is God in God) ‘once was not’, secondly that the divine essence could be named and then known through a name, and thirdly that God, in general, could be contemplated as non-existent.101

100 Cf. Gregory’s discussion in CE III/VI 1-14ff GNO II185-190ff. Philosophically, Gregory’s argument in the context is based on the concept of the eternity of the divine being, conceived as an ‘absence of origin and end’, which is not limited, ‘surrounded’, by non-existence. He says that the eternity of the Father ‘is marked by his never having taken his being from non-existence and never terminating his being in non-existence’. The Only-begotten Son who is God ‘in the Father’, ‘is in him in respect of all that the Father is conceived to be’. Hence, ‘being in his eternity, he is assuredly eternal’: ‘endlessness’ and ‘un-originateness’ apply to both the Father and the Son who are one in being.

101 The two first edges are aimed directly against the claims of the adversary Eunomius: Gregory regards them as heretical ideas threatening the sound Christian doctrine as discussed by people calling themselves Christians. The last edge is aimed more generally against the alien idea of ‘divine non-existence’, one which underlies the heretical notions in reference to the Son. We have no way of telling how Gregory might have reacted to the apophatic system of Pseudo-Dionysius. The contexts of discussion and the acute subject matters and aims of discussion change during the development of Christian apophatic tradition from Clement to Gregory and from Gregory to Pseudo-Dionysius. It nevertheless remains a fact that in the fourth century context of Trinitarian discussions, Gregory quite categorically rejected the ontology which supports Neoplatonic apophasis and its apophatic concept of God.
Even as Gregory’s apoplectic thought gave the orthodox ground for the later, more distinctively Neoplatonic development of Christian *apophasis*, ‘apophasis’ constructs and manifests itself systematically in a different way from that in Pseudo-Dionysius. There is no linguistic ‘technique of negation’ (*apophasis*) used as an epistemological method in Gregory. Instead, if Gregory had regarded ‘the essential unknowability of God’ – ‘apophasis’ – as a theological principle (*arkhe*), it would have created a *sequence of ensuing arguments* to support it. Consequently, Gregory’s apoplectic notion of God is not just ‘a thing’ to notice and mention, but a ‘real thing’ to observe and examine, in order to identify the subsequent sequence and how it qualifies Gregory’s theological argumentation.

The spiritual aspects and consequences of *apophasis* – notions like the ‘mirror of the soul’, ‘spiritual senses’ and ‘mystical ascent’ (*epektasis*) – have been well mapped in studies applying the ‘spiritual approach’ ever since J. Daniélou’s prolific study, but the systematic aspects have attained no systematic attention. This is probably because no ‘apophatic system’ has really been expected yet from Gregory. What have been expected, rather, are polemical reactions against Eunomius who claimed that God’s essence *can* be known, and still premature suggestions of those Neoplatonic elements that attain systematic application later in Pseudo-Dionysius. It is true that one can proceed from Gregory to Pseudo-Dionysius – but it is not wise to read the latter’s system back into the theological thought of the former.

The concept that we have of the ‘apophatic theology’ in Gregory of Nyssa relates to the common idea that Gregory advocates a technical division or antithesis

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102 The idea of ‘principle’ of ensuing arguments is something that Gregory shares with Plotinus – as well as the idea of the unknowability of God (or ‘One’, in Plotinus). What they *do not* share is the Source from which the principles are derived – which is what Gregory shared, as a reader of the Septuagint, with Philo. Philo did not adopt the idea (from the Alexandrian Platonists) but introduced it (to them?), based on his exegetical work. Cf. A. LOUTH 1981,19.

103 Studies that have such extensions are M. CANÉVET 1983, R. MORTLEY 1988b, and the recent study of S. DOUGLASS 2005. The study of J. HOCHSTAFFL 1976 is good, but even as E. Mühlenberg’s original assertions are there improved, one misses more elaborate discussion in reference to the Trinitarian context.

104 These common expectations are well manifested in D. CARABINE 1992 and 1995.
between *qeologiā* and *oikonomiā* while he does not technically distinguish between *qeologiā* and *qeognwsiā*:

*It is believed that rather than two distinctive things, he connotes by *theognosia* the mystical aspect of *theologia* regarded as divine knowledge or contemplation of God.*

From Gregory one does not find the distinction between *apofasij* and *katafasi̇j* which Pseudo-Dionysius later conducts, but *theologia-oikonomia* distinction would seem to prefigure it.

There is a problem in this assumption: according to the prevailing idea of the *theologia-oikonomia* distinction in Gregory, could the Dionysian idea of ‘kataphatic theology’ have anything to do with Gregory’s idea of *oikonomia* that needed to be distinguished, technically, from theology?

Much of the modern Gregory research is characterised by the somewhat one-sided trust on the ‘upward tendency’ of Gregory’s spirituality: the manifestly apophatic character of his theological thought is commonly seen as a clear expression of this very tendency. Gregory’s intriguing doctrine of *e)pektasij*, the perpetual progress in the infinite *ascent* of the soul, has been fascinating enough to become captivating. Nyssen’s equally distinctive – and perhaps even more remarkable – emphasis on Incarnation and virtue, while being well remarked, has remained in the shadows of his

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105 Cf. A. Grillmeier 1975, 370; B. Studer 1993, 2. The value these two studies remains beyond any question. In the case of Gregory of Nyssa, however, a revision is needed. Unlike Grillmeier’s and Studer’s monumental accounts, many of the other textbook accounts of Cappadocian thinking in the issue are deeply confused. Whatever other merits there are, for example, to C.M. LaCugna 1991, the account of the Cappadocians and of Nyssen’s thinking in particular is, quite simply, a disaster confusion of previous scholarly notions.

106 These two questions have an organic connection in research where Gregory is presented as the one of the Cappadocians who gave classic expression to the Patristic antithesis between *qeologiā* and *oikonomiā* (cf. B. Studer 1993, 2), in a source – *Oratio catechetica* – where the word *qeologiā* does not, in fact, appear at all. One wonders, would not the case rather be, that the whole of *lo/goj kathxhtiko̱j* concerns ‘theology’ whereas the relevant distinction of this early catechesis is exactly the one it provides: that between the divine knowledge (*qeognwsiā*) concerning the Holy Trinity and the economy of salvation in Christ (*oikonomiā*)? Could *theognosia* and *oikonomia* actually be the two ‘ends’ of *theologia*, connected by a substantially Christological sequence, the ‘sequence of the Word’ that Gregory thought the Word invited his disciples to follow?

107 According to J. Daniélou, the term ‘*qeognwsiā*’ belongs to Gregory’s ‘mystical vocabulary’, meaning ‘*qeologiā*’ as ‘mystical knowledge of God’. Cf. J. Daniélou 1944, 200-201. In modern translations, it has become commonplace to translate ‘*qeologiā*’ in Gregory’s use as ‘divine knowledge’. Cf. the translations of VM II 158 of Daniélou (in SC1 2000, 207) and E. Ferguson/A. Malherbe (1978, 93;).

108 This is the route into ‘Gregorian apophasis’ as D. Carabine 1993 describes it, as also M. Laird 2004.
teaching of *epektasis*.\(^{109}\) It is suspected that Gregory was not a self-consistent thinker – but there is an evident problem of self-consistency in the scholarly assertion that Gregory’s spirituality is ‘up-tending’ – even as on the next page it is remarked that he respected virtue over knowledge, and put especial emphasis on the notion of Incarnation.

Remarkable development is going on at the moment in Gregory studies on the question of the *theologia-oikonomia* distinction. There is the valuable study by R. Kees, who has shown that *theologia* and *oikonomia* seek rather mutual relation than separation in Gregory.\(^{110}\) G. Maspero has recently addressed, importantly, the continuous and coherent sequence of *theologia*, *oikonomia* and *historia* in Gregory.\(^{111}\) According to Maspero, Gregory’s ‘theology of history’ is defined by the ‘reciprocal relations of distinctions without separation’ and ‘union without confusion’ of *theologia*, *oikonomia* and *historia*. Finally, M. Laird\(^ {112}\) has introduced the concept of *logophasis*, marking the theologically relevant downward movement the Word and human soul enlightened by *φυσική*. These are, one would expect, important ‘moments’ in the interpretation of Gregory’s *oeuvre*.\(^ {113}\)

3.2. ‘Christocentric anthropology’ in Gregory

Anthony Meredith is right in saying that the question ‘what part in Gregory’s scheme is played by the person of Christ?’ is both relevant and acute for us at the present. The present situation, however, is somewhat awkward. One feels that the point of the

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\(^{109}\) Cf. A. Meredith 1993, 59.

\(^{110}\) R. J. Kees 1995.

\(^{111}\) G. Maspero (Diss.) 2003.

\(^{112}\) M. Laird 2004.

\(^{113}\) To this list of monographs should be added the article of L. Ayres in *Re-Thinking…* (S. Coakley 2003, 15-44), presenting the idea of ‘grammar of divinity’ in Gregory’s *Ad Ablabium*. Ayres does not discuss the *theologia-oikonomia* distinction in Gregory, but provides means for discussing the theme from a fresh angle. As much as one would like to endorse M. R. Barnes 2001 for many of his valuable findings, one senses, on the other hand, that the study creates as many problems as it at first would seem
centrality of the role of Christ\textsuperscript{114} has already been made many times, even by Meredith himself: his oscillation in the issue\textsuperscript{115} is a good case in point to approach the issue.

According to Meredith,\textsuperscript{116} it has to be admitted that ‘aside from Gregory’s treatment of the interrelationship of God and man’\textsuperscript{117}, one misses in him ‘the warm Christocentric piety that we find in St Paul and in later medieval spirituality.’ In terms of ‘warm piety’, there is some truth in this notion when the more impersonal atmosphere of Gregory’s writings is compared to the atmosphere of medieval sources – at the level of expression, that is. However, in terms of the foundation of Gregory’s ‘spirituality’ and his theological considerations, one is not so sure that Christocentricism would not be the very concept to describe Gregory’s thinking and its motivation. What universal criteria, one wonders, are there for calling someone’s thinking Christocentric, or more or less Christocentric than someone else’s? Is piety the measure, or explicit ‘personal devotion to Jesus’, of which Meredith speaks about in the context? How to measure piety – and how to distinguish it from sentimentality? Even as it comes to piety, Gregory’s Commentary on the Song of Songs, for example, shows nothing but Christocentric spirituality – and not only ‘warm’ but \textit{flaming} piety, one might say. But, of course, also this depends on how one defines ‘piety’. Eventually, ‘piety’ does not provide us the way to evaluate Christocentricism in Gregory, or in anyone else, in the most meaningful and substantial sense of the word.

\textsuperscript{114} Cf. E. Moutsoulas 2005, 107: ‘Gregory is the Christocentric theologian par excellence...He [Christ] is the centre of history but also of Christian spiritual life [according to Gregory]’. Cf. also E. Moutsoulas 1997, 408-427.

\textsuperscript{115} The oscillation has something to do with Meredith’s trust on the ‘sympathetic critique’ of J. H. Strawley 1906, 434-441, admitting that while Gregory thought that Christ assumed a fallen human nature, his Christology was ‘crude and tentative’ because of its ‘dominant conception’ of the ‘exaltation of the human into the divine’. Cf. A. Meredith 1999, 47 (and 147, note 42). But see also A. Meredith 1993, 56-61 for a proper discussion of the issue. There Meredith concludes that Gregory ‘turns the platonic image [of the cave] on its head and invites us to believe that it is only in Christ, through the purifying and enlightening action of the Word, that we can approach God’. In his introductions (1995, 1999) to the thought of Gregory, Meredith does not show all his personal edge in the issues he displays.

\textsuperscript{116} A. Meredith 1999, 25-26.

\textsuperscript{117} The by-passing remark should not be by-passed: it is not a minor emphasis in reference to Christocentricism.
Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco\textsuperscript{118} has found Christocentrism belonging ‘to
the nucleus of Gregory’s theological and spiritual thought’. When commenting
Gregory’s Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes, Mateo-Seco writes: ‘Everything in the
homily converges in Christ. Towards him tend, in a word, the hunger and thirst of the
soul.’ Christ most certainly is the Omega of Gregory’s thinking – and manifestly so,
in the eschatological context of his writings at the very latest. But is he also the Alpha?

It would be very hard not to find Christ presenting the very beginning for a
Christian thought according to Gregory – including his own thinking, of course. In fact,
even Meredith everywhere argues for the Christocentric character of Gregory’s thought.
When discussing the difference between Origen and Gregory, Meredith writes: ‘By and
large, Origen’s thought is largely theocentric, Gregory’s is Christocentric’.

In reference to the ‘spiritual context’, it is exactly as Meredith remarks:\textsuperscript{119} the three major
theophanies in \textit{De vita Moysis} ‘occur in the incarnational context’ and ‘the first at the
burning bush is the most obvious.’ Unmistakably, the Alpha of Moses’ mission was his
meeting with Christ, according to Gregory. In \textit{In Canticum Canticorum} Gregory
confirms the same in reference to divine contemplation: ‘Moses’ vision began with
light…’\textsuperscript{120} One must also notice the Christological notions of \textit{De perfectione}. As
Virginia Woods Callahan says in the introduction to her English translation of the text,
this work has ‘rightly been referred as St. Gregory’s Christology because in it he
provides us with a systematic commentary on each of the terms which St. Paul applied

\textsuperscript{118} Of the present Gregory scholars, besides E. Moutsoulas, L. F. Mateo-Seco is most clear in affirming
Gregory’s distinctive Christocentrism. In his theological accounts of Gregory’s thought, Mateo-Seco
clearly moves on from the ‘spiritual’ interpretational platform prepared by J. Daniélou, but is also well
equipped with the tools of the ‘dogmatic line’ of interpretation. He is able to explain Gregory’s discourses
with admirable ease with a view to the author’s theological intent, presenting the ‘spiritual’ and
‘dogmatic’ aspects of the author’s thought inseparably side by side. Mateo-Seco’s theological approach
gives a promise that when ‘Daniélou’s line’ and ‘Mühlenberg’s line’ are not run against each other in the
theological interpretation of Gregory’s thought, they serve a common purpose. In Mateo-Seco, the
common purpose exposes itself in the clear affirmation of Gregory’s Christocentrism. Cf. L. F. MATEO-

\textsuperscript{119} Cf. L.F. MATEO-SECO 2000, 162-163. In Mateo-Seco’s view, there is ‘warm Christocentric piety’ in
Gregory’s Homilies on the Beatitudes: ‘Hunger and thirst, passionately lived, have meaning because it is
hunger and thirst for a dear Person, Jesus Christ’, cf. p. 160.

\textsuperscript{120} A. MEREDITH 1995(b), 8.

\textsuperscript{121} A. MEREDITH 1999, 25-26.

\textsuperscript{122} Cf. \textit{Cant} 7 GNO VI 322 8-12.
to Christ.123 In this source Gregory presents Christianity as ‘imitation of Christ’ with Pauline directives. Would one not be tempted to call this ‘Pauline Christocentricism’? Or is the talk of ‘imitation’ only a sure sign of Gregory’s Platonism? Alden A. Mosshammer asserts that ‘the notions of participation and imitation are themselves deeply indebted to Platonism and could never have been derived from the Biblical “image of God” in itself’.124 This, however, is clearly an understatement: the Bible has more to say about participation and imitation. Gen 1.26 is not the only place in the Scripture which Gregory might have derived notions concerning participation125 and imitation from.

In the expression of Mosshammer, ‘could never have been derived…’, one notices an element one might more readily associate with the name of Werner Jaeger.126 The same was said by Jaeger of ‘theology’ in the Christian context: ‘Without […] Hellenic striving for a philosophic understanding of what we believe, theology would never have arisen in the Christian world.’127 Is this correct? Or is it making too much out of a historical fact, of how things in practice went in history when taking time and place? Jaeger identifies the applying of a name to some idea or phenomenon as being the same as beginning of the idea or phenomenon – but this is not a very ingenious identification. Was ‘theology’ really non-existent in the Christian world before Clement and Origen took the term ‘theology’ into Christian use as Jaeger claims?

125 Cf. the study of D. BALÁS 1966.
126 W. Jaeger is the figure behind the ‘philosophic line’ of study, contrasted to the ‘theological line’ by G. MAY 1981. A. A. Mosshammer is a successor of W. Jaeger in working within the same basic frame. However, Mosshammer, unlike Jaeger, is ready to see authentic forces of ‘philosophic innovation’ also in the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. Partly for this reason, one is surprised to find the latter scholar using such definitive formula as ‘could never have been derived’ when discussing Gregory’s concepts of participation and imitation. It is a problematic formula to use when referring to a historical course of events – unless one admits the idea of divine providence in a scientific study. Gregory would not have minded this interpretation of ἱστορία, but it hardly is what either Jaeger or Mosshammer are talking about.
127 Cf. W. JAEGGER 1965, 73.
It is reasonable to raise a question. Would not, rather, the order presented by first Jaeger and recently by Mosshammer be reverse? It could also be claimed that the historical take-over and utilisation of the Greek concepts of ‘imitation’ and ‘theology’ would not ever have taken place in the Christian world, if Paul had not called himself an imitator of Christ (Eph. 4.4) and called people into imitation of God (Eph. 5.1), if Genesis 1.26 had not said ‘in the likeness of God’ – and if Christ had not been called, by John 1.1, \( \log\ tou\ qeou\ ) who in the beginning, as God, was in and with God and incarnated for our sake.\(^{129}\)

In her study on the Greek apophatic tradition, Deirdre Carabine has asserted that it would seem that ‘Gregory’s christology is subordinate to his trinitarian theology, although this is not surprising in the light of the theological tumult of his century.’\(^{130}\) However, one could formulate basically the same idea by saying that Christology, in Gregory, still integrates into his Trinitarian thinking. This would mean that the foundation of his Christocentricism – whether it eventually manifests itself in anthropology or not – is already to be found from the distinctively theological level. In Gregory’s view, all the divine names that we may apply to our concept of God we find

\(^{128}\)Mosshammer’s account of the ‘role of Christ’ in the thought of Gregory supports the assertion that it is appropriate to regard Nyssen as a ‘Christocentric thinker’. Cf. A.A. MOSHAMMER 2005, 503-514. In Mosshammer’s view, only Gregory’s emphasis changes during his production, from regarding Christ as a teacher and example (which Mosshammer sees as a more Platonic emphasis) to regarding him as a redeemer and a saviour (a more distinctively Christian emphasis, according to Mosshammer). Cf. A.A. MOSHAMMER 1997, 172.

\(^{129}\)The point is this: the fact that both participation and imitation are notions that appear in the Scripture, could be considered as quite sufficient motive for elaborating them as especial themes in encounters with Greek philosophy. So, if we have to say ‘could not have ever’, the biblical notions, rather than the Greek, may be considered as the ‘without which not’ of Gregory’s discussions.

\(^{130}\)D. CARABINE 1995, 248. Carabine suggests that ‘Gregory’s underlying apophatic attitude…leads him to a position whereby his stress upon the relativity and unknowability of the three hypostases results in some loss of their economic characteristics’. One asks: according to what standard? Although one does not want to promote the habit of separating the Eastern and Western traditions too far apart, Carabine’s standard must be ‘Western’ on this issue: Father equals Creator, Son Saviour, Spirit Sanctifier. In Gregory, however, all persons are active in all divine action ‘from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit’. There is no need for him to defend that conviction, or to subordinate it to his apophatic position to which, on the other hand, it fits well. Indeed, it could also be asserted that the notion of the ‘economic characteristics’ of the \( \text{hupostaseis} \) that can be known as distinct \( \text{hupostaseis} \) – while they remain unknown according to their one essence – is enforced in ‘Gregory’s system’. The economic characteristics of each hypostasis would be enforced in a manner that leads into a solid notion of the \textit{indwelling of the whole of the Holy Trinity} in a human soul which receives Christ in the Spirit: in the Spirit, through Christ the Son, the soul receives also the Father.
‘concentrated’, in the Scripture, upon the person of Christ. Further, in Gregory’s view (as presented in *Ad Ablabium*), when we examine the divine operation according to the ‘suggestions of the Scripture’, we find it to be a motion of divine will-power ‘from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit’. Christology, in Gregory, it is not unreasonable to say, is not really ‘subordinate’, but deeply *rooted* in his Trinitarian thinking. It is there that we find Gregory’s most initial Christological centre. In the case of Gregory of Nyssa, Christology and Trinitarian thinking should not be viewed in isolation from each other. His thinking, it appears, functions somewhat differently from the way we tend to expect, according to the standards that work for us as generalisations when approaching the tradition of the Christian thought as a whole. The generalisations do us a disservice when we try to grasp the coherent sequence of Gregory’s thought.

We have now come back to question of the authentic sequence of Gregory’s thought: its *akolouthia*. As asserted above, Gregory’s especial emphasis on *ákolouthía* is probably of a biblical origin, even though most attention has been given in the past to the Greek associations that relate and support his method. Insofar as one is right in asserting a biblical origin of Nyssen’s *akolouthia*, Gregory’s comprehensive method would be one of the clearest expressions of his distinctive Christocentricism. It is not, however, immediately clear how *apophasis* and Christocentricism could ever coherently connect in a thought of one and single author. The common, and valid, question, asked recently by D. Carabine, is this: does the Incarnation not bring us any knowledge of God’s essence (*ousia*)?

When stating this particular question, it should be noticed that the expectation according to which Incarnation *should*, eventually, provide us knowledge of the divine *ousia* in particular, is a very ‘Greek’ expectation as such. There was no such promise in Gregory’s Bible – which was, as it still is, silent about God’s *ousia*. There is only the promise of knowing perfectly ‘face to face’ (cf. 1 Cor 13.12) in a context where

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love is endorsed.¹³² There are many in the Christian tradition who believed, like Plato, that we shall learn to know the divine essence in the life hereafter, and that ‘perfect knowing’ is what beatitude is all about. Gregory did not think so – but there is no reason for us to presume that the positive answer to the question of the knowability of the divine ousia would be more ‘authentically Christian’ than the negative one. That we tend to think this way, clearly indicates how the research tradition itself is somewhat ‘Hellenized’ in its common expectations.¹³³

In the particular case of Gregory of Nyssa, it should be possible to arrive to a Christological goal (telos) from the theological principle (arche) of apophasis. The studies of this thesis assume that such sequence is possible and existent in Gregory, and that this is the very sequence that, once exposed, at once exposes also the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought. The basic assumption of this thesis is that before we can use any ‘key’ into Gregory’s thinking, we first have to identify the right ‘keyhole’. I suggest that the keyhole is Gregorian form of apophasis, based not on negations but on what God has revealed of his essential nature: its unknowability and infinity. Once the keyhole is found, we might already have the fitting key in our hands, too, handed over by Gregory himself: Christ, in whom God is revealed, and who is to be followed by faith, in love – in time as in eternity.

¹³² In fact, when one reads 1. Cor 13 carefully, it does not directly say that we shall know God as perfectly as God knows us. It only says that our knowledge at the present is fragmentary, and when we shall see ‘face to face’ at the hour of the coming of ‘the perfect’ putting an end to all that is fragmentary, what we now know partly, we shall understand completely, ‘as we are understood’.

¹³³ D. Carabine is clear in saying that the essence of God remains unknown in Gregory’s system. Often the secondary literature asserts that according to Gregory nothing can be known of God besides his existence and unknowability. Cf. for, example, J. P. Williams 2000 28-36. This is misleading: in Gregory, there is, instead, an eternal growth in theognosis, the ‘divine knowledge’ which never captures the object of the soul’s loving desire, God, who by his essential nature is unknowable.
4. The thesis

4.1. The aim

In this thesis I examine the relation of Trinitarian theology and anthropology in Gregory of Nyssa. The aim of the studies is to investigate the inner coherency of Gregory’s theological and anthropological thinking, under the apophatic theological premises peculiar to the author, and with Christological focus. It is suggested that the coherency of Gregory’s theological and anthropological thought is to be found in his Christological concept of unity between ‘true God’ and ‘true Man’ in the ‘one person’ of Jesus Christ.

4.2. The method: identification

The method employed in this thesis seeks intimacy with Gregory’s own method, *akolouthia*, and its principles. When aiming to examine and expose the sequence of Gregory’s thought with a view to the possible inner coherency of his Trinitarian and anthropological thinking, it is held necessary clearly to acknowledge and recognise the more comprehensive original sequence his individual arguments belong to, observe the aims and goals of his discourses and identify the principles that determine the sequences of his argumentation. The methodological aim is to follow the sequence of Gregory’s thought according to the author’s intention: hence the method may well be regarded as a modern application of Gregory’s original method of following. Like Gregory’s original method of *akolouthia*, the method employed in this thesis has systematic and hermeneutic dimensions: one might call these dimensions ‘problematic’ or ‘critical’ and ‘self-critical’.

After noticing the ‘ancient mould’ of the method, it is important to notice also the ‘modern mould’ that underlies the approach peculiar for this thesis. The systematic-analytic approach is somewhat similar to what Eric Osborn calls, in reference to his historical approach, the *problematic method*, asking ‘what problems the
author aims to solve and what new moves he makes towards this end. The historian naturally asks the question with reference to the history of ideas. The approach of this particular study is that of a systematician examining the thought of one particular author: the relevant investigated is the ‘textual history’ of Gregory’s works, in principle, from his first work to the last. It is not possible, in practice, to examine the whole of Gregory’s corpus in one single study: it is nevertheless from the ‘historical context’ of Gregory’s works that the relevant sources and passages are picked up to be analysed for the benefit of the aim of the study. Gregory’s own methodological principles of *akolouthia* are used as devices for identifying the problems that manifest his intention in the discourses that are analysed.

There are cases when in order to become able to identify the original problems to which the sources provide answers, one must first identify a problem in one’s own conception in the issues the author discusses. The latter ‘problem’ means only ‘trouble’ – in practice, confusion – in the interpreter’s own mind. This is beyond the scope of the problematic approach which identifies, by analytical means, problems as motives behind the ideas authorised by someone else. One cannot analyse one’s own confusion in the sources one examines: there is no such problem in them. But something in the sources gives the first impulses that make one question one’s own conception, in suspicion that there is something in one’s own way of understanding and interpreting the sources which is not quite compatible with their contents and intention. It is then that the hermeneutical *self-critical* dimension of the method should become especially active.

In the process of identifying the problem that exists in one’s own mind, the sources must take the role of a critical opponent and ‘purge the hearing’ of their student. At this point one may speculate but one cannot really make proper analyses, because one is not quite sure what exactly to analyse. One can only read and re-read the

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134 Cf. E. Osborn 2005, xii for the latest explication of his approach.

135 In all wrestling with the text, whether ‘systematic’ or ‘hermeneutic’, the self-critical dimension can and should be active, but there are times when the hermeneutic self-criticism is the only way to proceed and make real progress.
sources, attentively, with a self-critical mind. One must let the sources take the initiative and lead, invite and suggest, make an impact – and mould the patterns of one’s mind and the usual ways and routines of one’s thinking. After the sources have moulded the patterns which the mind previously followed as unquestioned parts of its own sequence, it follows more closely the relevant patterns and sequences in the sources themselves. One may then become able to identify the problem in one’s own thinking and remove the incompatible element. Consequently, one becomes again capable of formulating questions which correspond better with the problems in the sources. One can again proceed problematically, by identifying the original problems to which the sources provide answers – which should be more manifest and explicit than the problems.

The practical functioning of the self-critical dimension of the method as described above is not a public thing as such: it takes place during the hours of labour in the student’s ‘private chamber’. The results of its functioning become public, however, in such arguments and assertions of the publication of he studies that critically re-evaluate the assertions and interpretations of previous research. The things that the student can and must be most outspoken and critical about are things that he previously held as his ‘own’ by sharing them with the research tradition he has received.

An article dissertation such as the one at hand has one advantage when compared to a thesis composed in a traditional monograph form. Not all marks of the genuinely self-critical functioning of the exercised method are in fact left in the secret of the student’s ‘private chamber’. The whole process of study – and, consequently, the development of the student’s vision during the process – leading into the final view, is more manifest and transparent than it would be in a monograph. This is a true advantage from the viewpoint of the possibility of recognising the functioning of the self-critical

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136 The intention, of course, is not to say that Gregory’s discourses should be ‘listened and followed’ as a ‘word of God’ where there is the divine Logos ‘purging the hearing’. A human discourse and argumentation, however, can work in the same way: the separate arguments and sources explain each other, provided that they also connect in a coherent sequence.

137 This would mean inter-textual considerations, with an aim to observe a coherent pattern connecting individual sources.
dimension of the method during the process of study. What the self-critical disposition should impart to the study-process, if it is effective, is such progression in the student’s vision as will put under critical question at least some of the notions and ideas that were previously upheld by the student himself. The whole fabric of argumentation should not remain quite the same from the beginning of the studies up until their end. In the beginning, it is only probable that there is still much ‘flesh’ of the student’s own conception in his argumentation – whereas in the end, there should be less.\(^{138}\)

The apparent change in the student’s view can be offered as a record for the working and the efficacy of the used method: the series of *identifications* both ‘critical’\(^{139}\) and ‘self-critical’\(^{140}\) – starting already from the notice of the most initial, historical and most basic *self-identification* of the author himself as a Christian\(^{141}\) – have beard fruit.

The aim to identify connects the ancient and modern ‘moulds’ behind the method exercised and is the scarlet thread that goes through all the studies included in

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\(^{138}\) When reading the five articles included in this thesis in the order of their composing and presentation, one may observe how the student’s notion of Gregory’s concept of theology remarkably changes during the process. One may even recognise the point when the former intuition of the student has finally turned into an identification of a problem as it becomes explicated with much critical distinction to the standard views of Gregory research. An attentive reader will notice how in the fourth article of this thesis, the student critiques a use of the concept of ‘theology’ in reference to Gregory’s ‘theological thought’ which he previously, in the first two articles, saw yet no reason to be suspicious about. In other words, the student critiques himself as much as the ‘others’, for his previous understanding of the concept of theology in Gregory.

\(^{139}\) The ‘critical identifications’ would be those based on the critical, analytic questions that arise in the student’s mind and help him understand, by analytical means, the meaning and the intention of the discourse under examination. The critical questions are addressed to the sources with a ‘methodological trust’ that they will – eventually, insofar the sequence of the author’s thought has been patiently followed through – provide an answer. In the end it is evaluated whether that trust has been put in the author.

\(^{140}\) The ‘self-critical identifications’ would be those that relate to the student’s own way of approaching, interpreting and understanding the sources under examination. The self-critical questions arise from the sources and they are addressed to the students ‘self’ or to the research tradition the student belongs to: they question the student’s and the tradition’s understanding of the sources.

\(^{141}\) This first underlying ‘methodological identification’ of the studies which is based on the author’s own most basic self-identification would belong to the ‘class’ of ‘self-critical identifications’. In other words in the most elementary level of the approach, the *author* is ‘allowed’ to decide for his student how his thought is to be approached in the first place. The *critical questions*, whether Gregory was more a Hellenist or a Christian, or to what extent he was a Hellenist or a Christian, is methodologically excluded from the rights of the student whose aim is to follow what he is invited and ‘allowed’ to follow in the authors text. The personal judgement of the student comes last.
this thesis. In other words, the motive of identification is systematized and hence made a method for pursuing the thematic aim of the studies, which is to examine the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought. Therefore, the student has chosen to call the method which admits both ancient and modern influence, a ‘method of identification’.

4.2. The plan of study

The plan of study is based on the idea of a process of learning through different kinds of exercises of the ‘method of identification’ as described above. The articles establish a process where all the individual articles aim to contribute, in their own individual but organically connected way, for the one aim of examining and exposing the (possible) inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought. As important as it was for Gregory himself to explore and expose the coherent sequence (akolouthia) of things and thoughts by his method of following (akolouthia), as surely the aim of presenting such a theory that the two Schwerpunkte of his thought would establish one coherent sequence (akolouthia) was part of the plan that was his very own.

The study plan based on the idea of a progressive process of learning must acknowledge the fact that all issues that will prove relevant to be invoked for further discussion during the process, cannot be exactly identified at the beginning of the process. While an initial plan with a view to the aim is naturally required to begin the studies with, the sequence of the author’s thought must ‘decide’ how the studies are carried into their final conclusion. There are hence two ‘stages’ in the studies conducted in the articles, the first stage based on a preconceived plan, and the second stage based on the previous endeavours, i.e. what has proven relevant to be subjected to further discussion. The third stage is the summary where the issue of the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought is viewed from the final, maturated point of view and the question of the applicability of the general paradigm of Hellenization is commented upon before the conclusion.
The two important specifications that relate to the method and the aim of the studies in the preconceived plan are *apophatic approach* and *Christological focus*. The principle according to which the essential nature of God is unknowable qualifies Gregory’s theological thinking: this principle, traditionally known as *apophasis*, qualifies also the approach of the present thesis. By admitting a ‘Christological focus’ in the subject matter, the studies acknowledge a Christological *goal* that should prove identical with the *aim* of the studies when they come to their completion. The Christological focus hence adds to the plan its *hypothetical element*. The general hypothesis of the studies is that the sequence which coherently connects the Trinitarian and anthropological ‘ends’ (the two *Schwerpunkte*) of Gregory’s thought, is *Christological* in substance, just as there are ‘two ends’, divine and human, in Christology as Gregory conceived it.

To the speculative aspect of the preconceived plan belongs a distinction between the ‘general hypothesis’ and the especial ‘working hypothesis’ of the studies. Identification of Gregory’s initial ‘theological-anthropological problem’ that would be relevant and acute in both his Trinitarian and anthropological sources – deserving some kind of synthetic solution – is the central task of the examinations. Identification of this particular problem is pursued immediately in the beginning of the studies. It would be the problem that is expected to attain, ultimately, a Christological solution in Gregory, creating coherency inner between theology and anthropology. The identified problem is the first proper result of the studies, but it also represents the especial ‘working hypothesis’ for the studies that will follow. The examinations after the identification of the problem in the Trinitarian context proceed by identifying the further implications and exponents of the *same* problem in the distinctively anthropological, and other relevant contexts of Gregory’s thought: devotional, Christological and eschatological.\(^\text{142}\)

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\(^{142}\) It is important to realise that the aim of the studies is not to examine ‘Gregory’s Christology’ as an isolated issue as such, or as it is discussed in *Antirheticus adversus Apollinarianum*. Instead, it is asked whether Gregory’s Christological thinking provides a solution to some initial problem in the relation of Trinitarian theology and anthropology, in the context of Gregory’s distinctively Trinitarian and anthropological sources, and in relation to such Christological considerations that are not planned as an answer to a ‘Christological problem’. The intention is not to avoid polemical dispositions of discourse.
When it comes to the practical steps that belong to the preconceived plan, first of all there is the choice of Gregory’s *Ad Ablabium* for the key text of the studies. The source that discusses an analogy of nature, between the ‘tri-unity’ of ‘one God’ and the ‘multi-unity’ of ‘one man’, serves the purpose of the studies well. The analysis of the analogy – both when it comes to its contents and, importantly, its *limitations manifesting the problem* in the relation of divine and human concepts of ‘oneness’ – is used as an *entrance into* the ‘inherent sequence’ of Gregory’s thought on the issue of the ‘inherent coherency’ of his Trinitarian and anthropological thought. It should be possible to use the source as such ‘entrance’ into the whole of his Trinitarian-anthropological sequence, that is, was there inner coherency in his thought in this respect. Again, it is Gregory’s own idea of *akolouthia* that would demand it.

The self-critical dimension of the method of identification is active in the approach to the key-text *Ad Ablabium*. The approach is self-critical in asserting that one cannot just ‘go and analyse’ the analogy, without due acknowledgments of Gregory’s own approach and the more comprehensive sequence to which the analogy belongs only as one, even if important, part. Before conducting analysis of the analogy, it is necessary to take into account the *Trinitarian aim* of the treatise and the *apophatic standpoint* underlying and conditioning the *theological sequence* of the whole discourse of *Ad Ablabium*. The elements that as the ‘ensuing arguments’ support the principle of *apophasis* in Gregory, qualify also his discussion of the analogy. Determined by the *theological* principle of apophasis, the analogy creates a *theological sequence* within the *anthropological* concept of oneness which the treatise implies. As the aim of the treatise is Trinitarian, not anthropological, this particular source is not – as it is not intended to be – explicit about all that comes to the author’s anthropological concept of oneness. Hence one cannot yet draw too far-reaching anthropological conclusions based on *Ad Ablabium* alone. However, the source should imply the blueprint of Gregory’s concept of the *anthropological perfection* in oneness. *Ad Ablabium* explicates what constitutes

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obviously: it is only that the concentration of this particular thesis is in the dispositions of thought that are characteristic for *Trinitarian* discussion and polemics.
the *divine perfection* – of which humanity, according Gregory, should be a ‘likeness’ and ‘imitation’.

*Ad Ablabium* is a perfect source for providing the ‘working hypothesis’ for the remaining examinations. Insofar as the analysis of the analogy succeeds in identifying the original problem of theological and anthropological concepts of oneness in Gregory, the entrance into the ‘inner sequence’ of his thought should be successful, too: the studies may then be pursued further within ‘Gregory’s sequence’ by means of identification. The sequence of examinations derives from the Trinitarian context where all anthropological argumentation is subject to the theological aim. Accordingly, the anthropological theory which is there implied is subordinate to the theological aim and necessarily supports Gregory’s Trinitarian views. The eschatological context of discussion, at the latest, is only due to bring some change to the anthropological theory of Gregory as there the ultimate *telos* of humanity is discussed, perfected in Christ by means of subjection. If a coherent sequence were maintainable despite the eschatological change, the suggestion would be that Gregory’s anthropological theory is dependent of his apophatically qualified Trinitarian views. It would have a Christological goal which integrates into his overarching Trinitarian aim. Such result, or its opposite, would complete the first stage studies. The second stage studies would then sharpen the picture by concentrating on some issue found relevant for further examination. In the summary, the third stage, the process is completed by providing the maturated view on the subject of the studies, before the conclusion.

### 4.4. The procedure and the main sources of the study

The first three articles included in this thesis represent its ‘first stage’. They discuss the themes that could be preconceived in the beginning of the study process and proceed according to a plan which is given expression in the first, founding article of the dissertation, *Jesus Christ as Mediator, Archetype and Prototype in the Light of the*
Anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Context. In the first article, the studies begin with the analysis of the three-man analogy as presented in Ad Ablabium. The analysis which is conducted by taking notice of the Trinitarian aim and the apophatic principle of the treatise, leads into a suggestion of an anthropological concept of ‘oneness of a person’. This concept would be an implication of the theological concept of ‘perfect oneness’ which applies to the Holy Trinity as a unity in both nature and operation. Like God as ‘one nature’, each human person is ‘one’ in reference to his or her actions which manifest the existence of the one and common human nature: the integration of nature and operation, it is suggested, constitutes a concept of ‘oneness of a person’ in Gregory.

After the analysis of the analogy in Ad Ablabium, the first article considers whether the pattern of ‘oneness of a person’ applies in the anthropological context of De hominis opificio discussing the creation of humankind in the image and likeness of God, and in the ‘devotional context’ of De perfectione discussing human perfection as an imitation Christ. Finally it considers whether some central Christological concepts, as discussed by Gregory in De perfectione, provide a solution to how the divine-like perfection may be attained at a personal level.

In the second article, The Eschatological Telos of Christian Life. Life in Christ according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, the studies are continued in the eschatological context of the author’s thought. It considers whether such God-like perfection in oneness that would apply not only to a ‘person’ but also to ‘man’ as ‘one nature’, is, according to Gregory, finally attainable. The analogy of Ad Ablabium would categorically deny such a possibility. In Gregory’s view, however, a discussion about the eschatological telos of humanity is a different matter from a discussion of natural

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analogies: ‘telos in Christ’ and ‘analogy of nature’ are two different things. The second article considers whether the same pattern of ‘perfect oneness’ applies in the eschatological context of In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius as in Ad Ablabium in referring to the oneness of God – and whether the ‘theological-anthropological problem’ attains its final ‘Christological solution’ in the discussions of the eschatological context. The basic recognition of the coherent sequence between the apophatic arche and the Christological telos in Gregory’s thought would be the result of the first two articles.

In the third article, The Constitutive Elements of the Apophatic System of Gregory of Nyssa, the ‘apophatic elements’, which are only briefly addressed in the first article to help in the analysis of the key source Ad Ablabium, are more fully discussed in the context of Contra Eunomium. The third article adds the analytic basis to the ‘apophatic approach’ of the founding article of the dissertation and gives necessary argumentative weight to the whole. The third article completes the total sequence of the first three articles. In the whole sequence of the entire thesis, it mediates between the first two articles and the last two of them. By discussing the Gregorian form of ‘apophatic theology’, attention is turned also to Gregorian concept of ‘theology’ – a concept which as such, it will be suggested, most fully reveals the integration of Gregory’s theological and anthropological thought.

In the two last articles the studies are pushed forward by examining the concept of theology in Gregory. It is the theme ‘proven relevant for further discussion’ during the process of the previous studies. The ‘second stage studies’ begin by taking a critical stand in relation to previous Gregory research. Behind the critique is the genuinely self-critical dimension of the method of identification which has led the student into questioning his own presuppositions and preconditions in reference to Gregory’s concept of theology. The critique objectifies the problematic preconditions which the

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student previously shared with the research tradition, and must now, consequently, criticise as the standards that underlie and condition the modern discussion of Gregory’s thought. The context and the object of the critique have changed from the student’s ‘self’ to the ‘research’, but its content remains the same.

The fourth article *Service or Mastery? ‘Theology’ in Gregory of Nyssa’s Contra Eunomium II* focuses on the concept of *qēologiā* in light of Nyssen’s use of the title *qēologiōj*, in relation to the neighbouring concepts of *qēognwsiā* and *qeωriā*, and *filosofiā*. The main context of discussion is *Contra Eunomium*, especially the second book, but the discussion is related to other sources where the terms *theologia* and *theologos* appear, especially to *De vita Moysis*. In the article, Gregory’s biblical *self-identification* not as a ‘theologian’ but as a ‘servant’ – in imitation of the imitator of Christ, St. Paul – is addressed. Then the corresponding biblical *pattern* of his concept of *theologia* in subtle distinction to *theogosia* is shown, based on the simultaneous intimacy and distinction between the ‘hearing’ and the ‘seeing’ of the Word. Finally also the ultimate anthropological significance of Gregory’s concept of theology is addressed in a short overview of theology as ‘divine philosophy’ and the Church’s ‘Mother-tongue’ of worship proclaimed in one voice. The ecclesiological and eschatological dimensions that are only shortly addressed at the end of the fourth article, are more fully discussed in the second article of the thesis.

The discussions that are begun in the fourth article are continued in the final fifth, *Contemplation of the Divine Word and the Law of Worship in Gregory of Nyssa’s Contra Eunomium III*. The last article concentrates on the relation of *theoria* and *dogma* in Gregory, and to how they relate to the concept of *theologia*. It is shown how Gregory improved the *theologia-oikonomia* distinction as previously employed by

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146 The first draft of the article was presented as communication in the 10th Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa held in Olomouc, Czech Republic, 15th - 18th September 2004. Published in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II. An English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*. Eds. L. KARFIKOVÁ, S. DOUGLAS and J. ZACHHUBER. Leiden 2006, 473-484.

his brother Basil, by another technical distinction which served the intention of the original distinction better. Nyssen underlines the division between the ‘uncreated and created’, a division which corresponds with the ‘divine and human’ natures of Christ. In the third book of *Contra Eunomium*, Gregory presents his theoretic approach to theological issues as one that ‘looks to the Incarnation’ as proclaimed by the saints in the Scripture, in a manner that resembles his account of Moses’ looking at the thorny bush in *De vita Moysis*. This connection is elaborated in the fifth article, and it is suggested the ‘contemplation of the divine Word’ – i.e. *theoria* following *theologia* – leads into the recognition of God’s will that his Word expresses as the ‘law of worship’: this *nomos* is the institution of the Church’s *dogma*. In the fifth article, the biblical foundation of Gregory’s manifestly central technical distinction between the uncreated and created is analysed. How Nyssen derived the distinction from the Scripture is a good example of his exercise of the method of following, and it also shows the most immediate and natural context of ‘theology’ in Gregory: worship.

The final third stage of the studies is the summary, titled *In Love with Christ*. The purpose of the summary is not to repeat what is said already before in the articles, but to summarise results of the studies in their subject matter from a more mature perspective. The studies are summarised in the context of their key source, *Ad Ablabium*. The source is read, once more, analytically, with a concentration to the anthropologically relevant concept of theology Gregory there presupposes. The final discussions are related with *Contra Eunomium* and *De vita Moysis*. These texts are the two main sources of the two traditional ‘theological approaches’ – ‘dogmatic’ and ‘spiritual’ – of twentieth century Gregory research where *Ad Ablabium* has been said to make manifest the problem of self-consistency in Gregory. The purpose is to show that the opposite is actually true, by addressing the obvious initial ‘mould’ of Gregory’s concept of theology in the Scripture.
After the final analysis of Ad Ablabium, it is shown how the concept of theology – and its anthropological implications – permeates Gregory’s spirituality as manifested in De perfectione and De vita Moysis. The issue of the applicability of the ‘general paradigm’ of Hellenization for interpreting Gregory’s thought is commented upon already when discussing Ad Ablabium. The final comment on this issue, however, is provided in the context of Gregory’s ‘spiritual’ sources with a concentration to Gregory’s concept of ‘imitation’. In the previous research, it has been claimed that neither ‘theology’ nor ‘imitation’ could ever have been derived from what the Bible provides. After discussions in the ‘spiritual context’ of Gregory’s thought, the final conclusion of the thesis may be presented in the question of the inner coherence of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought.
SUMMARY

IN LOVE WITH CHRIST
1. Introduction

In the general introduction to this thesis I pointed out that whatever new findings we are about to witness in the near future in Gregory research, the credit is to be attributed to an on-going process, not the moment. Every new generation of Gregory scholarship builds on the foundation of the previous generations. At the same time the process, insofar as there is any progress, is necessarily aphairetic: something of the previous interpretations is always cut off, though not necessarily to the loss of the previous interpretations, especially when it comes to their intention.

What I have discovered in the five articles may appear somewhat shocking in the context of the scholarly tradition. I claim that Gregory did not regard himself as a theologian – and that in his view, ἐκκοιμία is ὀἰκονομία. It may appear that I have come up with some ‘new thing’. But I give much credit for what I have discovered to the ever dynamic tradition of Gregory research. My main point as regards this tradition is that the two basic lines of theological interpretation confronting each other in the past, spiritual and dogmatic, have been equally right in themselves about Gregory’s thinking: but these lines can be integrated. The findings of Daniélou and Mühlenberg can go hand in hand: this is because there is a deep integration of theoria and dogma in Gregory of Nyssa himself. Different approaches to his thinking do not make his ‘system’ fall. My most basic and very simple claim is the very traditional statement of Gregory research: the role of Christ is central in Gregory’s Christian thinking. Faith in Christ is the substance of his theological and anthropological thought, as well as the basis of his identity as a ‘Christian philosopher’ loving Christ.

In what soon follows, I summarise the findings of my studies in the Trinitarian context of Ad Ablabium, the key text of the studies, from my final point of view. It may be held as one of the results of the studies that Ad Ablabium still can be regarded as one of the most fitting entrances into Gregory’s theologically motivated thinking. It is important to express this clearly, because there are also opposite tensions on the field at the moment, asserting that such a procedure is not proper. The final analysis of Ad Ablabium will hopefully make manifest the uniquely and authentically
biblical mould of Gregory’s apophatic concept of theology, and the manner by which his idea of theology turns out to be the very idea that crowns his Christocentric anthropological vision. After the final analysis of Ad Ablabium which is supported by elements of Gregory’s argumentation from the ‘dogmatic’ context of Contra Eunomium and the ‘spiritual’ context of De vita Moysis, the prevailing ‘general paradigm’ of Hellenization is commented upon in the ‘spiritual context’ of De vita Moysis and De perfectione, in the light of Gregory’s notion of ‘imitation’.

In what immediately follows, I give a short overview to the history – and to some of the relevant pre-history – of the ‘Gregory renaissance’ up to the 1970s, in how it has conceived the concept of ‘theology’ in Gregory of Nyssa. I think that the knots to be untied in our minds in order to attain a better recognition of the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought relate to the concept of theology we try to apply when interpreting him. The knots, I believe, come from the period of the first ‘two waves of re-thinking’ of Gregory ever since the dawn of the ‘Gregory renaissance’. The same decisive period can also provide us some advice on how to untie the knots: we are talking about a fine research tradition that possesses the required tools. After describing those first three decades – by no means exhaustively – I shall offer a basic view of my own final position, based on a process that is manifest in the five articles of this thesis. This view will be deepened in the summary which I have decided to entitle ‘In Love with Christ’. For the reader of the summary, the title should become intelligible in relation to the general title of the entire thesis: ‘One Word, One Body, One Voice’.

1.1. ‘Theology’ in the two first waves of the ‘re-thinking of Gregory of Nyssa’

The ongoing process of serious ‘re-thinking of Gregory of Nyssa’ began in the midst of the twentieth century discussions of the Hellenization of Christianity, by acknowledging Gregory – instead of just one of the ‘three Cappadocians’ or as one relatively insignificant and unoriginal Platonist – as an innovative Christian philosopher and
spiritual theologian deserving much attention of his own. In the prehistory of the Gregory renaissance those like Harold Cherniss believed that Gregory simply adopted Plato’s doctrine and called it Christian theology. It was into this context and general atmosphere that the pioneering works of von Balthasar and Jean Daniélou brought much new light and ‘rethinking’ with their new theological-spiritual approach. Von Balthasar believed that for Gregory ‘the God “above God” (which is to say, the God who is above the God of the philosophers), the God beyond hope cannot be an object of a system’. He importantly addressed the ‘strict and definitive correlation between the word of God and what the creature hears.’ Simultaneously – and problematically – he identified ‘theologia’ and ‘epinoia’ (abstract conception) in Gregory, asserting that ‘theology [in Gregory] is merely an “inventive approach”’. ‘The object of “theology”’,

148 The ‘first wave of Gregory renaissance’, the serious re-thinking of his work and contribution, began with VON BALTHASAR’S Présence et Pensée; Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nyssse (1942) and DANIELOU’S Platonisme et Théologie Mystique; Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de S. Grégoire de Nyssse (1944). Daniélou’s thesis is undoubtedly the most influential and celebrated study ever written on Gregory. Other notable monographs of the first wave before the second, are R. Leys, L’Image de Dieu chez Grégoire de Nyssse (1951); H. MERKI, Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottählichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa (1952); A. A. WEISWURM, The Nature of Human Knowledge according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa (1952); J. GAITH, La Conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nyssse (1953); W. JAEGGER, Two Rediscovered Works on Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius (1954 – reprinted in 1965); W. VOLKER Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker (1955). Already the first glimpse to the titles of the monographs shows that Platonism and spirituality were the dominant themes in the first generation discussions. The number of the articles written after the rediscovery of Gregory is countless. The vast majority of them make an issue of Gregory’s alleged Platonism.

149 H. CHERNISS, The Platonism in Gregory of Nyssa (1930). Previously W. MEYER, Die Gotteslehre des Gregor von Nyssa (1894), for example, had introduced Nyssen as an uncritical follower of (Neo)Platonic philosophy. This view was questioned in the study of F. DIEKAMP Die Gotteslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nyssa (1896) and the discussion was continued in the same spirit especially by J. BAYER Gregors von Nyssa Gottesbegriff (1935) and S. CONZALES, La formula mē oüiē treî upostaēj en San Gregorio de Nisa (1939). From the same period shortly before the final universal breakthrough in Gregory studies there is also M. G. DE CASTRO Trinitätslehre des Hl. Gregor von Nyssa (1938). The many articles by E. VON IVÁNKA, above all Von Platonismus zur Theorie der Mystik; Zur Erkenntnislehre Gregors von Nyssas (1936), importantly moulded the ground for the studies of von Balthasar and Daniélou: Ivánka stressed the idea that Gregory conducted a Christian transformation of the Platonic themes. An important study was also K. HOLL Amphilocheus von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu der grossen Kappadoziern (1904): Holl was among the first to see in Gregory a theologian of remarkable distinction. He found that Gregory did not just repeat the other Cappadocians, but significantly developed the themes of Basil in a manner that eventually distinguished ‘his theology’ from both that of his brother and that of his namesake Nazianzen.

150 To use the distinction of G. MAY 981, 91, between the ‘theological’ (von Balthasar, J. Daniélou) and ‘philosophical’ lines (W. Jaeger) of interpretation.

von Balthasar wrote, ‘is...strictly limited to what the “trumpet” clearly wants to make heard from on high, from θεὸν ἐγὼ (the God who speaks).’ Von Balthasar thus emphasised the notion of ‘God who speaks’ in Gregory, but had no especial name for it: in his view, ‘theology’ as used by the author, connoted the human approach to speaking of God. When it comes to J. Daniélou’s account, the following words of Werner Jaeger – the most prominent figure of the ‘philosophic line of interpretation’ – well describe the character of the change that Daniélou’s Platonisme et théologie mystique brought about:

[The] two books of Cherniss and Daniélou [The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa and Platonisme et théologie mystique] are of widely different intent. Cherniss finds in Gregory much that is Platonic but thinks that Gregory has not improved Platonism by applying and adjusting its ideas to Christian problems. Daniélou, on the other hand, believes that Gregory’s Platonism is no longer Platonic and that it must be judged on the basis of its Christian motifs rather than its original philosophical intention – in other words, there has been a complete metamorphosis of its traditional meaning.

The classical scholar Jaeger – who was the most out-spoken of all the twentieth century scholars in reference to Gregory’s concept of theology – clearly places himself somewhere in between Cherniss and Daniélou. In contrast to them both, Jaeger regarded Gregory not only as a Christian continuator of the Platonic tradition preserving its intention, but also as a saviour of the Greek creative spirit and force from its Stoic and Epicurean decadence: according to him, their systems had turned philosophy into a (mere) ‘set of dogmas’ fulfilling only the religious function of giving inner security.153

153 For dogmas as the decline of creative philosophical power, see W. JAEGGER 1961, 41. In p. 90 Jaeger stresses that ‘for Gregory Christianity was not mere set of dogmas’. Jaeger also claimed that for Gregory there was something to be called ‘mere faith’, πίστις in distinction to γνώσις resembling a higher state of perfection and assimilation to God. Cf. W. JAEGGER 1965, 73. Daniélou, in comparison, asserted that in Gregory discursive knowledge is opposed to the simplicity of faith which alone introduces the things of God to the mind. Cf. J. DANIELLOU 1944, 152. The textual reference of Daniélou is from the second book of Contra Eunomium where Gregory gives the example of Abraham’s faith and writes: ‘it is faith (πίστις), not knowledge (γνώσις), which God credits to men as righteousness.’ (GNO I 254, 1-3). This is the locus classicus of Gregory’s conviction about the primacy of faith over knowledge. For Daniélou’s view of faith in relation to knowledge in Gregory, see M. LAIRD 2004, 16-18. For the primacy of faith over knowledge, see A. MEREDITH 1995, 88-89.
In Jaeger’s view, ‘Gregory’s theology’ was permeated with the more original Greek idea of *paideia*, especially in its Platonic form. According to him, Gregory used ‘the Greek forms as the structural model of fully developed culture and by way of comparison created for each of them a Christian variant shaped in the classical mold but at the same time clearly differentiated from it.’\(^{154}\)

Basically Jaeger was satisfied with the view of Adolf von Harnack as presented in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*\(^{155}\) – but with the difference, that what von Harnack regretted and saw as a ‘Greek fall’ of authentic Christianity, Jaeger celebrated and saw as a ‘Christian resurrection’ of Greek, especially Platonic, philosophy.\(^{156}\) Jaeger may thus be seen as a ‘re-thinker of Gregory of Nyssa’, that is, from the viewpoint of the previous historical and classical studies. Jaeger never saw any reason to question the sincerity of Gregory’s Christian commitment and the Christian concerns of his subsequent efforts. He believed, however, that without the *authentically Greek* ‘philosophic mind’ the ‘simple faith’ of the Christians\(^{157}\) would have created another insignificant, Semitic religious cult. Jaeger thought that Gregory had a ‘Greek mind’ which he used as a committed Christian, with the best intention of turning the Christian religion into a Christian culture: what the Christian religion initially lacked, were the philophic models which the Greek *paideia* alone possessed.

According to Jaeger, then, in order to regard and use the Scriptures as the Christian source of instruction (*paideia*), Gregory must have observed how the Greeks regarded and used their Homer as instruction.\(^{158}\) Jaeger was also very certain that *qēologiā* in Gregory is to be regarded as a ‘new philosophic and rationalised form of

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\(^{154}\) Cf. W. JAEGER 1961, 98.

\(^{155}\) Cf. Ib. 105, note 2.

\(^{156}\) Cf. W. JAEGER 1965, 136. According to Jaeger, the fundaments of Platonic philosophy ‘form the core of Gregory’s theology’. ‘All of Gregory’s thought and writing appears’ – to Jaeger – ‘as a consistent effort to bring about[...]catharsis of Greek philosophy. It means the reception into Christian theology of the ‘sound elements’ of Greek (i.e. Platonic) philosophy. These coincide with what one might call the ‘essentials’ of Plato’s thought’. Ib., 137-138.

\(^{157}\) Jaeger’s idea of original Christianity, one must say, is somewhat narrow: besides his trust in the concept of ‘faith’ that is necessarily ‘simple’ or is ‘mere’ faith, he presupposes that a *Christian* conversion is necessarily a ‘sudden act’ – whereas in the original Platonic sense of the word, ‘conversion’ may be considered as a gradual process. Cf. W. JAEGER 1965, 107.

\(^{158}\) Cf. Id. 91-93.
Christian religion’. According to him, ‘as Greek philosophy culminated in ‘theology’[…] so Christian religion was in its highest level to become ‘philosophy’, *i.e.* speculative theology.’ In a very positive classical light Jaeger saw in Gregory a theologian who was a true heir of the intellectual spirit that is authentically and distinctively Greek. For Gregory, namely, ‘Christianity was not a mere set of dogmas’, the German scholar stressed: instead, it was ‘the perfect life based on the *theoria* or contemplation and on ever more perfect union with him [God]’. Jaeger was sure that ‘without Hellenic striving for a philosophic understanding of what we believe, *theology would never have arisen* in the Christian world’. In his view, Gregory continued the work of Clement and Origen in the ‘hazardous attempt to intellectualise the supraintellectual that called theology into being’.

If for Cherniss ‘Gregory’s theology’ was simply philosophy of Plato clothed in Christian disguise, for Jaeger it was a Christian *ascetisch-mystische Paideia-Theologie* as a continuation of the Platonic *paideia*: it was Greek humanism in a new Christian context. Thereby the ‘sayings’ of the prophets and apostles became read as

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159 Ib. 1965, 72.
160 Ib., 22.
161 Ib. 1961, 90.
162 W. Jaeger 1965, 73. Italics are mine.
163 Ib. Whether or not Gregory is regarded as a continuator of the classical tradition like Jaeger saw him, Jaeger’s notion of the concept of *q̣eologi/a* in Gregory is very much alive and presupposed in Gregory studies.
165 Jaeger is very persistent in celebrating Gregory’s classical intention. In *De vita Moysis* Gregory writes about the better birth into the light of the knowledge of God (*theognosia* as the light of Incarnation). He shows pity for the ‘barren princess’ of Greek philosophy: she is always in labour but never gives birth to ‘Virtue’ identified, by Gregory, as Christ. The classical scholar can but remark that according to the author, the [‘foreign’] philosophers never really see the light of *theognosia* although the might perhaps ‘become men’ – but this only gives him an opportunity to instruct us that ‘becoming men’ is ‘the goal of all humanism’. Cf. W. JAEGER 1965, 135. As it comes to Gregory’s intention, however, it is John 16.20 that he has in his mind in the context: St. John is the original ‘humanist’ of that particular occasion.
an ‘education’ which changes ‘man’, i.e. transforms the individual soul according to the model of the ideal man-divine, Christ. 

For Jean Daniélou ‘Gregory’s theology’ was théologie mystique, and that par excellence, as an extension of his sacramental theology. The meaning that Daniélou gave to the predicate ‘mystical’, indicated the unique and distinctively Christian substance and spirit of Gregory’s thought acknowledging the infinite distance between God the Creator and man as God’s creature. In ‘Gregory’s theology’ there had taken place of a complete metamorphosis of original Platonism, effected by the authentically Christian, biblical substance Gregory had given to the Platonic form. In practice this meant that the three-staged pattern of purification-contemplation-union – having its Christian root in Origen’s Platon-Stoic three-fold division, ethike-physike-enoptike – had been transformed into something totally new by Gregory’s interpretation of Phil 3.13: ‘I do not consider myself to have apprehended. But forgetting the things that are behind, I stretch forward (ἐπεκτιένομενοι) to those that are before.’

The two biblical concepts to which Daniélou applied the idea of ‘leitmotiv of Gregory’s theological thinking’ are ἀκολουθία and ἐπεκτάσις, literally ‘following’ or ‘sequence’ (akolouthia) and ‘stretching out towards’ (epektasis). When following

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166 Cf. W. Jaeger, 1961, 93: ‘Instead of saying, “the prophet says” or “Christ says,” as would be most natural to us, he writes innumerable times, “the prophet Isaiah educates us” or the “apostle educates us” (paideuei), implying that what the Bible teaches must be accepted as the paideia of the Christian’.

167 Cf. Jaeger, 1961, 86-87; 93. Jaeger takes the ‘morphosis’ Gregory is talking about solely as a psychological, not at all (also) as an ecclesiological, ‘happening’. That Jaeger discusses the morphosis only as a ‘formative process of the human personality’ – as ‘the formation of the Christian man’, the individual, whose ‘form is Christ’ – is a major lack in Jaeger’s interpretation.

168 Daniélou’s whole study is arranged so that by its very structure it constitutes an argument concerning the sequence, the motive and the character of Gregory’s thought. What appears ‘Platonic’ in Gregory’s ‘doctrine spirituelle’, or has a Platonic coloration, is not ‘Platonism’ but Christian ‘mystical theology’. The three parts of Daniélou’s study Platonisme et Théologie Mystique (note the distinction) correspond with what he presented as Gregory’s three stage ‘light-cloud-darkness’ model of theological reflection, as a modification of Origen’s model of ethike (purification) – phusike (contemplation) – enoptike (union): I La lumière ou De la purification – II La nuée ou De la Contemplation – III La ténèbre ou De l’amour. The last chapter of the study culminates with an examination of Gregory’s concept of epektasis.

169 Daniélou relates Gregory’s idea of ‘perpetual progress’ to his notion of ‘divine darkness’ (γνῶσις) like ‘culmination’ would relate to ‘foundation’. Cf. J. DANIÉLOU 1960, 226 where the Frenchman, when addressing the ‘unceasing advance’ of the soul in the divine darkness as the ‘leit-motiv of Gregory’s mystical theory’, himself provides a note to his discussion of La ténèbre divine (p.201-211) in Platonisme et théologie mystique (1944), instead of giving note to the section omitted to the doctrine of epektasis.
the sequence of Paul’s words in Phil 3.13, Gregory came up with the ‘doctrine of perpetual progress’ which Daniélou named ‘epektasis’. There was ‘leaving behind’, ‘stretching out towards’, and things that ‘are still before’, Gregory noticed, even for St. Paul who alone saw even the ‘third heaven’ (cf. 2. Cor 12.2) where he was initiated into the divine mysteries. In Daniélou’s interpretation, Gregory’s biblical vision of epektasis effected a revolution, most of all, in the understanding of the last stage of the classical three-stage model: union. It was no longer understood as assimilation to divine gnosis, to intellectual light in the ‘sudden’ or ‘final’ ekstasis of the soul in her ‘homecoming’. Instead, there was walking by faith (pistis) not knowledge: moreover, there was no final culmination for the soul’s quest in the stage of ‘union’. Instead, there was infinite ascent in the divine presence which was darkness for the intellect. There was no ecstatic union of knowledge while there still was a union with God, according to Daniélou: a mystical union of ecstatic love between the soul and God, making the soul always stretch out towards the Bridegroom, Christ – who was, on the other hand, already dwelling the soul. Nevertheless, he was still calling: ‘Come, follow me!’

The main reason for Daniélou to regard Gregory as the ‘founder of mysticism proper’ was Nyssen’s concept of ‘divine darkness’ – which could only be a biblical concept, most definitely not Platonic. Even Plotinus who, like Gregory, had a positive concept of divine infinity and a concept of ‘knowing through unknowing’, taught ecstatic assimilation to the One in terms of light. Whereas Gregory, then, was to be regarded as the ‘father of Christian mysticism’, having a concept of divine darkness in God’s presence, the ‘grandfather’ would not be the Neoplatonist Plotinus (who, in Daniélou’s view, influenced Gregory but did not determine his decisions), but the Jewish philosopher-exegete Philo of Alexandria, who was well known by the Christian

170 Cf. J. DANIÉLOU 1944, 209; 309ff
172 In Gregory the ecstatic element in the soul’s mystical union without any final satiation is not a final state of ekstasis: ‘ekstasis’ rather defines the character of the utmost love as manifested in the activity of loving where, as Nyssen says, agape intensifies into eros. The soul never looses herself even as an object of God’s overwhelming love. Instead, her loving desire for the Beloved makes her reach outside of herself towards Christ, the beloved One who, on the other hand, also ‘comes out’ from his divinity to meet the longing soul in her sweet suffering of love.

173 Cf. J. DANIÉLOU 1944, 7; 245; 292.
It was Philo’s exegeses of Moses’ life where the concept appeared before Gregory – and it is the endorsing of the concept of the divine darkness that distinguishes Gregory from his great Alexandrian processors, Clement and Origen. It also distinguishes him from his friend Gregory Nazianzen – and from Evagrius, the close friend and pupil of Nazianzen, the desert monk in whose writings Origen’s three-fold technical division *ethike-physike-enoptike*, took the form *praktike-physike-theologia*. Daniélou apparently assumes that this division, in these terms, is technically applicable to Gregory of Nyssa’s threefold model even as the contents of his teaching is not identical with that of Evagrius’. The difference is that whereas Evagrius represents Origenian, Platonic intellectualism, where the final state is defined in terms of the ‘light of the intellect’, Gregory’s solution is distinctively ‘Christian mysticism’ emphasising *pistis* over *gnosis*. Only faith is able to ‘grasp’ God in the ‘darkness of the intellect’.

Daniélou distinguishes between the concepts of *qewri/a* and *qelogi/a* in Gregory, that is, between the second and the third stage of the Origenian model, but makes no technical distinction between *qelogi/a* and *qegognwi/a*, defined by Daniélou as the ‘mystical knowledge of God’: he translates the both Greek terms in French as ‘*la connaissance de Dieu*’. Gregory would, then, have originally an Origenian concept of

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174 Cf. J. DANIELLOU 1944, 201-209.
175 Evagrius, in fact, is the most explicit advocate of Origen. Accordingly, of the three ‘great Cappadocians’, it is Gregory Nazianzen who in his concept of theology most manifestly follows Origen closely. Cf. A. LOUTH 1981, 100ff.
176 Cf. J. DANIELLOU 1944, 200-201; 159. Cf. also A. LOUTH 1981, 87 citing Daniélou (p.159) asserting that contemplation 'has for object human realities, but seen in their celestial perspective. Knowledge takes a precise sense. It is neither knowledge of God, *theologia*, for God remains inaccessible; nor is it any longer ordinary knowledge of human things: it is supernatural knowledge of God’s plan, *oikonomia*, the history of spiritual creatures. And its own sphere is that of angels’. After this stage there is yet ‘entering the darkness’ and ‘knowing through unknowing’: this would be the final stage of *theologia* beyond *oikonomia: theognosia* as ‘mystical knowledge of God’. In Daniélou, we may notice, *theologia* is clearly distinguished from *oikonomia*, but not from *theognosia*.

Up to the present, the modern interpreters of Gregory’s important early catechesis *Oratio catechetica*, have followed Daniélou in their notion concerning the relation of the concepts of *qelogi/a*, *qegognwi/a* and *oikonomi/a* in Gregory. There is a *communis opinio* that in that particular work, Gregory gives a classical expression to the traditional Patristic distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia* by using *theognosia* as a synonym for *theologia*. This notion is nowadays upheld, above all, by the generally trustworthy introductions – such as A. GRILLMEIER 1978; 1982 and B. STUDER 1985 – to the tradition and development of Christian doctrine. In his recent study on Gregory’s doctrine of God’s *oikonomia* in *Oratio catechetica*, R. J. Kees concludes that *theologia* and *oikonomia* seek relation rather than separation in Gregory: he nevertheless maintains that Nyssen builds his catechesis upon the technical distinction
theology to which he applies the concept of divine darkness and the ideas of the unknowability of the divine essence and ‘knowing through unknowing’. As a term, θεολογία does not appear in the Bible but was taken into Christian vocabulary by Clement and Origen. Of the two terms that Daniélou treats as practical synonyms, Gregory more frequently uses θεογνωσία. The reason would be his ultimately mystical concept of theology as ‘knowledge of God’: according to Daniélou, θεογνωσία belongs to Gregory’s ‘mystical vocabulary’. In that sense, it has the precise meaning of ‘mystical theology’ whereas theologia serves also as a name of the pursuit for the mystical knowledge of God beyond language and thought.

Daniélou would appear to be right. In De vita Moysis Gregory has two names for the one ‘Mountain of God’, calling it the Mountain of θεολογία and the Mountain of θεογνωσία. In this Mountain, Moses’ makes divine ascents which Gregory follows as recounted in the Book of Exodus, first as historical narrative, ἱστορία, and then in his ἑρωιδία, contemplation, where the historical narrative is viewed according to its spiritual contents. In the second part (ἑρωιδία) Gregory asks: ‘What is the meaning of Moses’ entry into the darkness and the vision of God he enjoyed in it?’ He first addresses the infinite character of the soul’s progress and then moves on to address the incomprehensibility of God. Daniélou interprets:

Now it is clear that the point here [VM II 162-163] is not that supernatural truths are relatively obscure for the natural man; for Gregory presupposes that the soul has already been enlightened by grace, and is discussing its further progress in contemplation. After learning all that can be known of God, the soul discovers the limits of this knowledge; and this discovery is an advance, because now there is an awareness of the divine transcendence and incomprehensibility. We have then arrived at a negative, “apophatic” theology. For we have now an authentic between theologia and oikonomia. The term theologia does not actually appear in the treatise. The term used is theognosia: this has provided the modern scholarship, followed by Kees, the occasion for affirming that Gregory’s intention is to discuss theologia in the first, short part of his book, and oikonomia in the last, extensive part of the book, divided in three sections: creation, salvation in Christ and sacraments. What is very true, at least, is that Gregory held it necessary to keep the doctrine of Trinity unconfused with the doctrines of creation, salvation and sacraments. But one still wonders, why he did not use the word ‘θεολογία’ when introducing τὸ ἑκατάλθη θεογνωσίαν didaskαλία; in apparent distinction to τὸ ἕκαστον ὄρνημαν οἰκονόμην τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου? Cf. R. J. Kees 1995, 60-66. Should there be a problem in our standard interpretation of Gregory’s procedure and intention in Or cat, as I suggest there is, it was a problem shared equally by ‘spiritual’ and ‘dogmatic’ approaches.
experience, a true vision.[..] here in this obscurity the soul experiences the transcendence of the divine nature, that infinite distance by which God surpasses all creation. Thus the soul finds itself as it were elevated above all created things and at the same time lost in an infinite darkness wherein it loses its contact with things, though it is aware of God despite the total incapacity of its knowledge.  

According to Daniélou, as the citation makes clear, the concept of divine infinity (απειρία) in Gregory is initially based on experience of God’s transcendent infinity. There is, first of all, the initial experience of Paul and Moses: one can learn that God is infinite, απείρον, when following, contemplating the Scriptures. But it is also what any soul experiences when making the ascent and approaching the divine darkness. The apophatic moment in the soul’s ascent is that of ‘leaving behind’, and there would appear to be a negation (αποφάσις) when entering the divine darkness, the supreme region of infinite divine mystery where knowledge becomes love in the ‘feeling of (God’s) presence’ (αιχμής θεαματική). 

According to Daniélou’s interpretation, the ideas of apophasis and mystical theology already appear in Gregory, although without technical labels of αποφάσις and μυστική/qeologiā as later in Pseudo-Dionysius. Moreover, Daniélou found from Gregory the idea of mystical union of love in the divine, mysterious infinity. In another words, he found much reason to regard Gregory as ‘le fondateur de la théologie mystique’, in his ideas a close forerunner of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita and John of the Cross. 

177 The quotation is from J. Daniélou’s own English Introduction to his selection of texts from Gregory of Nyssa’s mystical writings, translated and edited by H. Musurillo in From Glory to Glory (1979, 1995, 2001), p. 29-30. All italics in the quotation are mine. Cf. also J. DANIÉLOU 1944, 205-206.

178 The only clear occasion where Gregory unmistakably uses the Greek term αποφάσις in a negative meaning – the word can also mean ‘statement’, ‘that which is from (apo-) the speech (phasis)’ and is hence ‘speech’ – is right here. However, it is not necessarily used in the meaning of ‘negation’: it can also be used in the meaning of ‘denial’. Indeed, Gregory is quoting St. John (who himself, according to Gregory, did penetrate ‘into the luminous darkness’), denying from us the hope of ever becoming able to ‘see God’, as he says: No one has ever seen God (cf. Jn 1.18). ‘No’ comes from the ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’; it is not ‘us’ negating something of God. The modern translations of αποφάσις vary: FERGUSSON-MALHERBE (1978, 95) gives (incorrectly, to my opinion) ‘thus asserting’; DANIÉLOU (2000, 213) and hence also MUSURILLO (2001, 29) give ‘par cette negation’ and ‘by this negation’; the latest translation by MEREDITH (1999, 105) is correct, giving ‘by this denial’.

179 Cf. J. DANIÉLOU 1944, 202-203.
The second wave of Gregory renaissance, the ‘re-thinking of Gregory of Nyssa’, emerged in 1965 with the appearance of the study *Unendlichkeit Gottes; Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der Klassischen Metaphysik* by Ekkehard Mühlenberg. As the technical title of the study indicates, whereas Daniélou regarded ‘Gregory’s theology’ as a *metamorphosis* of Platonic philosophy, Mühlenberg regarded it as the *antithesis* of the classical metaphysics which the Greeks called, since Aristotle, ‘theology’. He who took issue with Daniélou’s notion of Gregory as a mystic and introduced Nyssen as a ‘dogmatic’ rather than a ‘spiritual’ theologian, that is, as an innovative dogmatician working in a polemical context *instead* of a mystic speaking of his personal mystical experience. As seen, the notion of divine infinity (ἀπειρότης) was central in Gregory’s teaching of *epektasis*, the *infinite* ascent of the soul as she always ‘stretches out towards’ God in her longing desire for Him. Following the directions previously suggested by Hermann Langerbeck, Mühlenberg argued that Gregory’s notion of the ‘divine infinity’ generated his notion of the ‘infinite ascent’ – not *vice versa*.

Mühlenberg criticised Daniélou for neglecting Gregory’s dogmatic theology and assimilating Gregory’s teaching of *epektasis* with the *unio mystica* of Latin medieval authors. The claim of Nyssen’s ‘lack of interest’ in Plotinus’ concept of divine infinity established an important part in Mühlenberg’s argument of Gregory’s originality in the issue. Concerns for Trinitarian orthodoxy, he argued, *not* classical influences or concerns, any more than any personal mystical experiences, made Gregory what he became as a distinctive Christian thinker. In another words, the concept of divine infinity was not to be regarded as a Christian metamorphosis of an original (Neo)Platonic theme but as *quite* original concept arising from distinctively Christian Trinitarian question-setting in a polemical, dogmatic context. Gregory’s teaching was a Christian reaction to the Neo-Platonic philosophy (and the use of Aristotelian syllogisms) of his time, as represented by his adversary Eunomius who believed that

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180 Cf. H. LANGERBECK 1957, 81-90.
181 Cf. MÜHLENBRG 1965, the state of research in p. 22-25 (d-f) and discussion p. 147-151.
182 Cf. MÜHLENBRG 1965, 82-88.
divine essence is knowable and even nameable. Consequently, as the Trinitarian considerations of the polemical context generated the idea of the essential infinity of God, the same considerations would underlie the ‘negative theology’ peculiar to Gregory. In Gregory’s ‘negative theology’, the concept of divine infinity is presented as the reason for the divine unknowability. Mühlenberg pointed out that τὸ ἄπειρόν ἀλλὰ Begriff, while being formally negative, is also affirmative: God is infinite according to Gregory. If nothing else, man can always say this before God: The Infinite!  

Mühlenberg importantly stressed that the notion of divine infinity established not only Negationsmoment in Gregory but also – and more importantly in Mühlenberg’s view – Affirmationsmoment in his philosophic speculation of God. The German scholar also drew attention to the fact that the notice of divine infinity does not take place only just before and in the divine darkness: it is not only for ‘mystics’ – that is, if Gregory’s theological thinking is to be regarded ‘mystical’, and his theology ‘mystical theology’, at all! Mühlenberg asserted that it is not mystical theology: although Gregory’s ideas influenced Pseudo-Dionysius, the later author, whoever he was, did something totally different. 

Mühlenberg’s study was again a major step ahead in the process of rethinking of Gregory of Nyssa. It truly was a contribution, not least because it drew attention to the central significance of the Trinitarian polemics in the development of Gregory’s Christian vision. In one important sense Mühlenberg’s and Daniélou’s views

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184 Cf. E. MÜHLENBERG 1965, 142-143. Mühlenberg’s basic vision of the character of Gregory’s theological thinking attained support in the study of RONALD HEINE: Perfection in Virtuous life: A Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa’s De vita Moysis (1975). Importantly, Heine sought and addressed integration between what he called ‘edification’ and ‘polemical theology’ in Gregory, i.e. something that Jaeger called ‘paidea’ and ‘set of dogmas’. Heine did not agree with Mühlenberg in the issue of Gregory’s absolute originality in his notion of divine infinity. Instead of building argument on Gregory’s philosophic originality, he convincingly showed the movements within the orthodox tradition that were simultaneous with Eunomian controversy: there was criticism against Origen’s views, conducted by Origenists like Gregory of Nyssa. That Gregory was an active agent within his ‘own’ Alexandrian tradition, capable of individual and critical thinking, and was the ‘most speculative of the three Cappadocians’ besides, may indicate that his concept of qēologe is more subtle than it hitherto is recognised by the scholars.
185 It was a major step as such, and especially when supplemented with the notions of Heine’s study (which was also an important step as such).
were very similar: they both found coherency in Gregory’s thought from its distinctively Christian substance and motivation. But where there was perhaps even two steps forward that Mühlenberg took in his study, there was also one step back, not minor. Problematically, Mühlenberg’s somewhat angry and absolute rejection of ‘Gregory’s mysticism’ made the division between ‘dogmatic’ and ‘mystical’ – a division which often takes the form ‘theological’—‘spiritual’/‘mystical’ – more acute than ever in Gregory research. It thus reinforced, or even created, the phenomenon which may be called a ‘problem of two Gregories’. More than ever, research seemed to reveal – convincingly, with a good evidence – ‘Gregory the Dogmatician’ and ‘Gregory the Mystic’ instead of one Gregory of Nyssa. Somewhat unfortunately, the concept of divine infinity (a)peiri/a) which manifestly increases the consistency of Gregory’s thinking in terms of Christian dogma and theoria, became an instrument of drawing the unnecessary division between spiritual and dogmatic in Gregory, a division often too strongly drawn in Gregory studies, as in Patristic studies in general.

It is good to realise that the antithesis between ‘spiritual’ and ‘dogmatic’ that Mühlenberg’s study appears to promote, is a very ‘Jaegerian’ division. As shown above, for W. Jaeger these concepts labelled two opposite movements or tendencies of the Greek rational thought, resembling the ‘revival’ and the ‘decline’ of human intellectual powers when exercised: wherever there appeared rational thinking, then both tendencies of ‘freedom’ and ‘captivity’ of the intellectual spirit appeared as well.

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186 We naturally have to use distinctions when explaining things, but there are differences in how the distinctions are used. It is true thatDaniélou, who made much use of the distinctions between ‘spiritual’ and ‘dogmatic’ and ‘theological’ and ‘mystical’, did emphasise the significance of the spiritual context of Gregory’s thought over the dogmatic. He nevertheless also emphasised the crucial connection between ‘Gregory’s mystical doctrine’ and ‘his theology’: for him, this connection represented the ‘most important’ aspect in Nyssen’s teaching of the divine darkness. In the end, in Daniélou’s view, ‘Gregory’s theology’ as a whole (including the dogmatic aspect) was in essence ‘mystical theology’ where the ‘spiritual doctrine’, defined as the ‘most important part of his work’, was to ‘be seen as an extension of His sacramental [or ‘symbolic’] theology’, expressed and ‘concretised’ in Baptism and Eucharist, in the liturgy and the sacramental living of the Church. Unless the expression, ‘His sacramental theology’ in the text just cited is not a mistyping, Daniélou does not refer to ‘Gregory’s sacramental theology’, but to ‘Christ’s sacramental theology’. Cf. J. DANIÉLOU 2001 (the latest printing of From Glory to Glory), 22: 35-36. To say that Daniélou’s interpretation is explained by making a distinction between ‘spiritual’ and ‘theological’, clearly oversimplifies his vision of ‘Gregory’s theology’. The notions of Incarnation and Atonement, and the idea of the Word’s presence in his ‘symbols’ constitute Daniélou’s view of the ‘symbolic theology’ as applicable to Gregory.
Thus Christian theology, ‘that new philosophical and rationalized form of Christianity’, emerged, according to Jaeger, ‘at the moment when Christianity began to take issue with the ideas of the Platonic philosophy of the time and to take the form of ‘dogma’, ‘doctrine’ and ‘system’.’ In Jaeger’s view, dogmas served the need of the simple believers who sought security and comfort from a religion: the more intellectual persons were driven by a spirit that sought sublimation to knowledge (gnōsij). According to Jaeger, Gregory was as a true Christian heir of the Platonic paideia, driven by the initial Greek ‘intellectual spirit’ that was free – as ‘for Gregory Christianity was not a mere set of dogmas’, and for Gregory there was a ‘higher state of perfection and assimilation to God that of mere faith (πίστις)’.

Neither Daniélou’s nor Mühlenberg’s interpretation would at all support the claims of Jaeger, especially the last. It is true that like Jaeger, Daniélou emphasised the spiritual-mystical aspect of Gregory’s thought over the dogmatic one. However, unlike Jaeger, he also emphasised Gregory’s evaluation of faith over knowledge and the ecclesiological and sacramental aspects of Nyssen’s substantially theological concept of human unity. Moreover, Gregory’s emphasis on Incarnation and the presence of God is totally alien to Jaeger whose interpretation of the author’s thought is exceedingly anthropocentric: in Daniélou’s interpretation, the notion of l’inhabitation du Verbe, God’s parousia through faith in Christ in the heart of the believer, is central. When talking about Jaeger’s and Daniélou’s concepts of the ‘mystical theology’ of Gregory, we are talking about two different conceptions, even though the words used are the same.

In relation to ‘Jaegerian divisions’, Mühlenberg’s account is more problematic – if it was his intention at all to build an argument according to a different

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188 Therefore, one should be very careful when grasping the valuable point of A. MEREDITH 1993, 59, made by an assertion that both Jaeger and Daniélou saw in Gregory a continuator of the Platonic tradition.
structure from Jaeger’s. By fighting the ‘spiritual interpretation’ within the general context of the ‘theological line of interpretation’, Mühlenberg maintained and thus reinforced the basic view of Jaeger concerning the opposition between ‘spiritual’ and ‘dogmatic’. He insisted that ‘die Theologie der Unendlichkeit’ as the core of his dogmatische Theologie – having nothing to do with theologie mystique – is what ‘Gregory’s theology’ is all about. When compared with Jaeger’s idea, only the order was reverse in Mühlenberg’s interpretation: Gregory was innovative as a Christian defender of the Christian dogma who did not ‘decline’ into the Greek kind of human innovation, something that he was critical of when fighting Eunomius.

When it comes to the ultimate questioning of Jaeger’s ‘classical positivism’ as the other side of the coin of von Harnack’s ‘Christian liberalism’ – some serious re-thinking was done by Reinhard Hübner in a study published in 1974, Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa. Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der ‘physischen’ Erlösungslehre. Like Mühlenberg’s, also Hübner’s ‘re-thinking’ belongs to the second wave of Gregory-renaissance, where it is characteristic to objectify a problem that is present in the first. Mühlenberg operated mainly within the theological line of interpretation, criticising it for its spiritual or mystical orientation that

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189 Paideia, the most central term of Jaeger’s interpretation, means ‘education’. Jaeger wanted to alienate its original Platonic meaning from a dogmatic way of thinking – but on the other hand, the concept of ‘education’ may be easily attached to the idea of teaching something to be held as a dogma.

190 In other words, the basic model provided by Jaegerian antitheses served well Mühlenberg’s intention to deny Gregory’s spiritual motivation and his ‘mysticism’.

191 In two different ways and with two different objectives, the ‘second wave studies’ of Mühlenberg and Hübner present an antithesis to a thesis of the first wave: the third wave (which I discuss further later in the summary) is characterised by the search of some kind of synthesis. In that respect, the studies (especially the articles) of this thesis may, I hope, still be identified as the last drops of the ‘third wave’. ‘Re-Thinking of Gregory of Nyssa’ (S. COAKLEY 2003) may be considered as the ‘bell banging’ the fourth wave. My findings have much in common with those of L. AYRES and M. LAIRD, although my studies have followed their own course – independent of Ayres and Laird – moving on from a starting-point that is to be spotted from the twentieth century studies. It is possible to consider my investigations as an expression of the intellectual movements that seem to peculiar to our time, and belong to the causes of the new wave. But should my thesis as here summarised, be found to be a part of the fourth wave, what I would like to emphasise, is the fact that Gregory scholarship, obviously, has recently come to a certain common standpoint which is actually due to the restless working of the previous generations rather than to the ‘spirit of post-modernity’. So I do not celebrate the fourth wave any more than the three previous ones but see it as a ‘necessary routine of the nature’ of a research tradition that, to my opinion, has been suffering of the universal twentieth century ‘trauma’ of Hellenization. In substance, however, the research
underestimated the central importance of Gregory’s dogmatic endeavours. Hübner’s study, in turn, may be seen – partly, at least – as an apology for the original ‘theological line of interpretation’ as presented in the prolific studies of the Catholic scholars von Balthasar and Daniélou. Hübner endorses, and aims to preserve, something that he introduces as the actual intention of the Catholic research. Simultaneously he objectifies the *communis opinio* of Gregory research concerning ‘Gregory’s Platonism’ which was not alien to either von Balthasar or Daniélou. The heavy burden of critique, however, is aimed outside the original theological line of interpretation, at the architects behind the influential thesis concerning the ‘Hellenization’ of Christianity in the Patristic era: A. Ritschl and, especially, A. von Harnack.192 The Catholic scholars never became followers of the Lutheran liberal school of the history of dogma, Hübner reminds us. Their background in *die katholische Forschung* was more appropriately presented in the accounts like K. Adam (1924) and finally H. de Lubac (1938): it is from their discussion that one can detect the traits of the tradition that has sought to give an expression to the ‘Leib-Christi-Lehre’ of Gregory.193

In his study, Hübner addresses no critique to Jaeger in particular. However, the critique addressed to the Harnackian position when it comes to Gregory’s soteriology would actually apply also in reference to Jaeger. The latter’s argumentation is indebted to the former’s general idea of all Christian theology as a Hellenization of the original Christian religion of simple believers.194 When examining the supposed ‘physical doctrine of salvation’ in Gregory, Hübner forsakes – indeed, rejects – the

tradition has been very healthy and well-functioning throughout the stressful times, in the care of its good and responsible doctors sometimes disagreeing about the right therapy.

194 My approach, seeking the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought, has been different from that of Hübner who in his study examined Gregory’s doctrine of salvation in particular. Accordingly, Hübner does not discuss Gregory’s *concept of theology* as such, but what ‘Gregory’s theology’ in the particular issue of salvation is like, finding it to be *Leib-Christi-Theologie*. What I have found problematic is the very ‘Jaegerian’ concept of ‘Gregory’s theology’ that we commonly use – whatever we find it to teach or promote –, thereby accepting (either intentionally or unintentionally) the idea that ‘theology’ in Gregory is to be conceived as Jaeger defined it: a human, and characteristically *Hellenic*, enterprise of ‘striving for a philosophic understanding of what we believe’. Even as Hübner is – correctly, I think – very critical of the paradigm of Hellenization, he does not penetrate into the most basic level of the twentieth century confusion and distraction.
whole concept of ‘Gregory’s Platonism’: there would be neither ‘metamorphosis’ nor ‘antithesis’, in a word, no Platonism in Gregory. Instead, there would be a genuinely biblical idea of human unity in the likeness of God, in the one Body of Christ, the Body of salvation. According to Hübner, the too long unquestioned idea of ‘Gregory’s Platonism’ became implanted in Gregory studies with a soteriological twist. Von Harnack claimed that Gregory endorsed a ‘physical doctrine of salvation’ based on Platonic realism which provided, allegedly, the philosophic foundation for his soteriology. Hübner argues that the _platonische Interpretation_ of Gregory’s soteriology and the coincident notion of his Platonic concept of the universal human nature, repeatedly stated in _philosophie- und dogmengeschichtlichen Handbüchern_ during the first decades of the twentieth century (also in Catholic accounts), distracted Gregory research.

Hübner identifies von Harnack as not the founder but nevertheless the most successful _Propagator_ of the false interpretation of Gregory’s soteriological teaching: the distraction attained universal proportions especially after the appearance of von Harnack’s _Dogmengeschichte II_. ‘Gregory’s Platonism’ soon became the _communis opinio_ of the research, taken as given without a question – even as the Catholic scholars never actually shared the basic standpoint with the liberals. In contrast to the liberal individualistic interpretation, the Catholic scholars emphasised, instead, the _ecclesiological_ character of Gregory’s idea of the ‘one and common human nature’ as the one humanity of the Body of Christ. They did not, however, come to question the underlying assumption of Gregory’s Platonism in particular. The idea of Gregory’s Platonic concept of ‘universal human nature’ only seemed to support their notion of the social character of Gregory’s theologically motivated vision of human unity. This notion was actually based on the author’s biblical concept and theory of _die Einheit der Gottesbildlichkeit der ganzen Menschheit_. This theory is what Hübner saw as his task.

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195 The claim was that Gregory taught a salvation of the universal human nature as a physical process, rather than a salvation of an individual believer, because Christ, according to Gregory, assumed the ‘universal human nature’ (die menschliche Natur) instead of ‘individual human nature’ (ein einzelnes Menschenwesen) in the Incarnation. Cf. A. _Von Harnack_ 1889, 133-134; 1887, 165-166 – and thereof R.M. _Hübner_, 1974, 4-8.
to highlight and expose in his study, by separating from it the ingredients of ‘Platonic realism’ and ‘physical doctrine of salvation’, identified as later additions to Gregory’s original ‘Leib­Christi­Theologie’.

The concept of ‘Body of Christ theology’, used by Hübner in reference to Gregory’s soteriological teaching or the Catholic interpretations of it, is not actually often used as such, according to my observations at least, in Gregory studies. In that concept, ‘anthropology’ and ‘theology’ are inseparably related, and in the centre there is Christ. In fact, ‘body of Christ theology’ would not be a bad concept to be regarded as something that envelopes Gregory’s idea of ἡ λογική as a whole.

1.2. Breaking waves: suggestion for the biblical mould of ‘theology’ in Gregory

After my own studies on Gregory, I find that Hübner’s remarks are important and much to the point. Academic research that acknowledges and may be proud of its roots in classical paideia, must be liable to severe self­criticism in order to live up to its own ideals. In Hübner’s case, his critique becomes academic self­criticism in two senses. First of all, when he criticises one scholarly tradition from the viewpoint of another, he still nevertheless operates within one, more comprehensive tradition of academic patristic research. Secondly, although Hübner’s critique of his own Catholic scholarly tradition is very gentle and full of understanding, it is nevertheless critique. According to him, there is distraction, caused by some accepted principles of the paradigm of Hellenization, even in those Catholic interpretations he endorses.

In the end it is irrelevant whether we are Catholics, Lutherans, or Orthodox – or whatever our ecclesiastical background may be – when aiming to ‘hear’ and interpret Gregory fairly, as far as possible according to his own intention. We all need to question, anyhow, our habitual ways of thinking when approaching the intention of some other person’s discourses, especially when we do not share the context of their
presentation as contemporaries. Not as a ‘Lutheran student’, then, but quite simply as a student of Gregory aiming to understand what we all are being told by him in his discourses, in my studies I have come to adopt notions whereby I can but agree with Hübner: the paradigm of ‘Hellenization’ has served Gregory research badly. It has caused distraction. Gregory’s apophatic notion of theology is not an extension or metamorphosis of Plato’s allegory of the cave, but a wholly different notion of theology. Gregory suggests a different ‘mould’ for what is to be called ‘theology’ and challenges the classical concept from a totally another standpoint. As A. Meredith once suggested, Gregory ‘turns the platonic image [of the cave] on its head and invites us to believe that it is only in Christ, through the purifying and enlightening action of the Word, that we can approach God.\(^{196}\)

The question of ‘Hellenization’ is not out of date: the concept of theology still most often applied to Gregory’s thought in research presupposes an underlying mould that would be an adoption from the classics. I would not consider this as a bad or alarming thing as such, did I not think it creates major problems in our interpretation of Gregory, and had I not found that Gregory’s concept of theology in itself opens up remarkable insights to the deep integration of his theological and anthropological vision and thought.

When discussing the development of Christian thought, the historical as well as the philosophic approaches, searching for indications of ‘philosophic influence’ in the Fathers, have to take into account the possibility of authentic and independent philosophical potencies of religious thought, as well as their actualisations. Ultimately, it is a question of universally credible anthropology: universal use of reason and universal religious search, universal longing for God. It is a question of universal human spirituality, and the kind of universalism that notices the same humanity, intellectually equally equipped, in us all, and rises above simple historicism: the way things went in

\(^{196}\) Cf. A. Meredith 1993, 61. Gregory’s ‘turn’, however, is conducted also for Trinitarian reasons, not only because of the Apollinarian controversy, as Meredith suggests.
history is not the only way they might have gone – even though there is no escape from the historical facts.

It is a historical fact that the development of Christian thought took place in encounters with Greek culture. That is beyond question, and certainly there is also much mutual influence. I see no reason to say that there would have been no Platonic influence in Gregory’s anthropology, in how he conceived the spatial-temporal functions of the corporeal existence of the human soul and its universal longing for the ‘most beautiful and best’: God. Gregory thought that the routines of human nature and thought, human suffering, and the need and longing for God, are all universal phenomena: as such phenomena they are all known or at least knowable to all men. Neither would anyone living the life of a man be totally ignorant of God in things which can be known of him naturally and universally by all men.

Gregory’s attitude in these questions is biblical, Pauline. In Rom 1.19-20 Paul says that what may be known of God, has been manifest to all men since the creation of the world, that is, ‘his invisible attributes, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead’. In Cor 1. 18-25, Paul further advocates a distinction between natural human wisdom ‘psychologically’ discovered by the ‘spirit of man’ and divine wisdom spiritually received from the Spirit of God: the latter wisdom cannot be known by the natural man (psychikos anthropos). For St. Paul and Gregory alike, the receiving of the divine wisdom is a matter of faith, worship and reverence: of a recognition of the Lordship of Christ Jesus.

Gregory, evidently, feels free to adopt and use the cosmological and the psychological models of ‘natural wisdom’, the natural philosophy of the Greeks. But for models of ‘theology’ and ‘theological anthropology’ he has the God-inspired source, the Holy Scripture, trusted to the disciples of the Word: when approaching the Word in faith with understanding, the disciples are dependent on the instruction of the Spirit. This is the very natural ‘philosophic disposition’ of Gregory’s mind – and it is problematic only in the light of the paradigm of Hellenization, claiming that all ‘philosophic dispositions’ belong to a ‘Greek mind’ and have nothing to do with the ‘authentic’, ‘simple’ Christianity.
The findings of the present study support another kind of notion of the ‘authentic Christianity’, manifested in the subtle biblical thought of Gregory of Nyssa. His whole thought-structure is based on the distinction between the Lord and his servants, and on their relation which does not melt into an ontological assimilation even in the beatic state of the union and the divinization of the humankind. Then the ‘servants’ of the Lord are made his ‘friends’, that is, equals in his divine honour: humanity restored in Christ is perfected and exalted in him, and in the final union between God and his servants their relation is not annihilated but perfected and exalted. The Lord-servant distinction is original and authentic distinction in the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition which Gregory wholeheartedly continues. This biblical distinction underlies Gregory’s philosophical principle of theological discourse, the essential difference between the uncreated and created natures of God and man. The ‘natural philosophy’ of the Greeks infuses Gregory’s discussion of God in reference to the creation as the creation of God – but the ‘mould’ of his concept of theology as ‘speech concerning the uncreated nature’ is not derived from the classics.

The idea of ‘mould’ is very central in Gregory, called ‘type’, τούπος, in him. In his view, the Old Testament is the source of all relevant theological and anthropological types. For him, obviously, the Old Testament τούπος of theology is ‘the Mountain of God’ where God spoke to his people face to face. What God spoke, was given as a mission for his servant Moses to express and explain in human words to the rest of God’s servants. Moses, the lawgiver who delivered, according to Gregory, Christ to God’s people in the form of the Law, was the ‘type’ of the ‘true Lawgiver’, Christ himself – whose incarnation was foreshown to Moses in the Mountain in the theophany of the burning bush.

Προτεγμένη είναι η λέξη τούπος, Gregory writes in De vita Moysis (II, 158): this is an expression of the initial type, the mould that Gregory’s ‘theory of theology’

197 Gregory was not, of course, original in this view but a heir of Philo and Origen. In his typological interpretations of the Old Testament narratives, however, he drew a somewhat independent line, by concentrating, more than Origen, on the literal meaning of the text. Rather than ‘analogy’, I think, the valid name of the method of Gregory’s typological interpretation is ‘akolouthia’. For the tradition of typological interpretation of the Scripture, cf. J. DANIELLOU 1960.
depends on – even as this mould is ‘figurative’ or ‘symbolic’ rather than strictly ‘rational’. Nevertheless: the Mountain is the mould. Gregory realises that ‘mountain’ means more than only its peak. From a human perspective the mountain ‘begins’ from its foot – and from a human perspective, the mountain does not ‘end’ up in its peak: when someone reaches the peak, he cannot escape the mountain, but is still on the mountain which ‘ends’, again, in the valley. Gregory was also quite aware of the fact that Moses who went up to the Mountain of God, always also came down from the Mountain, never ‘empty handed’ without something to deliver from God. When Moses went up, Gregory interpreted the ‘solid rock’ under his feet as Christ whom he was, on the other hand, also following as the ‘divine voice’ calling him – and when he came down with the ‘tables of stone’, he was delivering Christ as God’s servant who delivers God’s will. Gregory thought that the whole Mountain proclaimed Christ on all occasions – and God’s servant Moses stayed up without coming down only when he finally died in the Mountain as a friend of God.

For Gregory, the iστορία of Moses is the ‘skeleton’ of the ‘one body’ of the whole story of theology. It attains its true ‘flesh and blood’ at the hour of the Word’s σαρκωσία, the Word’s presence (παρουσία) in the flesh – in the οἰκονομία of Incarnation.198 The Word was then seen and heard in a human body on earth, in his own person: now the Evangelists and the Apostles proclaim him openly in the New Testament, adding to the one body of the Scripture the fulfilment of the promises given in the Old. However, this is not yet the end of the ‘story of the Body of the Word’: Christ is the centre of its whole history which will come to its τέλος when everything is consummated in Christ. Everything will be first subjected to the Son who then subjects ‘himself’ – i.e., his Body, Gregory thinks – to the Father (1. Cor 15.28). Then every knee shall bow in the name of Jesus, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the Glory of the Father (cf. Phil 2.10-11). The confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the singing of God’s glory are identified as ‘theology’ by Gregory.

198 Cf. E. MOUTSOULAS 1965, cited by L.F. MATEO-SECO 2005, 197: ‘By the term σαρκωσία, Gregory understands the whole mystery of the divine economy, from birth until death on the cross and the
The whole ἱστορία of the Word manifested by and in created bodies is told us in the Scripture: for Gregory, clearly, the Scripture has the same function as the ‘Mountain of God’ where God spoke to his people. But does it all end in a book? Is Christianity quite simply a ‘religion of a book’, according to Gregory? No. In his view, like the ‘whole Mountain’, the ‘whole Book’ proclaims Christ. The divine intention behind all is that Christ should take form in us, so that ultimately the ‘whole Man’, humanity as one, would proclaim Christ in words and deeds. Christianity, in Gregory, hence is not simply a ‘religion of a book’ but the religion of Christ who takes a body and lives in us. We, the living people, the humanity created in the image and likeness of God – when living in Christ – are the ultimate end of theology in Gregory. When reflecting on St. Paul’s eschatological vision in 1. Cor 15.28 where Christ is spoken of as the Son of the Father – as the Son of the Father, Christ does not naturally have a body – Gregory says that ‘Father who loves his Son loves the Son’s body just as the Son himself: we are the Son’s body’.  

Gregory’s idea is that in the final beatitude, when we have become one human Body of the Son of God, we are the Son’s humanity and the Son is our divinity. The one Word of God is then manifest in the one Body of many members who with one Voice proclaim the divine nature to the glory of the Holy Trinity. The sequence of Gregory’s thought leads into an idea according to which humanity becomes theology defined as τολύθερον ἡμῖν αὐτών και τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ (cf. VM II 158).

What is said above sketches the outlines of my final view of the ‘biblical mould’ of Gregory’s concept of ‘theology’. According to this final view, especially the ‘philosophic line of interpretation’ of Gregory research – and the undercurrent that has been determining its course, the paradigm of Hellenization – must face the question: can one really say as W. Jaeger has done, that without Hellenic striving for a philosophic

resurrection of the Lord’. In his excellent article, Mateo-Seco shows the centrality and the connectedness of the Christological Hymns in Jn 1.1-18 and Phil 2. 5-11 in Gregory’s Christology. 

understanding of what we believe, *theology would never have arisen* in the Christian world?

The reader will discover that in the following summary the argumentation comes with a notable polemical ‘spin’ which is alien to the articles. The sole cause for the spin is in the breakthrough that took place during the studies by the discovery of the biblical substance of Gregory’s concept of theology. Without that breakthrough, the critical comments concerning the philosophic interpretations of scholars like H. F. Cherniss and especially W. Jaeger would be considerably milder, and the manifestly *polemical* spin would be non-existent. It should be realised that the polemical edge of the critique concerns the Hellenized interpretation of Gregory’s concept of theology in particular. The present writer appreciates the work of the aforementioned scholars in many respects, but sees no reason to save them from the severe criticism they deserve in the light of these studies.

What in the following will be removed from the interpretation of Gregory’s thought is not the idea of ‘philosophic influence’ in Gregory, but the basic assumption of the paradigm of Hellenization and his initially Greek theological motives and moulds of thought. Gregory uses his reason to be sure, but this does not make him ‘Greek’. With no especial drama involved, it just tells us that he is ‘man by nature’: man uses reason. The basic assertion in what follows is that Gregory’s theological thought is not a rationalization or a metamorphosis of Platonism but an authentically Christian philosophic confirmation of his Christian faith and confession. Should we like to call it ‘Gregory’s theology’, according to the ‘author’s intention’ such a procedure is legitimate only in connection with what the author, Gregory, thought the Christians as one body and in one voice (and he, as one of the members of the Body) are invited to confess and proclaim in faith in one Lord, the Word of God.
2. ONE WORD, ONE MAN, ONE VOICE: 
THEOLOGIA AND HOMOLOGIA IN AD ABLABIUM

2.1. The treatise and the problem

The issue of the relation of Trinitarian theology and anthropology is approached in the articles in the light of Gregory’s brief Trinitarian tractate *Ad Ablabium: quod non sint tres dei.* I regard it as the key-text for examining the issue in Gregory, though it is also of crucial importance to realise that it does not expose Gregory’s whole anthropological vision. However, the whole the blueprint is there.

I take it that Gregory wrote the tractate some years after the Trinitarian debates, not sooner than 385, in a non-polemical context. Its purpose is to give instruction in the spirit of St. Paul’s instruction to Timothy (cf. 2.Tim 2). As a ‘father’, he is ‘passing on the torch’ so to speak, to the younger generation, ‘sons’, represented by Ablabius: like Timothy in Paul’s second letter to him, Ablabius is called a ‘noble soldier of Christ’.

*Ad Ablabium* is different in style and tone than his other treatise on

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201 *Ad Ablabium* is traditionally regarded as one of the key texts of Gregory, especially as it comes to Nyssen’s personal advance and contribution with reference to previous Trinitarian thinking. Cf. S. COAKLEY 2003, 2-3. Especially M.R. BARNES 2000 has strongly questioned this traditional view. He has argued that, rather than the summit of Gregory’s trinitarian convictions, the treatise represents ‘a work of controversy’ with a ‘more limited trinitarian application’ than *Contra Eunomium*. While I agree that *Ad Ablabium* should not be read in isolation from CE, I believe it still can be used as an *entrance* to Gregory’s Trinitarian thinking in its most mature – provided that it is read according Gregory’s own, apophatic premises, and provided that it is not expected to offer us an immediate and full account of his views on the issue of the relation between Trinitarian doctrine and anthropology. I agree with L. AYRES 2003 that *Ad Ablabium* is about the ‘grammar’ of Trinitarian language (or pro-Nicene ‘grammar of divinity’ as Ayres puts it) Gregory thinks the Christians, guided by the Scripture, are obliged to use.

202 In agreement with ZACHHUBER 2000 and STEAD 1990 – arguing against BARNES 2000 and AYRES 2003, who propose that Abl is a polemically motivated text, written in 380-383. For discussion, cf. MASPERO 2004, 30-34;41. Besides the fact that Gregory does not refer to any particular opponent or opposing group in Abl, there is an absence of all stress and frustration characteristic of those of Gregory’s *opera dogmatica minora* that are unquestionably written under the pressure of the acute Trinitarian debates – like *Adversus Macedonianos* (GNO III/I 87-115) and *Ad Eustathium* (GNO III/I 1-16). Another later, summarising Trinitarian writing besides *Ad Ablabium* is *Ad Simplicium, De fide* (GNO III/I 59-68).

203 Cf. 2.Tim 2.3. That Gregory identifies Ablabius with the biblical figure of Timothy also suggests that the bishop of Nyssa was not in this particular treatise reacting to acute polemics, that is, was not
the same subject, *Ad Graecos (ex communibus notionibus)*\(^{204}\). The latter text would work well as a ‘working-paper’ in a council: most likely it was originally also written to be one, for the Council of Antioch in 379.\(^ {205}\) *Ad Ablabium* clearly belongs to the later phase of Gregory’s life when the Trinitarian debates were settling down and his own position among the orthodox was, generally speaking, such that he was respected as a father in the apostolic succession like his brother Basil before him. Simultaneously there still were, of course, also critical voices questioning the success of the Cappadocians’ argumentation in support of the Trinitarian recognition of God. Characteristic for works of this later period is this sense of fatherly guidance in Gregory’s works that are addressed to different selected audiences, expecting either instruction or clarification from him. This audience he meets at all levels of the hierarchy of the Church.\(^ {206}\).

*Oratio Catechetica* (*lo\(\acute{o}\)j kath\(\acute{x}\)htikoj*),\(^ {207}\) for example, is written in 385-7 – again, in the spirit of Paul – for an instruction of the ‘elders’ (cf. 1.Tim 5.17), the ‘ministers (proest\(\acute{h}\)ko\(\acute{s}\)) of the mystery of religion’ (1.Tim 3.16). In their local congregations they approach ‘the hearing of the unbelievers’ (*th|\(\acute{a}\)koh|\(\acute{t}\)\\(\acute{a}\)apistwn*) ‘according to the teaching of the word of faith’ (*tou~kata\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{h}\) didax\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{n}\) pistou~lo\(\acute{g}\)ou*, cf. Tit 1.9). They encounter questions and objections presented by their Jewish and Greek audience, possible converts, and by those who come from heretic quarters.\(^ {208}\)

\textsuperscript{204} Graec GNO III/I, 16-33.
\textsuperscript{205} Cf. R. M. HÜBNER 1971, 206.
\textsuperscript{206} It is held possible that Gregory was the author of the expanded pneumatological article of the Nicene Creed, accomplished in Constantinople 381. Whether this is in fact the case is impossible to say with any decree of certainty – but it is not improbable that Nyssen had a leading role, at least, in the drafting of the article. Cf. M.A.G. HAYKIN 1994, 199-201; W. JAEGER 1971, 56-59; G. MAY 1969, 54-57. In this light, it is small wonder if for some years after the Council of Constantinople, Gregory was expected to deliver presentations of the orthodox teaching on different issues, for various purposes and audiences.
\textsuperscript{207} Or cat GNO III/IV . Ed. E. MÜHLENBERG, Leiden 1996.
\textsuperscript{208} Or cat GNO III/IV 5.
Gregory’s catechesis, one notices, is not written directly to catechumens but to their teachers. In another words, Gregory is acting as a ‘father’ for the fathers.209

In Ad Ablabium Gregory explains the inherent logic of the recognition of God as Trinity and the Trinitarian confession of faith, by questioning the orthodox position with various reasonable and logical questions that arise in the human mind. The treatise clearly reflects Gregory’s concern for the young ministers and for those preparing themselves for the priesthood – those who will carry on in future guarding the orthodox faith against the attacks of its adversaries. To begin his instruction, he picks up the question from Ablabius that is most likely to cause uncertainty in the mind, making it ‘totter and waver’.210 This cleric, who remains otherwise unknown to us, appears to be a ‘young fighter’ full of spirit – some young ‘truth-seeker’ from the orthodox camp either challenging or willing to learn the views of his fathers. He has demanded a clear explanation to a question which is not new to Gregory:211 if we call three human persons in one human nature ‘three men’, why were we not to call the three divine persons we confess, being in one divine nature according to the confession (ομολογία), ‘three Gods’? Ablabius’ mind struggles with the problem and his question is serious: are the adversaries right? What to say to people who ask: is it not clear you teach three Gods?

209 The Second (Seventh Ecumenical) Council of Nicaea (787) confirmed Gregory in his title ‘Father of Fathers’, ὄπαθτος πατέρων, ‘named by everybody’ by that name. Cf. MANSI, Amplissima Collection Paris-Leipzig 1902. Tom xiii, col. 239. It could be that this name and reputation has its root in Gregory’s ‘formal position’ among the orthodox after the Council of Constantinople. Nyssen’s deep theological vision and its influence in the East, his good name and the historical memory carried by his good name probably saved him from the destiny of Origen. The latter was condemned for his teaching of apokatastasis in the Synod of Constantinople (543) and the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553). Gregory never became a famous ‘Father of the masses’, but his influence among all the most central Eastern thinkers is remarkable. Maximus the Confessor (560-662), for example, called Gregory the ‘Universal Teacher’ (ὁ οἰκουμενικὸς διδάσκαλος, cf. Opusc theol, PG 91 161 A). Cf. H. U. VON BALTHASAR 1995, 15; P. MAR GREGORIOS 1988, xiv.

210 Abl GNO III/I 38, 21-22. Cf. Eph 4.14. Interestingly, same pair of words ἐπιδιστάσιον καὶ κραδαίνομεν, which Gregory uses to connote the Pauline idea of ‘wind of doctrines’ throwing us back and forth, is used in VM II 243 (p. 274, 11 in Sources Chrétienes I, ed. J. DANIÉLOU. Paris, 1955) – but nowhere else. The idea of the ‘calming of the mind’ effected by good and pious doctrines appears frequently in Gregory’s writings: the use of the same expression for this idea in Abl and in VM might hint a close date of their composing.

211 Abl GNO III/I 38, 8-18.
The opening of Gregory’s answer\textsuperscript{212} – given as a father not only in apostolic succession but also in age – is slightly patronising, perhaps, but not arrogant. Perhaps he is smiling, tenderly, to himself for this young ‘challenger of the old ones’. More manifestly he shows worry for the fact that the clash of weapons is within the orthodox camp. However, he does not want to discourage Ablabius in the seeking for an answer. On the contrary, he wants to encourage Ablabius – and his like – to approach the question with a patient attitude and reverent mind: one is before a divine mystery. However, it is Ablabius and his like who need to make their mind clear in this particular issue: Gregory takes Ablabius’ problem very seriously. He is not in the least polemical, aggressive or frustrated in his answer: his attitude to the task before him is positive. He explains both the problem and his method\textsuperscript{213} carefully and clearly before starting his discourse in the issue.

The method used is, clearly, \textit{akolouthia}, the ‘seeking out of the way’ to the truth to be \textit{followed (akolouthein)} as a ‘way to the truth’.\textsuperscript{214} In this case, the question is about the most ultimate \textit{truth of faith}, the very \textit{lo
\overset{\circ}{g}o
j \ t\hbox{h}\iota\j   p\i\j\varepsilon \waj}: it concerns the mystery of faith which remains a mystery for human reason even after the way has been discovered – the mystery cannot be changed by a human decision. In practice, \textit{akolouthia} means exploring the logical sequence, the train of thought that takes the reflective mind from ‘here’ to ‘there’ when ‘there’, i.e. the destination, is known as \textit{destination} even before the actual travel begins. As with any travelling that has a definite destination, the destination cannot be re-decided on the way there – and as with any travelling, the destination \textit{can} be known as destination while what is then discovered and experienced in the destination is yet another thing. For example, one can know that one is going \textit{to} Jerusalem. But what awaits one \textit{in} Jerusalem, one finds out only after \textit{arriving} there, when one \textit{enters} Jerusalem though the city gates and becomes enriched by experience as one of its inhabitants. The inhabitants of Jerusalem ‘know’ their city by \textit{living in it}. This kind of idea applies to \textit{lo
\overset{\circ}{g}o
j \ t\hbox{h}\iota\j   p\i\j\varepsilon \waj} in Gregory:

\textsuperscript{212} Abl  GNO III/I 37, 1-15
\textsuperscript{213} Abl  GNO III/I 38,1-39,7
God is known as Holy Trinity in Christ, in faith in God who indwells the heart of the believer.\textsuperscript{215}

It belongs to Gregory’s \textit{akolouthia} method to ask reasonable questions that would seem, by a logical necessity, to prevent one ever arriving at the destination: it is necessary to ask them, even if there are no adversaries trying to block the way. If one runs into a question that cannot be solved in order to take the next step towards the destination, the destination remains unaltered while seeking the way continues. Gregory’s aim in \textit{Ad Ablabium} is to show the way – or, \textit{a way}, his account of the way, perhaps there are yet better ways – to the mystery of faith as it has descended into the words of the confession. His rational discourse that Ablabius is invited to follow with him\textsuperscript{216} – ‘our logos’ (\textit{h\(\epsilon\)\(\nu\)\(e\)\(r\)\(o\)j \(l\)\(o\)\(g\)\(o\)j}) that is seeking the way – is subordinate to the tradition of the fathers (\textit{p\(a\)\(r\)\(a\)\(d\)\(o\)\(s\)i\(j\) \(t\)\(w\)\(n\) \(p\)\(a\)\(t\)\(e\)\(t\)\(w\)\(n\)}) endowed with grace. This Tradition resonates with the word of faith from the Lord - which is what is sought after and which is what \textit{\(o\)\(m\)\(o\)\(l\)\(o\)\(g\)\(i\)\(a\)}, the Trinitarian confession, expresses. The authority of confession is authority of the divine logos, the Lord himself. In the issues of faith, when some rational explanation is sought, our logos approaches \textit{logos} that is divine. One must then know that the divine logos cannot be circumscribed and ruled by the human.

\textsuperscript{214} In what follows I explain the method in my own words. For \textit{akolouthia} cf. J.\textsc{DANIELLOU} 1970, 18-50; H. R.\textsc{DROBNER} 2000, 69-103 (esp. 83-87); P. \textsc{MAR GREGORIOS} 1988, 47-67.

\textsuperscript{215} Cf. \textit{CE} III/VII GNO II 239-236 where Gregory discusses the issue of \textit{pistis} placed before ‘\textit{gnosis} obtained from ratiocination’. What is central for the contemplation of the divinity, is the recognition of the divinity of Christ Jesus. This recognition, Gregory thinks, is a matter of faith. ‘Contemplation of the divinity (\textit{qewri\(a\) \(t\)\(h\) \(q\)\(e\)\(o\)\(t\)\(h\)\(a\)}) in the trinity of persons (\textit{e\(n\)\(t\)\(h\)\(t\)\(\i\)\(a\)\(t\)\(i\)\(n\) \(u\)\(p\)\(o\)\(t\)\(a\)\(t\)\(e\)\(w\)\(n\)})’ is attainable only when one ‘sees the door of faith’ (\textit{th\(h\) \(q\)\(u\)\(s\)\(a\)\(n\) \(b\)\(\i\)\(\varphi\)\(e\)\(i\)\(n\)\(t\)\(h\) \(p\)\(i\)\(s\)\(t\)\(e\)\(w\)\(j\)}) Christ, and does not ‘lose the gain’ which is then ready at hand, found by ‘faith alone’, \textit{d\(i\)\(a\)\(m\)\(o\)\(n\)\(h\)\(j\) \(t\)\(h\) \(p\)\(i\)\(s\)\(t\)\(e\)\(w\)\(j\)}. In the occasion, ‘knowing God’ is identified as \textit{living} in God. Gregory points out that ‘the Gospel enjoins us to behold eternal life alike in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’. ‘The Word has spoken’, he notices, ‘that to know the Father is life eternal’ (Jn 17.3). Further, every one ‘who believes in the Son has eternal life’ (Jn 3.36) – and to him who receives the Son’s grace, the Holy Spirit becomes a ‘well of water springing up to eternal life’ (Jn 4.14). Christ is not only the ‘door’ (Jn 10.9) into the life everlasting, but the Son himself \textit{is} life (Jn 14.6) and has life \textit{in} himself (Jn 5.26); in the Son the one who yearns finds in its entirety what is longed for. For the central importance of faith in Gregory’s thinking, cf. M.\textsc{LAIRD} 2004. Laird argues, unlike W.\textsc{VÖLKER} 1955, that ‘faith’ as the ‘faculty of union with God’, has \textit{technical} epistemological significance in Gregory. In his claim he moves on from the standpoint of J.\textsc{DANIELLOU} and develops further the more recent discoveries and arguments presented especially by M.\textsc{CANEVET} 1983 and B.\textsc{POTTIER} 1994 (cf. esp. p. 215).

\textsuperscript{216} Following discussion in \textit{Abl} GNO III/I 38 19 – 39, 7.
Gregory thus writes that if his solution to the problem should be proven unequal to it, the tradition received from the fathers, nevertheless, should be kept firm and unshaken. One then continues to seek from the Lord a rational explanation that agrees with our faith: should it be discovered by someone that has the grace, the Lord who has given the grace is to be given thanks. If such an explanation is not found, the faith must be kept firm based on what is known. What is known, thinks Gregory, is trustworthily expressed in the words of the confession. The logical sequence by which Gregory is going to bridge the gap between the orthodox confession and universal reason, is not an attempt to do away with the Holy Mystery of One and Three, the Trinity of God. Instead, he will explain why God is confessed as Holy Trinity. The basic answer to the question ‘why’, is: because that is the way God has revealed himself to us in Christ, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is why. The ‘reason why’ – which is known and should come as no surprise to anyone – gives the ‘question why’ the form: ‘how?’. How is it that we confess as we do, speaking that way? Gregory’s akolouthia, the presented rational sequence, shows how to ‘arrive at’ the orthodox confession of faith, uttered with one voice when celebrating God.

When showing a way to arrive at the truth, Gregory utilises an analogy questioned by Ablabius, one that he himself had used during the Trinitarian debates.217 It is the analogy that Gregory conceives as validly existing between many human persons and three divine persons218 as it comes to the one and common nature219 the persons share, each person equally and fully. Peter, James and John are not actually ‘three (many) men’, not ‘three human natures’ (‘many humankinds’), Gregory asserts, but ‘three human persons’. The human nature, the ‘man’, in them is one: it is actually a

218 In the following I use the term ‘person’ for both προσώπον and ὑπόστασις, and in cases when the English language requires an indication to an individual ‘existent’ or ‘agent’ expressed in some other way in the original Greek. In Gregory, ὑπόστασις is a more philosophical and technical term indicating individual ‘mode of existence’. When he addresses the individual operative agent in a more practical manner, the term used προσώπον. For example, when Gregory in Abl (44,16-45,3) speaks of the power and operation of ‘seeing’, the term used is προσώπον. In the treatise προσώπον appears four times and ὑπόστασις eleven times.
misuse of language to use the name denoting one and the same human nature in the plural\textsuperscript{220} when addressing the individuals Peter, James and John. Gregory’s conviction is that there is actually only ‘one man’ while there are many human persons – just as there is one God but three divine persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Gregory’s analogy has often been regarded as not the most successful move he ever made to protect himself from accusations of falling into tri-theism.\textsuperscript{221} Moreover, Gregory’s claim that the common habit of speaking of ‘many men’ is actually a case of abuse of language, has neither pleased nor convinced many of his modern commentators.\textsuperscript{222} However, in modern accounts of the analogy, its positive content has been given much attention while its negative implications have been neglected. In other words, the analogy has not been interpreted according to the \textit{apophatic premises} that are necessary for its interpretation in \textit{Ad Ablabium}. The analogy has been discussed, instead, in isolation from its authentic context, as a classical question concerning the relation of \textit{koinon} and \textit{idion}.\textsuperscript{223} This classical question is by no means irrelevant in and for Gregory, but it does not take us into the theological centre of his thought. Moreover, ‘the way of Gregory’ has not been followed, but ‘a step’ has been regarded as ‘the way’.

In the original context, Gregory does not say all he has to say about the divine oneness by his ‘three-man analogy’. As a step towards a more complete vision and definition, it is much more ingenious than its reputation would allow us to think - from theological, as well as from anthropological point of view - when discussing the differences and similarities of divine and human oneness. Importantly, Gregory’s idea of ‘one man’ is not a forced but an integrated part of his Christocentric anthropology.

\textsuperscript{219} In \textit{Abl} Gregory favours the term ‘nature’ \textit{\textguillemotright} \textit{\textguillemotright}, used sixty-two times, over the more formal term ‘essence’, \textit{\textguillemotright}, used only four times. C.G. Stead suggests that this indicates the relatively late date of the treatise. Cf. C.G. STEAD 1990, 150.

\textsuperscript{220} \textit{Abl} GNO III/I 40, 5-8

\textsuperscript{221} Cf. A. MEREDITH 1995, 108-110; 119 summarising the somewhat common verdict.

\textsuperscript{222} Cf. G. C. STEAD 1990. Stead, however, has very little understanding of Gregory’s apophatic standpoint.

\textsuperscript{223} In \textit{Graec} (GNO III/I 19-33) Gregory concentrates more on the question of the \textit{common notions} of the Greeks and discusses the issues that appear also in \textit{Abl} from the traditional Greek philosophical point of
What is often problematic in the modern accounts of the Trinitarian thinking of Gregory of Nyssa, is that it is evaluated by standards of human logic in a way that fails to appreciate the position held by the author himself. Gregory never claimed that God’s tri-unity itself could be made a logical fact for our created reason. Instead, he emphasised that human reason is unable – even in final beatitude – to comprehend the uncreated, infinite reality where there are no distinctions.

Some scholars say that Gregory’s teaching disappoints us by being unable to present a conception of ‘numeric oneness’ of God but only ‘generic’ instead – but what does this really mean? Most certainly God is one according to Gregory; but as certainly he is not trying to do away the three divine prosopa or hypostaseis of the one God in whose untold and one ‘unnameable name’ Christians are baptised, as they are baptised in the one name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Why should we

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view, as questions of formal logic. In Abl the emphasis is on what human reason perceives of God when it hears that God – who is confessed in three persons named in the Scripture – is one.

224 Cf. A. MEREDITH 1999, 16 expressing how Gregory fails in Ad Ablabium: the defence of ‘his position’ is ‘not wholly successful partly because Gregory endeavours to operate with an idea of substance which belongs neither to Plato or Aristotle.’ What this idea implies, well describes the expectations we have: Gregory’s ideas should ‘belong’ to either Plato or Aristotle in order to be ‘successful’ or ‘satisfactory’.

225 According to Gregory, the divine form of existence is ‘adiastematic’ (a)dia/statoj), it means, there are no distinctions and intervals, no extension or dimension in the divine phusis and einai. It is usually pointed out that ‘apophasis’ (when conceived as the principle behind the notion of the essential unknowability of God) in Gregory of Nyssa is based on his notion of the divine infinity, a)peiri/a – but his notion of the divine a)diatasi/a is not any less constitutive for his line of apophatic thinking. Cf. the third article of this dissertation discussing the constitutive elements of the ‘apophatic system’ of Gregory of Nyssa. I find that Gregory did not just ‘improvise’ his distinctive apophaticism, but was being very ‘systematic’ in his apophatic thinking according to what he held to be revealed of God in the ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’. On the one hand, the biblical saints are silent about the essence of God, and on the other hand, they explicitly deny to us a knowledge of some form: Gregory thinks that the ‘denied form of knowledge’ is a knowledge of the essential nature of God.

226 Cf. the first article of this dissertation (esp. 2.1. Specific oneness of God). All the Cappadocians held – just as Basil argues in De Spiritu Sanctu 18 – that the Trinity is not a matter of arithmetical numbers. Cf. V. LOSSKY 1963, 24.

227 According to Gregory, the ‘one name’ in the baptismal formula in Matt 28.19 stands for one essence: what this name is, is not told us in the Scriptures. Thus in CE I 683 GNO 222, 24-25 Gregory plays with words and writes that God ‘has one name to indicate his own nature, [the name] that it is above every name’. In another words, the only ‘name’ we have for the divine nature is its ‘namelessness’.

228 Cf. Ref Eun 1 and 3 GNO II 312,1-4 and 313 9-13: ‘The Christian faith, which in accordance with the command of our Lord (kata\tau\i\ pro\st\agma tou-kurib\u) has been preached to all nations by his disciples, is neither of men, nor by men, but by our Lord Jesus Christ himself (ou\d\e\ e\ta\ a\h\er\i\p\h\i\n e\st\i\b\ ou\j\e\d\i\ a\h\or\i\p\h\i\n, a\l\a\l\i\d\i\ a\b\o\u\t\ou\kurib\u h\h\i\n\i\h\s\ou\krist\o\u\y...’ We believe, then, even as the Lord set forth the faith to his disciples, when he said: Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the
feel uncomfortable or embarrassed for him, for not doing away the divine persons to clear the way for some more neat and intelligible human concept of God? Gregory is often suspected of having a concept of Christianity as a system of knowledge – but is it not rather we who ‘Hellenize’, intellectualise Christianity when expecting it from Gregory? He is seriously expected to be able to give us logical proof - as a theologian, by means of the ‘divine science’ of theology - that the number ‘three’ is ‘one’.

In the end, it seems, it is really we modern readers who are obsessed with knowledge – not Gregory – when we feel disappointed that in the end the Cappadocian fails in his project to ‘intellectualise the supraintellectual’. We suspect that there is some confusion in Gregory’s concept of unity. But is it not rather the Evangelist John who initially was ‘confused’ enough to ‘fail’ in intellectualising something for us, when he reports Jesus saying things like: I pray for them…that they may be one as we are…- so that all may be one as you Father are in me, and me in You, so they may be in us…-so that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me so that they could be completed into one, that the world may recognise that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me (Jn 17. 20-23).

Instead of trying to reduce Gregory’s concept of unity into the classical mould, one might rather go to the source of his ‘confusion’: the main ‘philosophical source’ for this confusion is not too hard to find. The ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’ is a philosophical source for Gregory – rather, the very Source of philosophy. Gregory is convinced that in the Scripture, the Father communicates his Word to us in his Spirit. In the Scripture, the Son and Word who is the divine Wisdom loved by his Father speaks to us, in his Spirit, words of love. And in the Scripture – which Gregory defines as ‘the man-loving oikonomia of the Spirit’229 – our Instructor who informed the saints230, the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, delivers us Christ, the Power and the Wisdom of God whom the Christians love.

name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28.19). This is the word of mystery (οὐ̣το̣ς τὸ τῆς μυστηρίου ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Άγίου Πνεύματος Tw 32 GNO I 1078. 229 Cf. CE II 225 GNO I 9-23.
In the Scripture, according to Gregory’s view, someone who wishes to be a ‘friend of wisdom’ finds, in the one person of Christ, both the friend and the wisdom one is looking for: in Christ, one has the whole summit of all ‘love of wisdom’ one could ever desire. The Truth and Light shining from the Cross – which Gregory calls theologos silently proclaiming Christ\(^{231}\) – remains, however, foolishness to the ‘wise of the world’. Any rational philosophic discourse, in Gregory’s view, should lead us to a wonder whereby human words are silenced,\(^{232}\) not to a rational explanation of God doing away the divine mystery and our wonder before the essential wonderfulness of the Holy Trinity. We might pick up a fitting comment from Gregory:

> [W]e confess only, that it is not possible that that which is by nature infinite (e\(\acute{t}\)i to\(\acute{a}\)riston \(\kappa\)ata\(\acute{t}\)h\(\acute{h}\) f\(\acute{u}\)sin) should be comprehended in any conception expressed by words. The fact that the divine greatness has no limit (of\(\acute{o}\)n), is proclaimed by the prophesy, which declares expressly that of His splendour, His glory, His holiness, ‘there is no end (ouk e\(\acute{t}\)i \(\pi\)\(\acute{e}\)\(\acute{f}\)\(\acute{a}\)j; Ps 144.3 LXX)’: and if the surroundings have no limit (ta\(\acute{a}\) peri\(\acute{e}\)\(\acute{l}\)h \(\alpha\)\(\acute{u}\)\(\acute{t}\)h \(\alpha\)\(\acute{p}\)\(\acute{e}\)\(r\)\(\acute{a}\)\(l\)w\(\acute{a}\)\(\acute{t}\)a), much more is He himself in his essence, whatever it may be, comprehended by no limitation in any way.

If then interpretation by way of words and names implies by its meaning some sort of comprehension of the subject, and if, on the other hand, that which is unlimited (to\(\acute{d}\)e\(\acute{e}\)\(n\)\(\acute{e}\)\(\acute{t}\)i \(\alpha\)\(\acute{p}\)\(\acute{r}\)\(\acute{i}\)\(\acute{s}\)\(\acute{t}\)on \(\pi\)\(\acute{e}\)\(r\)\(\acute{l}\)h \(\phi\)\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{m}\)\(\acute{a}\)i \(\o\)u\(\acute{d}\)\(h\)\(\acute{a}\)\(t\)ai) cannot be comprehended, no one could reasonably blame us of ignorance, if we are not bold in respect of what none should venture upon. For by what name can I describe the incomprehensible, by what speech can I declare the unspeakable?

\(^{231}\) Cf. Trid spat GNO IX 299-303; CE III/III 30-40 GNO II 118.14-122.9.

\(^{232}\) RAOUl MORTLEY 1986(b), 177 has pointed out that Nyssen ‘advocates a generic negation of epithets…but in the case of negation itself, Gregory offers a blanket negation of all names.’ According to Mortley, there is ‘no discussion of the logic of negation in the manner that is to be found in Proclus…there is no ‘via negativa, in the sense of a way or a technique to be syntematically pursued’. Mortley is right: ‘Gregorian apophasis’ is not identical with Neoplatonic ‘apophatic theology’. In Gregory, the human mental act of negation (apophasis) does not constitute the way of the mind to transcend itself. Rather, the elevation of the soul into the ‘divine darkness’ can take place only when the human logos allows itself to become subjected, in faith, to the divine denial (apophasis) which is proclaimed by God’s saints in the God-inspired Holy Scripture. Cf. VM II 163 (SC I) where Gregory writes that ‘the sublime John who penetrated into the luminous darkness, tells us that no one has ever seen God (Jn 1.18), teaching us by this denial that knowledge of the divine essence is unattainable (t\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{e}\)\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{e}\)\(\acute{i}\)\(\acute{a}\) j \(\o\)u\(\acute{b}\)a\(\acute{a}\) \(\t\)h \(\gamma\)\(\mu\)\(\nu\)\(\acute{s}\)\(\acute{i}\)n a\(\acute{f}\)\(\acute{e}\)\(k\)\(\acute{t}\)on \(\e\)\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{a}\)\(l\)h \(\h\)\(\acute{a}\)\(\acute{p}\)\(\acute{o}\)\(\acute{a}\)\(s\)\(\acute{t}\)h \(\o\)\(\acute{d}\)\(i\)\(\acute{o}\)l\(\acute{h}\)\(\i\)\(\acute{d}\)\(i\)\(\acute{p}\)\(\acute{i}\)\(\acute{s}\)\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{h}\)\(\acute{e}\)\(\acute{m}\)\(\acute{a}\)\(\acute{n}\)\(\acute{a}\)) not only by men but also by every intelligent creature’. In short ‘apophasis’ in the sense of divine ‘denial’ belongs, according to Gregory, to the essentials of the ‘divine philosophy’ of the Holy Scripture. After the subjection to the divine denial, there remains an infinite amount of wonderful ‘things’ to be learned of God, things that are communicable only in part, if at all, through analogies.
Accordingly, since the Deity is too excellent and lofty to be expressed in words, we have learned to honour in silence what transcends speech and thought. And if he who thinks more highly than he ought to think, tramples upon this cautious speech of ours…and recognises a difference of unlikeness in that which is without figure, or limit, or size, or quantity, I mean in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit…we shall follow the advice of the prophet, and not fear the reproach of fools (Is 51.7), nor be led by their reviling to talk too boldly of things unspeakable[. We make] that ‘unpractised’ speaker Paul our teacher in the mysteries that transcend knowledge, who is far from thinking that the divine nature is within the reach of human perception, that he calls even the judgements of God ‘unsearchable’ and his ways ‘past finding out’ (Rom 11.33), and affirms that the things promised to them that love Him, for their good deeds done in this life, are above comprehension, so that it is not possible to behold them with the eye, nor to receive them by hearing, nor to contain them in the heart (1. Cor 2.9).

For Gregory, the transcendent being and existence of God is supraintellectual reality of Love, known as love by the ones that love him. God is known not least in the fact that this utmost divine reality of love one joins through faith is beyond human comprehension. Gregory never attempts intellectually to penetrate beyond what God allowed to Manoah (cf. Judges 13.18) who asked to know his name (ονόμα). ‘Why do you ask this – it also is wonderful (καμάστον)!’ was the answer from God: Gregory

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233 CE III/1 103-106 GNO III/1 38, 17-39, 25. Gregory is on the occasion answering to the accusation: you worship you know not what! The Eunomians claimed that Basil and his supporters were like the Samaritan woman of Jh 4.22. One may notice that in the cited passage Gregory addresses 1. Cor 2.9, pointing out that it is not possible to behold the divine things with the eye, to receive them by hearing, or to contain them in the heart. Paul hence distinguishes between ‘sight, hearing and understanding’ in a manner that is typical of the Scripture in general. Gregory thinks that in the divine logos that knows no diastema, such distinctions do not exist. The human logos, however, is diastematic: the ‘seeing’ of something that is ‘looked at’ and contemplated, becomes ‘understanding’ or ‘knowledge’ only as the inner discourse of the mind succeeds in ‘hearing’ something correctly of the contemplated object. The biblical triad of sight, hearing and understanding hence constitutes Gregory’s idea of divine contemplation (theoria) as an infinite ‘interplay’ between sight, hearing and vision when following the Logos. In that akolouthia, each ‘vision’ becomes a new intellectual ‘sight’ to be, again, spiritually ‘heard’; ‘hearing’ leads into new understanding, a new ‘vision’ which, however, cannot grasp God – but becomes a new ‘sight’. The intellect, apparently, gets its share, as the love and presence that is experienced in faith ‘in the darkness of the intellect’, always seeks some expression, but the intellect cannot ever ‘conclude’ with God, or give ‘one name’ to him. The infinite sequence is hence ready: epektasis, where the divine logos is infinitely followed into all eternity in the eternal growth of theognosia which comes through ‘hearing’. Cf. the fourth and the fifth article of the dissertation. Recently M. LAIRD 2004 has validly discussed the issue of the ‘grasp of faith’: human intellect is given its bit in the process. Faith has also epistemological value, but that fact does not measure the value of faith that enjoys the presence of God and the union of love.
explains that 'by this we learn that there is one name significant of the divine nature, the wonder (qā u mā), namely, what arises unspeakably in our hearts concerning it'.

Attempt at 'intellectualising the supraintellectual' is how Werner Jaeger defined Gregory’s approach, when with much classical enthusiasm improvising his version of Gregory as Hellenizer. No matter how well the slogan might, perhaps, fit Origen’s ‘project’ – and while Gregory may be called ‘Origenist’ in many respects – most certainly the term is unsuitable for defining in what business Gregory considered himself to be. The ‘hazardous attempt to intellectualise the supraintellectual’ might have ‘called into being’ what we nowadays call ‘speculative theology’ as Jaeger has asserted – but the concept of ‘speculative theology’ is not what Gregory was ‘improvising’ from the elements of Christianity and Greek philosophy.

One does not want to criticise Jaeger either for his magnificent work in classical studies and in Gregory research nor for the fact that he loved Gregory’s

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234 CE III/VI 4 GNO 187 4-11.
236 The ‘polemical context’ of Origen and Gregory is very different, almost contrary. Whereas Origen still ‘fought’ for the intellectual, philosophical relevancy of faith and Christianity, Gregory already had a Creed, a Confession of the Christian faith to defend. A major part of ‘Gregory’s project’ was to defend the religious essence of Christianity against rationalist tendencies that also had Alexandrian, Origenist origin. Cf. P. Mar Gregorios 1988, 217-235 (a very fair view); R. Heine 1975. It also should be remembered that the Cappadocians did not begin theological schools in Cappadocia but monasteries.
237 Cf. Jaeger 1965, 72-73, and 22: ‘As Greek philosophy culminated in ‘theology’, though on purely rational level, so Christian religion was on its highest level to become ‘philosophy’, i.e. speculative theology.’
238 What Jaeger annihilates from the thought of Gregory are the intrinsic cultural models of the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition which are predominant in his writings, starting from the Mosaic Law and culminating in the concept of Church as the Body of Christ. Jaeger takes no interest of Gregory’s notions of the body of Christ – and in his opinion, obviously, the Law of Moses may well be by-passed because Plato, too, composed a treatise named ‘Laws’. He insists: ‘Plato derives the paideia of his Laws from the divine nous. Greek philosophical education offered a complete analogy to Christian theology as Gregory understood it… He uses the Greek forms as the structural model of a fully developed culture, and by way of comparison he creates for each of them a Christian variant in the classical mold.’ Jaeger admits that this Christian ‘variant’ is ‘at the same time clearly differentiated’ from its ‘classical mold’. He has an explanation: ‘It could not have been done otherwise. Greek culture, of course, was the product of many centuries. The attempt to take it over in a productive way and make it the instrument of the new religion was stimulating for both the traditional culture and for the Christian mind, but the result was necessarily an improvisation’. Cf. Jaeger 1961, 98-99. But neither was the culture of ‘Israel’, that of ‘Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’, born yesterday – Jaeger, however did not regard Judaism as fully developed culture, able to provide models and moulds manifesting ‘philosophy’, the loving of wisdom.
239 Jaeger’s ‘Two Rediscovered Works…’ (1965) is an admirable master-piece of scholarly art in its given task, that is, in showing that De instituto Christiano belongs to the Gregorian corpus. Jaeger had excellent
ascetic writings as much as he loved the classics. But his interpretation of ‘Gregory’s theology’ can be regarded as the most classical example of the fact that the final Hellenization of Christianity was not conducted in the 4th century but in the 20th instead, by its haters and lovers alike. We still carry on with some ideas that are part of this 20th century Hellenization. While it is commonly admitted that Jaeger ‘tended to over-stress Gregory’s indebtedness to classical tradition’,240 not many have seen the problem in how he maintains that Gregory much contributed in creating ‘that new philosophical and rationalized form of Christian religion, theology.’241

We are quite happy to say with Jaeger that Gregory is a ‘speculative theologian’. And why not, if we choose to do so – as we apparently have chosen. Indeed, one finds much speculation from Gregory in theological issues. The problem, however, is that we feel too confident that Gregory himself would be as happy as we are with the title. According to Gregory, the use of words is based on human conventions and habits, as he says in Ad Ablabium. Was he to hear how strong our prevailing convention is in the way we use the words ‘theology’ and ‘theologian’, he might,

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240 Cf. A. MEREDITH 1999, 27.
241 Cf. W. JAEGER 1965 73.
perhaps, say: ‘All right, it was to be expected – but I hope you got my point, did you?’

One suspects that the point has not been taken in the best possible way.

The thing that is constantly causing problems in the interpretations of Gregory’s theological thinking lies in what kind of concept of theology we presuppose applying to and in it. We speak of ‘Gregory’s theology’. We may do so, and it is hard not to do so as we need, anyway, some universal concept to connote philosophic speculation or theory of God in several different authors. But, in the case of Gregory at least, we should not do so without realising what we are doing. We are using the concept in a way that Gregory himself never used it – and he used it actually very seldom, and not quite in the same manner as his Alexandrian fore-runners and contemporaries. The fact that Gregory was probably the most speculative and subtle

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242 ‘Theological’ – περιτολεγέν – is relevant ‘Gregorian vocabulary’. Cf. Eun III I 54 GNO II 22, 25-26 where Gregory speaks about ὑπολογεὶ τὸ περιτολεγέν, ‘theological notions’ in distinction to ‘anthropological notions’ (ὑπολογεὶ τὸ περιτολαγῶρ πινόν) in reference to the one person of Christ. In Gregory’s view, there can be ‘theological speculation’ proceeding according to a logical sequence (ακόλουθοι), meditating and also producing conceptual notions concerning the divine. Theological speculation, however, is not ‘theology’ itself but ‘philosophy’ following (ακόλουθοι) the inherent sequence (ακόλουθοι) of theology proclaimed in the God-inspired Holy Scripture. In Gregory, theology does not name the something that is ‘merely an inventive approach’ as von Balthasar 1995, 172 suggests, but, instead, the ‘divine discourse’ which may be ‘inventively approached’ in a reality where the divine nature forever remains undiscoverable for the human intellect. In his definition of theología in Gregory, von Balthasar clearly utilises what he has noticed (cf. Ibid, 91) to be Nyssen’s definition of epinoia in CE II 182 GNO I 277, 20-21: ήτι... (ἐπινοια ἐφοδιασθείσα) ἑυθεία τοιν οὐκομνημονεύω, ‘epinoia is an inventive approach to the unknown’. The identification of theología as epinoia is problematic because, ultimately, it leads into a conclusion that theology is a human invention – whereas Gregory’s idea would rather seem to be that the words and concepts used in theology are human inventions produced through the exercise of the divine gift of epinoia. J. Daniélou 1970, 19 is more successful in approaching Gregory’s idea of theology when he addresses akolouthia as the leit­motiv of all Gregory’s thought. Akolouthia, ‘following’, immediately intimates the idea of the ‘subject which follows’ and the ‘object which is followed’. In theological reflection, man ought to be led not by his own inventive faculty of epinoia and his own logos but by the divine logos which is ‘already there’ to be followed. When the human mind is freed from the ‘bondage of creation’ in the contemplation of God, the human logos goes in pursuit towards a due recognition of the divine logos which is not ‘human invention’ but which the human inventions must accord with when identifying a reverent notion of God. Cf. CE II 136 GNO I 265, 7-10: ‘The purpose of the words that concern God (ἐν τοὶ περίλεγου-λογοὶ) is not to think up (ἐπινοιαί) resounding and harmonious verbal beauty, but to identify a reverent notion (έυσεβὴς διανοιαν εὐερεία) by which what befits the thought of God may be kept intact (τὸ πρέπον τῷ ὑπολογεὶ τὴν περίλεγου-μαζασικὴς).’ ‘Theological reflection’ which one is invited to conduct as a follower of theology is a hermeneutic pursuit: it is not itself ‘theology’ inventing things.

243 Cf. the problem-setting and the discussion of the fourth article of this dissertation.

244 I am not suggesting that we should stop talking about ‘Gregory’s theology’. It is only that we must be very careful not to import thoughts alien to Gregory’s conception when using the term ‘theology’ with reference to Gregory’s theological thought and speculation.
Christian thinker of his time – which is the reason we rightly like to call him a ‘speculative theologian’ – enabled him to ‘swim upstream’ against the currents of his time, not least when it comes to his contemporary customs in the use of the word ‘theology’.

Modern scholarly discussion, quite innocently in most cases, upholds – one might dare to say – the illusion that Gregory contributed much to developing a concept of ‘Christian theology’ as a Christian variant of the Greek concept of ‘philosophy’ or ‘paideia’. Those who do not read the actual sources of Gregory, but only modern patristic literature and textbook accounts of ancient Christian thought, must be quite convinced that Gregory loved to use the word ‘theologia’ for connoting ‘philosophic theory of God’ or ‘divine speculation’.\textsuperscript{245} Such idea, however, cannot be derived from Gregory’s extremely rare and obviously very controlled use of the term. Instead it must have its origin in our habit of using the term when talking about Gregory’s philosophising about God. Partly the illusion is due to Gregory’s frequent use of the title ‘theologian’ in \textit{Contra Eunomium}: the way he uses it there, would seem to support our habit. But we should take a closer look and notice who alone is called \textit{theologos} in all the three books of \textit{Contra Eunomium} and in \textit{Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii}. It is not Basil. It is not even St. John the Evangelist who, according to Gregory’s words in \textit{Contra Eunomium}, ‘proclaims theology’ and who is elsewhere (but only once) addressed by the title of ‘\textit{theologos}’\textsuperscript{246} by him. So, neither he himself nor

\textsuperscript{245} Even VLADIMIR LOSSKY, who has recently been attacked (by R. M. Barnes and many others) for drawing unnecessary distinctions between the ‘Eastern’ and the ‘Western’ theological traditions, writes in his ‘\textit{The Vision of God}’ (1963, p. 66) that in Basil (and in the Cappadocians in general, including Gregory of Nyssa) ‘trinitarian theology becomes theology \textit{par excellence}, where speculation is inseparable from contemplation, where thought surpasses concepts without however forsaking its characteristic faculty of reflection or discernment’. ‘Speculation’ and ‘contemplation’ may be inseparable in all the Cappadocians alike, but especially in the case of Gregory of Nyssa one should be cautious when identifying this ‘unit’ as ‘\textit{theologia}’.

\textsuperscript{246} Theod GNO X,1 71,5. Also John the Baptist is once called (but not ‘labelled’ as) \textit{qēlo|qēlo|qēlo} in \textit{Steph II} (GNO X/1, 102,8) in the middle of a very intensive explanation of how the prophets and apostles shone light which was not ‘theirs’ but Christ’s. Gregory indicates that the Baptist was the \textit{only one} shining light in his time, when he began his preaching before Jesus started his public preaching and teaching. Nyssen writes: “I have prepared a light for my Christ” (Ps 131.17, lxx). That is, I have prepared a helper and precursor for the light. The Lord confirms this voice of the Father by saying, ”He [John the Baptist] was a burning lamp” (Jn 5.35). However, such a light withdrew and became obscure at the Lord's coming who was the ‘sun of righteousness’ (cf. Mal 3.20). In this way, the Baptist might radiate all the more as a
Basil, neither Paul nor Moses, not even John, but the adversary Eunomius is repeatedly called a theologian in Contra Eunomium.247

In Gregory’s view, Eunomius reveals a ‘God’ that actually is his own philosophic theory. Eunomius himself, so Gregory indicates, is the initial agent of his God-talk: he is ‘the theologian’ authorising ‘his theology’ proclaiming that ‘private God’ of his. In Gregory’s account, Eunomius is ‘a foreigner in worship’248 as he is

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247 Eunomius is spoken of as qeologia sixteen times, always in a negative sense. If Gregory had really been a continuator of the classical tradition as W. Jaeger clearly thought he sought to be, he would not have found it problematic, somehow, to attach the title ‘theologian’ to himself any more than to his admired teacher Basil. If he however was a Christian follower of the classical tradition, this would have been the most natural thing for him to do. But as he wanted to follow the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition based on the notion of ‘God who speaks’ according to his divinity, One may also notice how reluctant Gregory is to call anyone a ‘theologian’. Paul and ‘Peter, James and John’ are mentioned soon after the passage just cited, but they are not severally nor together called theologians. Instead: ‘Together they hold special rank among the other apostles, and their courage does not belong to human reasoning but is in accord with the judgement of divine truth.’ John the Evangelist, as usual, is referred to as the ‘leader of the chorus’: probably the reason why Gregory was ready to consider John as ‘the theologian’ was that he was also considered as the leader of the celebration of Christ’s divinity and the Holy Trinity among the biblical saints.

248 ‘Foreigner in worship’ is how Gregory in De vita Moysis identifies the ‘Egyptian’ Moses kills (cf. VM II 13-15). The ‘killing’ stands for the absoluteness of the decision to follow the Israelite religious path of reverence and worship of the one, true God, in the spirit of Lk 16.13: ‘No one can serve two Lords.’ Also pagan philosophy is ‘foreign worship’, idolatry, basically because it is ‘opposed to Hebrew teaching’ and ‘resists the truth’. However excellent in natural philosophy, in theological issues the foreign paideusis partakes the stubbornness of the symbol of the evil Emperor, Pharaoh, in that it does not ‘listen to Yahweh’ and thus does not know him (cf. VM II 35 for Exod 5.2: ‘Who is Yahweh, that I should listen to him? I do not know Yahweh.’). In its refusal to repent (cf. VM II 86) and turn to Yahweh, it does not worship the one Lord of all creation: it does not properly distinguish between the created human logos and the Logos which is divine and uncreated. Pagan philosophy thus makes an idol of the created logos – i.e. worships creation – and its theological conception remains too ‘fleshy’ (cf. VM II 39). The foreign paideusis, however, is not evil as such: it is good in the service of the Truth it cannot master and circumscribe. When everything which is ‘hurtful and impure’ is circumcised and cut off from ‘what is taught by philosophy’s generative faculty’, the profane moral and natural philosophy may become ‘a comrade, friend and companion of life to the higher way’: it then follows the divine teaching just as the
idolising his own word ‘Un-begotten’ as God. Theology, for Gregory, we may infer, is something other than originally human theory or doctrine, or human speculation about God – while simultaneously it is something that can be heard and proclaimed in human words.

All in all, one should not believe those voices that say like Harold Cherniss:

[Except] for some few orthodox dogmas which he could not circumvent, Gregory has merely applied Christian names to Plato’s doctrine and called it Christian theology.

Gregory knows and utilises Plato’s dialogues, obviously, but he does not do what Cherniss claims that he does. Not many nowadays regard Cherniss – whose presupposition, as David Balás has pointed out, is that faith and reason are two incompatible sides of human mentality – as a safe guide to Gregory’s thinking. His a priori premise, based on a narrow and incredible anthropology which is hardly really

foreign wife followed Moses who was led by the Word. The circumcision of the ‘natural son’ of Moses, the Israelite, and his ‘foreign wife’ symbolises, according to Gregory, the ‘healthy’ or ‘balanced’ relating of the wisdom of the Israelites and the foreign wisdom, the divine ‘theological’ and the natural human ‘philosophical’ knowledge. Hence Gregory says that when the ‘fleshy and alien foreskin’ of pagan philosophy has been completely removed, there remains ‘the pure Israelite race’, ready to reverence the one Lord of all creation and to give birth to virtue. Cf. VM II 35-41.

In other words, Eunomius partakes the ‘error of the heathen’. H. CHERNISS 1930, 62. J. ZACHHUBER 2000, 7 points out that Cherniss is ‘sober and rather philosophically minded’. However ‘sober’, Cherniss nevertheless is wrong about Gregory – not just in my opinion but also in that of many others: as Zachhuber says, Cherniss’ interpretation has been criticised in most studies after 1940s.

I totally support to the critique presented by D. BALAS 1966, 16.

When it comes to the ideas presented in 1930s before the beginning of the ‘Gregory renaissance’, scholars have followed, rather, the line of interpretation represented by Endre von Ivánka. Cf. E. VON IVÁNKA 1936, 163-195 and E. VON IVÁNKA 1964. Von Ivánka’s idea is that Gregory was not an uncritical follower of Plato but accepted Platonic ideas and structures into his thought in their Neoplatonic form from Plotinus’ Enneads. However, with due acknowledgement of the merits of Ivanka’s notions, in his profound study Cosmic Man (1988, cf. p. 18-21) P. MAR GREGORIOS suspects that even von Ivánka still remains ‘caught in the categories of western thought and seeks to force Gregory of Nyssa into a Platonic-Neoplatonic mould.’ By this argument, Mar Gregorios criticizes also the interpretation of Werner Jaeger and other competent scholars who feel ‘that Gregory is a Platonist since the essentials of Platonism which Gregory has chosen for his thought are the true essentials of Platonism.’ I agree with Mar Gregorios that there has been strong tendencies in Western twentieth century scholarship to force the thought of Gregory into the moulds of Greek philosophy. Together with A. Meredith, I find plausible the suggestion of Mar Gregorios (1988, 19) according to which – as Meredith puts it – ‘the doctrine of Trinity-Incarnation is the criterion in the light of which Gregory passes judgements on the varied teachings of the Platonists that he passes under review’. Cf. A. MEREDITH 1990, 138.
biblical,²⁵³ is not the only problem. In the sentence quoted above, he says something that really cannot be said in all truthfulness about Nyssen’s sources. The whole sentence is twisted; but we are not set free of Cherniss’ error, really, unless we observe the error to which it finally leads. When the short sentence is taken to pieces, it may be seen how each argumentative step taken leads into deeper confusion.

First of all, the dogmas of Incarnation and Trinity do not make ‘many’ but neither are they ‘some few’ – as if they were somewhat irrelevant pieces of Gregory’s thinking and the essence of his teaching lay somewhere else. Secondly, in Gregory’s view it is a sure characteristic for authentic Christian dogmas concerning God - Trinity and Incarnation - that they present something that cannot be rationally circumscribed: divine mysteries. This is a fact reflected, for example, in Ad Ablabium. Philosophic theories supporting the divine dogmas can calm the ‘tottering and wavering’ of our reason by giving it a way to approach the divine mysteries – but no theory can ever circumscribe God and resolve the mystery.

Thirdly, neither ‘Plato’s doctrine’ or his own (!) theory of God are to be evaluated or regarded, in Gregory’s account, as ‘theology’. ‘Plato’s doctrine’, then, cannot be adopted in order to be ‘baptized’ and called ‘Christian theology’.

²⁵³ In 1. Cor 1, St. Paul distinguishes between the ‘wisdom of the world’ and the ‘message of the Cross’. However, the use of reason in the service of the Gospel message is not forbidden by him. It is only that even then what is preached and taught appears foolishness to the ‘wise of the world’. Further, in 1 Cor 1.17 Paul says that he is not sent to preach the Gospel ‘with words of human wisdom’. Nevertheless, Paul was an advocate of latreiâ logikhä, a ‘rational worship’ reverencing the divine logos instead of human, in offering ‘bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God’ (cf. Rom 12.1). Gregory’s concept of theology belongs to this kind of discursive context where faith and reason seek harmony and unification instead of separation in a manner which is not Platonic but distinctively and authentically biblical. In the biblical context, the concept of ‘body’ is central in many ways, and readily appreciated in a manner unthinkable for a true Platonist – and it is pístis instead of gnôsis, just as in Gregory, which brings about the ‘harmony of a body’ of the living sacrifice in latreiâ logikhä. W. Jaeger has made a case – and uses it as evidence of Gregory’s Platonism beyond all reasonable doubt – from the fact that Gregory was obviously criticised by some of his contemporaries of being too ‘philosophical’. To this we must answer: Nihil sub sole novum! The ‘apostle of the heathen’, St. Paul, is obviously in need of some defence against his contemporary critics, according to the second letter of Peter. Why? Because the letters of the apostle who writes ‘with the wisdom that God gave him’, ‘contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures’. Cf. 2. Pt 3.15-16. The question of ‘Hellenization’ goes down to the biblical roots of Christianity: it challenges our ideas of what we regard as ‘authentic’ Christian self-identification in relation to Jewish and Greek thinking. The disjunction between ‘religious’ and ‘philosophic’ thought may be false in the context of what is to be regarded as ‘authentic Christianity’ in the form mediated to us in the Bible.
Simultaneously even much of ‘Plato’s doctrine’ – or Aristotle’s and the Stoics’, or Plotinus’ – can be adopted to be used when explaining the way to the truth by means of *universal* human conceptions. No human being can avoid having such conceptions – insofar as he or she is not living in a barrel – while the words used may differ according to one’s cultural context. Sun and fire give light and warmth everywhere, everywhere people are born and die. Due to the same created, fallen reality, people everywhere have expressed similar ideas in various ways based on universal experiences. For Gregory there is nothing strange in the fact that there can be a universal conception, for example, of the ‘darkness of the world’ – the ‘cave’ as Plato expressed it,\(^\text{254}\) or whatever it has

\(^{254}\) Cf. CHERNISS 1930, 54: ‘the influence of the myth of the cave, the sun as the idea of Good, and the language of participation saturate in his essays.’ Active encounters with Greek culture and the subsequent use of Greek myths, words and ideas does not suffice to make Gregory a slavish follower of Plato as Cherniss suggests. That Nyssen uses them in his presentations reveals him rather as a Christian writer with universal concerns, expressing himself in the general context of the Greek culture. Gregory is in a very clear waters in what he is consciously doing: he notices that even ‘the divinely inspired word (*qeopneustoj logoj*) has used names taken from the mythical tales, with a view to benefit the hearers’. Cf. CE II 438 GNO I 354,23–355,1. Almost as if anticipating the twentieth century discussions, Gregory says that the wise who seek substances from the level of human words and expressions, as if the human words themselves were God-given, are being ‘overly pious’ in their self-imposed worship: ‘\(h(\delta\ell\iota\iota\iota\epsilon\upsilon\lambda\alpha\beta\jmath\upsilon\ tw\mspace{1mu}w\mspace{1mu}so\mspace{1mu}f\mspace{1mu}w\mspace{1mu}t\mspace{1mu}ou\mspace{1mu}w\mspace{1mu}e\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\omicron\rho\gamma\rho\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\jmath\upsilon\)’ (cf. Eph 2.23). He further points out that it was, in fact, a ‘barbarian woman’, Pharaoh’s daughter, who gave the name ‘Moses’ to the lawgiver, and God ‘did not judge it improper to remain valid’. Cf. CE II 284-285 GNO I 310,2-23. Nyssen thus believes that all the common words and universal concepts, even the tales and myths of the Greeks are for us to use, just as they are used in the Bible, that is, when found befitting the purpose.

Moreover, one should not ignore the fact that much of the vocabulary of ‘Platonic’ discussion of participation and imitation is central also in what Gregory read as his Bible: the Septuagint and the New Testament Canon, both written in Greek. When building up Christian identity in the discursive context of the fourth century, Gregory felt no need to apologise (or to explain that Plato knew Moses, for that matter) that according to (the Greek wording of) Gen 1.26, man was created *koq* *omoi\wsin geou*; that according to Eph 5.1, Christians are called to become *mimhtai\tou\geou*; that everywhere in the Scripture salvation and beatitude, as well as growth ‘in all speech and in all knowledge’, are said to be attained ‘in Christ’ (*e)n Xristw|~*); that according to 2.Pet. 1.3-4 Christians are explicitly spoken of as partakers of the divine *koinonia* (*me/toxoi tou\~ Xristou~*); that in 1.Cor 10.15-17 the term is used by Paul with a reference to the *koinonia* in the blood, the flesh, and the body of Christ: ‘We, though many, are one bread, one body, since we all participate (*met\ekein*) in the one bread.’ Paul thus associates the concept of participation with the idea of nutrition which sustains the body. For Gregory, this is *exactly* what theology, in the first instance as a thing received, is: it is nutrition, ‘milk’, sucked from the ‘teat of the Word’ for the maintenance of Christ’s Body. As ‘divine teaching’, this ‘milk’ is ‘better than wine’, that is, it is higher than human learning. According to Gregory, St. John who reclined on the Lord’s breast was filled with an ‘ineffable communication (*dia/dosij*) lying hidden...
been called during the one human history of suffering human nature. From Gregory’s point of view, it would be odd if the experience of suffering were not universal and if only the Jews and Christians were able to acknowledge and express that there is something wrong about the present state of all humankind.

Besides, thinks Gregory, God has also revealed himself, in the words of the God-inspired Scripture, through ordinary human words and concepts that have their immediate reference in universal human experiences. Why, then, one would need to be afraid to use common words and universal concepts for expressing something universally most relevant: God’s self-revelation and man’s salvation in Christ – insofar as the words and concepts are used to serve this very purpose. It is not betraying Christianity – quite the contrary: it is a Christian mission. Jerusalem has much to do with Athens in Gregory, and he is not trying to hide his position in this respect. He in the heart of the Lord’. John continued to mediate this flow of divine teaching with his mouth filled by ‘words of eternal life’. In the Gospel, he offers us the ‘teat filled by the Word’, by loudly ‘proclaiming the eternal Word.’ According to Gregory, then, the ‘flow of divine teaching’ is mediated by the human agents by *proclaiming* the Word – which would be *theologia*. Speculation belongs to the sphere of human initiations: there can be speculation in theological issues – but speculation is to be distinguished from theology which takes its origin from God. Cf. Gregory’s exegesis of the Song of Songs 1.2, ‘let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your breasts are better than wine’, in *Cant I GNO VI* 32,11 – 41,42.


256 To the favour of Cherniss it must be said that he has sharply picked up Platonic conceptions and expressions which undoubtedly in Gregory’s opinion were adequate to be used when communicating to the Greek world the Christian views concerning the real-existent uncreated reality behind the created reality universally shared and known by all humankind.

257 ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’ By this famous sentence, Tertullian (cf. *De praeescriptione haereticorum* 7,9) did not only prove himself as one of the most skilled rhetorician ever, but also proved what power rhetoric can have. Tertullian’s angry rejection of Greek wisdom has made him appear a more independent defender of Christianity than Gregory for example. In fact, Tertullian is no less ‘philosophic’ – or ‘Greek’, if one likes – than the bishop of Nyssa in his theological discourses. Moreover, Gregory makes the same distinction between ‘wisdom of the world’ and the ‘wisdom of Solomon’ as Tertullian does, for example, when defining the ‘foreign paideia’ as ‘barren princess’ in *De vita Moysis*, in distinction from the ‘natural mother’ of the Christians, the Church, who nurses her children with her ‘laws and customs’ (cf. *VM II* 10-12). When commenting these definitions of Gregory, W. Jaeger asserts that because of them, later in *De instituto Christiano* he must speak in self-defence in a treatise which is not written to an audience of people who possess the Greek *paideia* but to a ‘group of ascetics’. By subordinating, for ‘tactical reasons’ (!) as Jaeger claims, the philosophic tradition and the encyclopaedic learning of the Greeks to the authority of the Scriptures in *De vita Moysis*, Gregory ‘actually’ seeks to reconcile Christian religion with the classical tradition. But, again, the ‘tactical subordination’ improvised on the spot is actually what Jaeger is himself doing: it is yet another case of 20th century classical colonialism, or cultural imperialism that the German scholar practises as a humanist endorsing classical values. When rightly noticing that according to Gregory the Greek philosophy is sterile because ‘the
has his eyes set on Paul, the imitator of Christ to be imitated: Paul did not avoid Athens, and nor did he hesitate to quote Greek poets when proclaiming God (cf. Acts 17. 16-32).

There is yet the final point, the one that is most commonly missed. ‘Gregory has applied Christian names to Plato’s doctrine and called it Christian theology’, Cherniss writes. This is simply wrong and very misleading. There is nothing that Gregory calls ‘Christian theology’. For him, there is no such thing as ‘Christian theology’ – as if there were other theologies from which the Christian one is to be distinguished. The idea of ‘true theology’ of Clement is left behind. In another words the concept of theology is cut off from the classical root. In Gregory, theologia does not any more indicate the human speculative approach leading up to God, the culmination of philosophy in the ‘metaphysics of being’, or even the ‘dogma’ of God exclusively.

philosophers [of the classical tradition] never really see the light of the knowledge of God (theognosia), although the might perhaps ‘become men’ (ανηρ λαμβάνει τελειότητα), Jaeger rushes to define and celebrate the ‘becoming’ Gregory is talking about as ‘the goal of all humanism’. But in fact Gregory undoubtedly derives his saying from Jn 16.21 which speaks about a mother who after being in labour rejoices ὅτι εγένετο αὐτήν παρθένος. In general, Jaeger is in great difficulties in maintaining that even while the true fruit of Gregory’s endeavours was his ‘ascetic paideia-theology’ (as an imitation of Greek philosophy), the audience which received this fruit consisted of somewhat unlearned, simple and dull monks – who nevertheless were living the ‘philosophic life’ as Gregory puts it, and as Jaeger is delighted to notice. In the end, Jaeger’s arguments are like the handiwork of Socrates’ ‘ancestor’ Daedalus, the most skilled of all the ancient sculptors, who ‘made his own inventions move’ (cf. Plato’s Euthyphro 11b-d.). In a similar manner, Jaeger’s arguments do not stay put, but like the statues of Daedalus, ‘seem to turn round and walk away’. For the claim of Gregory’s ‘self-defence’, cf. JAEGGER 1965, 119-138.

258 Strom I,13 PG 8,749. Clement writes about the ‘true theology of Logos’. According to Gregory’s concept of theology, there is no other theology except that of Logos. It is true theology to be sure but no comparison can be made with other. ‘less true’ theologies.

259 For the history of the classical concept of theology, cf. W. JAEGGER 1967, esp. p. 4-6. One may notice how Jaeger already uses Gregory of Nyssa as his own right hand, or as his ‘brother in arms’ in this publication of his Gifford lectures (held in 1936, first published in 1947). In CE III/IX 59 GNO II 18-20 Nyssen asks: ‘To whom is it more typical than to the Greeks, to think that piety should consist in doctrines only?’ Jaeger takes this question as an exponent of a specifically Greek critique to a specifically Greek phenomenon. Cf. W. JAEGGER 1967, 218 note 28. Jaeger may be partly right – but I am at a loss to understand exactly how the fact that Gregory prefers over doctrines theTrinitarian confession of faith in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the sacraments, and other Christian customs like the sign of the cross, prayer, confession of sins, etc. (see the context of the aforementioned saying of Gregory), supports Jaeger’s claim of the manifestly Platonic determination of Nyssen’s thought. JAEGGER 1967, 62 writes: ‘Sects, dogma, and theology, indeed, are definitely products of the Greek mind, and their intellectual structure is such that nothing else could have given them their characteristic stamp.’ One may not agree with Jaeger’s notion of the ‘Greek origin’ of all theology and theological structure, but there is more sense in what he says next in reference to the Greek tradition of ‘theology’: ‘It is not from the Greek religion that they arise, but from philosophy, which, at the time of its impact on Christianity, was
Gregory says just ‘theology’ – and not very often. Instead he uses expressions like ‘divine voice’, ‘word of truth’, ‘word of faith’, etc. These are biblical expressions for the address of God that all people ought to listen to and follow. Gregory uses these expressions to connote the words of the Lord as reported in the Gospels, and the ‘divine words (ῥητορικὴ λαληθεία) of the Holy Scripture, set out for us by the persons inspired by the Holy Spirit’.  

Initially, in Gregory’s opinion, we may infer, theology is something that comes from up above, and moves downwards. When coming down, theology establishes also the ‘way up’ which would be an impossibility did not the divine Word...
first come down – and the proper context of theology as human expression is that of worship. With no hesitation, Gregory uses the term qeologi/a to connote our singing God’s glory with the angels.\textsuperscript{261} theology, then, is hymnology and doxology which proclaims God. According to Gregory, the singing of the Psalms makes the enigmatic teaching of the mysteries and the unspeakable and veiled, intellectually inaccessible visions provided by theologia sweet-sounding and easy to obtain with the aim of virtuous living. The singing of the Psalms, Gregory reminds us, belongs to all. He points out that all people in all pursuits, both men and women, healthy and ill, children and elderly people, whether working or playing, walking or sailing – even people having banquets – ‘consider it a loss not to announce (φεύγειν) this sublime teaching with their mouth.’\textsuperscript{262}

Theology, in Gregory, can therefore mean both God and man ‘speaking about God’. Yet there is only one theology – and this is Gregory’s point - as there is only one God whose spiritual ‘voice’ is to be heard and responded to. In theologia, the divine voice has become sensible to human receptors in some created form, veiled in a body of some corporeal substance. Theology as human enterprise by means of human, physical language is already a response to the initial spiritual address of God. It is received through hearing, not only what is immediately heard, according to the meaning of the human words, all of which have some meaning in the created reality, but what is said ‘in silence’ concerning the uncreated reality through these words of ours. What is so heard, is again confirmed through verbal expression – as far as what is received in silence is expressible in words. In the end, all theology maintains the constitutive element of silence, because the ‘divine word’, the spiritual ‘voice’, is not a sound uttered in the air.\textsuperscript{263}

\textsuperscript{261} Diem lum GNO IX 241.
\textsuperscript{262} Inscr I 3 GNO V 29, 18 – 30,10.
\textsuperscript{263} This is repeatedly emphasised in Contra Eunomium II. Unlike in the classical tradition, ‘apophasis’ which leads into silence – ‘away from speech’ as the word can be taken to suggest (which is not the only option since the word can be read also ‘from speech’, and that which is from speech is speech: ‘negation’ is a form of speech) – is not a technique of denial in Gregory. Silence is rather the condition of the essentially spiritual, incorporeal divine Word itself: the denial (ἀπαφή) – not ‘negation’ (ἀφαίρεσις) – which silences us before God originates in God. In Nyssen’s view, it is God who denies something from
In Gregory’s conception, theology, in essence and origin, is divine activity participated in and served by human agents who give it audible sound by applying human words to the essentially spiritual message ‘spoken’ by God. Gregory thinks that if there were two theologies, there would also be two speaking Gods revealing themselves separately – or, were there three Gods, there would be three theologies, one matching each God. But as there is one God and Lord of all, if one should hear theology properly so called, it necessarily takes its origin from one God and is one. Gregory adds the Alexandrian new-comer in Christian vocabulary to the list that St. Paul gives in his letter of Ephesians: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, the Father of all (Eph 4.4-6) – so, also, one theology.

2.2. Qeologia as ‘divine speaking’ in Ad Ablabium

As the study has been a process, I wish to complete the process by once more looking back to Ad Ablabium with an analytic intent. The ‘training of the hearing’ of Gregory’s texts has enabled their student to notice many new dimensions and connections in his

man (i.e. knowledge of his essence) through the words of his saints in the Holy Scripture, not man who denies ‘God’. Accordingly the only clear instance where Gregory uses the word ἂποφασία negatively, and then in the meaning of ‘denial’ (!), is in VM II 163: ‘John, who penetrated into the luminous darkness, tells us that ‘No man has ever seen God at any time’ (Jn 1.18), teaching us by this denial (ἀποφασία) that no man – indeed no created intellect – can attain knowledge of God’. According to Gregory (cf. CE II 84-94), man realises his own nothingness before God’s ‘everythingness’, not the ‘nothingness’ of God: all the wonderful things Abraham grasped of God through ratiocination were always less than what he sought. But in the experience his own nothingness man realises the infinite and overwhelming character of God’s love. ‘I am but dust and ashes’, he must say like Abraham – but yet he feels the essential presence (παρούσια) of God, and himself loved by God whose love, too, is an infinite mystery. In Gregorian apophasis, God’s love concurs and overwhelms human knowledge. It is not out of envy that God denies the knowledge of his essence. It is rather ‘divine realism’: it is not ‘in the essence’ of man (and human reason) as God’s creature to know the essence of God the Creator – it would be the destruction of the human essence. Besides, the divine denial is at once a divine promise of eternal enjoyment of growth in the ‘divine knowledge’ which is identified as the experience of God’s presence and his infinite love. For Gregory’s notion of silence before God according to the advice of Ecclesiastes 5.1, cf. CE II 95-105. For discussion, cf. M. CANÉVET 1983; R. MORTLEY 1986b; S. DOUGLASS 2005b, 638-640. For αἰσθησις τῆς παρουσίας in Gregory, see Beat, 6 (GNO VII/II 123 –148), and for discussion, cf. K-H. UTHEMANN 186-227. For ‘knowledge that becomes love’, cf. De an PG 46 93-96, and for discussion, cf. D. B. HART 2003, 111-131 and V. LOSSKY 1963, 70-74. Cf. also the third article of this dissertation.
texts which he was not yet able to recognise when writing the first article of the thesis. From my final point of view, these studies would not be properly summarised if they did not include an insight into my final reading of Gregory’s Ad Ablabium to complete the picture: there is something to be added to the analysis of the first article whence the studies began.

The aim in what immediately follows is to show how Gregory’s concept of ‘one theology’ as a divine discourse taking its origin from God is manifested and given its final argumentative weight in Ad Ablabium. While Gregory does not use the word ‘theology’ in the treatise at all – as he usually does not, because he has other words for it – what is said above is actually a point made in that source especially. The thing to be remarked is how Gregory, when shifting the emphasis from anthropological unity of nature to the concept of oneness applying to God, begins by saying:

[1st sentence]: [W]e must confess one God (O ὡκουν εἰς ἡμῖν ὁμολογητεῖν ὑμῖν) according to the testimony of the Scripture (κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν μαρτυρίαν), ‘Hear, Israel: Lord, your God, is one Lord’ (Deut 6.4), even if the expression ‘divinity’ (ἡ ὄνωπος τῆς θεότητος) extends throughout the Holy Trinity (ὅχθαι ἀγία τριάδος).

[2nd sentence]: I say this according to our definition on the question of human nature where we have learned that we should not widen into a plural character (μὴ δεῖν πληντικωτέρας χαράκθην πλατυνθείν) the expression by which the nature is signified (ἡ προσχορίαν τῆς φυσεωτέρας).

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264 Cf. Abl GNO III/I 42, 4-12. In the akolouthia of Gregory’s argumentation in Abl, it is with the following three sentences that he begins a section where he presents his major argument concerning the oneness of God. The argument is based on Gregory’s interpretation of what we may hear testified of God in the Scripture where the divine message is handed down to us in ordinary human words we are able to perceive. Gregory begins (42, 4-12) and concludes (55, 3-20) this section with Deuteronomy 6.4: ‘Hear Israel, Lord, your God is one Lord!’ Above I have separated the three sentences that follow each other in the original text without any break: in what follows I comment upon each in turn.}

265 The translations are mine. I have used ‘expression’ for ὄνωπος to keep visible the indication of ‘breath’ and audible ‘voice’ or ‘sound’. This term would not translate as ‘concept’ or ‘name’ while it could be translated as ‘word’- as in the NPNF edition. Besides the NPNF translation, I have been fortunate to see also the (unpublished) English translation of B. DUVICK which, in many cases, is more sensitive in observing important nuances that Gregory has intentionally put into his text. My aim has been to take into account the nuances – which in fact carry significant argumentative weight – still more carefully when judging between the possible words to use in the translation. For all possible faults, I am to be held responsible.
We should carefully examine the name of "divinity" itself (αὐτῷ τῷ Θεῷ· γεοθήτοι), whether through the original meaning clothed in this verbal sign (διὰ τῆς ἐκμενής τῆς ὁμοίωσις) – this synergy (τὸ συνεργά) – clarity was brought in the subject we approach. 266

2.2.1. Hear, Israel: ‘Lord your God is one Lord’

First it is good to realise the textual context to which the statements belong. The passage by which Gregory turns the attention into distinctively theological issues – ‘Hear, Israel: Lord, your God, is one Lord’ – is from Deuteronomy. In that book in particular, the ideas of ‘God speaking’ and ‘hearing God speaking’ are central, as well as the idea of human teaching according to God’s instruction. 267 i.e. according to what is received

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266 Gregory now uses οἶκομα, name: it is one word which incorporates the intended meaning that can be expressed in many words. The terms used in the context show that this is what Gregory wants to indicate. It may be noted that ‘ἐκμενή’, ‘be wrapped in’ can be used of sandals which the feet are ‘wrapped in’. 267 Throughout the twentieth century, much too much weight has been put upon the Greek paideia as the model of ‘education’ or ‘instruction’ in Gregory. Old Testament provides to its student equally distinctive ‘paideuetic models’. One might want to call in mind, for example, the surroundings of the sentence quoted by Gregory (Deut 6.4). This is Deut 6.1-8:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.

Hear, O Israel: Lord, your God, is one Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

That the Greek term παιδεία, ‘up-bringing of a child’, and its cognates relatively frequently appear in Gregory’s texts is not necessarily due the classical influence in his thought. The Old Testament – which Gregory read in Greek – is full of appeals like the one above, with a reference to the Law: προβιβασεῖν αὐτὰ τοὺς οἰκουμένα. In the Septuagint, both the terms and the ideas of paideia or paideusis appear frequently in the Proverbs – and in Deuteronomy, the verb παιδευέν is used not only in the meaning ‘to chaste’ but also in a wider meaning ‘to instruct’ verbally. Cf. Deut 4.36: ‘From the heaven was made audible His voice to instruct you (ὅτι ἐν οὐρανῷ παιδεύει)’. See also Deut 32.10 where paideia and the divine guiding of the Lord are related. De vita Moysis is the source where Gregory’s use of the terms paideia, paideusis and paideuëin is most frequent – that is, in a biography of Moses the ‘Law-giver’. According to Gregory, as a Law-giver Moses is the forerunner and the ‘type’ of ‘the true Lawgiver’, Christ, who is the guide and the ‘voice of God’ to be followed. VM II, 78.216. Cf. W. Jaeger 1961, 93 who argues that because Gregory may often write ‘Isaiah educates’ instead of ‘Isaiah says’, he therefore obviously thinks that Bible ‘is not law but education’. Is this really a solid argument?
when hearing God teaching by his own speaking. The context that Deuteronomy provides is very dear and important to Gregory, summarising as it does the ištʰɾiβ and dikaiwʰata of Moses: according to the Evangelist Mark (cf. Mk 12.29), even Jesus referred to the divine exhortation in Deut 6.4 when he was asked about the first and the greatest commandment of all. In Deuteronomy, the use of the concepts of light, cloud and darkness is most intensive. Moreover, the ‘face to face’-encounters with God is interpret as ‘hearing his voice’, ‘the voice of Lord our God’ (fwnh au̲tʰou̲-tʰn fwnh Kuri̲bou̲-Qeou̲-h̲mn) ‘out of the midst of fire, [where] there was darkness, blackness, storm, a loud voice’ (ek me̲g̲o̲j̲: sko̲t̲j̲, gno̲f̲o̲j̲, qu̲ell̲a, fwnh̲m̲ega̲j̲h – cf. Deut. 5.22). In this Book one may read Moses saying to his people: ‘The Lord spoke face to face with you’ (Pro̲sw̲pon kata̲-pro̲sw̲pon e̲la̲lh̲se Kuri̲o̲j̲ pro̲j u̲m̲aj) at the mountain, from the middle of the fire (5.4). The people would answer: ‘This day we have seen that God shall speak to man (e̲l̲l̲o̲m̲e̲n o̲t̲i lal̲h̲se o̲(Qeoj̲ pro̲j a̲h̲qr̲wp̲on) and he shall live’ (5.24). In the context of Deuteronomy, ‘seeing’ means ‘hearing God speak’ as one speaks with a friend – face to face (Cf. Ex 33.11).

Gregory’s idea of ‘the expression of divinity’ (h( fwnh̲tʰj̲ qeοf̲ht̲o̲j) which ‘extends throughout the Holy Trinity’ (dih̲kh̲ dia̲-tʰj̲ a̲q̲ι̲a̲j̲ tria̲bo̲j) connects the verb dih̲kw̲, ‘come through’ or ‘extend’, and the expression ‘h( fwnh̲tʰj̲ qeοf̲ht̲o̲j’, importantly, with a direct reference to the divine exhortation (of Deut 6.4) for ‘Israel’ to hear something which Jesus himself referred to as the ‘first commandment’ to be

In the notes Jaeger continues: ‘Here the Christian concept of paideia differs from the Jewish idea, which is that Jewish paideia is identical with the Law.’ I think Jaeger is not correct in making these very problematic disjunctions between the Jewish and the Christian ideas of paideia, and between Gregory’s ideas of law and education. Gregory clearly thinks that the Scripture provides teaching, but he is also very clear in asserting: nomoj gat e̲t̲in h(qe̲l̲a fwnh̲) Cf. CE 1333 GNO I 125, 22. He says this of the words of the Lord – who is both the Law and the Lawgiver – according to Jn 5.23, and refers in the instance to the divine honour (timh) addressed to the Father and the Son. In CE III/III 2 GNO II 107, 10-15 he continues about the same theme: ‘That no created thing is deserving of man’s worship (σεβαSYMio̲n ei̲m̲a), the divine word declares as a law (o(qe̲l̲a) qno̲m̲aθ̲h̲se l̲o̲g̲oj) , so that it may be learned (ma̲q̲e̲mi̲) from almost the whole of the inspired Scripture (ek pash̲j̲ mkروح̲-tʰj̲ qeοp̲n̲e̲u̲s̲t̲ou̲ graf h̲j̲) – Moses, the Tables, the Law, the Prophets that follow, the Gospels, the decrees of the Apostles…” Clearly what ‘Isaiah educates’ is law according to Gregory – not as Jaeger asserts.

268 That is, God spoke ‘face to face’ not only with Moses but with all his people.
obeyed: that there is ‘one Lord God’ to be reverenced and loved. It is remarkable that Gregory does not yet say ‘ὁ/μο ἐ θ ἤ κε ὑ θ ὁ ἰ’ – which is what is to be soon examined as an ‘embodiment of intention’ where there is synergy involved. In the particular context provided by Gregory in Ad Ablabium, the expression ‘fono/θi θ qeοθ θ ιο’ could also be understood as ‘the voice of divinity’ or a ‘divine voice’ as an indicative of *divine speaking*. The term *fono/θ* would then represent, in this particular instance, not just any utterance but, ultimately, the word denoting divine *operation* coming down to us as a divine dispensation of instruction, declaring God to be one. God’s own expression of his divinity, of what is divine and worthy of reverence, would according to Gregory’s expectation extend throughout (διηθ δια) the Holy Trinity, affirming, in the general context of the affirmation of God’s oneness, that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all divine in an equal manner.

Gregory’s first sentence implies a notion of divine operation *ad extra*, that is, a notion of a ‘voice from above’ – a voice from (εκ) God – approaching our hearing in the testimonies of the Scripture, instructing us about the equal divinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is what Gregory aims to show in his treatise: he will suggest that ‘divinity’ (κεθ) is not to be conceived as a ‘name indicative of [God’s] nature’ as it is commonly thought, but as a concept based on something that is universally observed as an *operation* of God’s power. By following the biblical testimonies, Gregory will describe how the divine power extends throughout the Three

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269 In Gregory’s view, in the Scripture the ‘divine voice’ (which in itself must be conceived as a spiritual, incorporeal and immaterial communication) has received a physical and sensible manifestation in the utterances of the inspired saints instructed by the Spirit – and it is according to the biblical testimony (καταιθ γραφικη ματουριαν) that God must be recognised as triune, and confessed as one God in the (one) name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. ‘Name’ (ὀνομα) denotes an object which may be spoken of, whereas the term *fono/θ* implies the actuality of speaking as a ‘voice’ to be heard: as ‘utterance’ or ‘expression’, it comprehends ‘saying’ also as an activity of speaking. In this particular occasion, by *fono/θ* Gregory indicates God’s speaking by human means in the Scripture through the words of the saints who have given the spiritual – soundless and immaterial – ‘voice of God’ a sensible form and a material body: a human voice. In the Scripture there is divine, spiritual instruction concerning God which is meant to be received by human receivers through the sense of hearing: first through physical hearing which grasps the literal or natural meaning of the words, and then through spiritual hearing which aims to grasp the divine intention as the spiritual ‘voice of God’ to be followed in order to receive divine instruction.
(dia\tw\t\triw\tdi\h\kei\h(d\uh\mij270) and constitutes the divine operation ‘from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit’. He will argue in conclusion that according to the biblical evidence, just as God is one in his nature, he is one also in his operation even as all the persons are always active in the divine operation. Because there can be conceived no difference either of nature or operation in the Godhead, says Gregory, the Holy Trinity is one God, ‘not three gods’ – which is what was to be shown in the treatise.

It is important to realise that according to Gregory, there can be conceived no extensions in the infinite divine nature: in his use, the verb di\hkw can be meaningful and relevant with a reference to God only when attached to the dispensations of his power and our thoughts concerning God according to his operations. If Gregory anywhere (as he does in Ad Ablabium) suggests that something extends throughout (dihkh\dia) the Holy Trinity, he is talking about some dispensation from (ek) God, brought about through (dia) the mutual action of the three divine persons, ‘from the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit’. The introduction of the verb di\hkw and h(f\w\nh\jh\j\qeo\ht\oj in the same instance with a direct reference to Deut 6.4, where God’s servant Moses proclaims to His people ‘Israel’ in human words what he has first heard as spoken to him by ‘Lord our God (cf. Deut 5.27)’, that He is ‘one God’, implies a notion of a dia-ek activity of the Holy Trinity towards men when giving them instruction – just as he gives them other good gifts like being, life, salvation (etc.), which Gregory also mentions in Ad Ablabium.

The idea of ‘expression of divinity’ or ‘divine voice’ which extends throughout the Holy Trinity as God’s dispensation from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit – as divine operation ad extra towards man – fits well with Gregory’s spiritual teaching of epektasis. In Gregory’s view, God and man reach out to each other in their mutual love-affair, and it is the divine reaching out that constitutes the eternal ascent of the human soul into the infinity of the divine Being. Significantly, in De vita

\[^{270}\text{Abl GNO III/I 44, 21.}\]
Moysis the ἐπεκτασία, ‘towards-outstretched’, of Moses consists of the following (ἀκολουθία) of the divine voice, ζηον ἔνυι Gregory identifies the voice as the call of Christ, or as Christ who calls: δεῦο, ἀκολουθεῖ μοι – come, follow me! According to Gregory, it was Christ who approached Moses in the theophany of the burning bush when he called Moses by name and spoke to him. According to Gregory’s pioneering exegesis the burning bush was a sign of the mystery of the Virgin: it was a foreshowing and foretelling of Incarnation. Christ said to Moses who was asking his name (according to the Septuagint translation), ἐγὼ εἰμί ὁ ὤν, and further identified himself as ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’. For Gregory, the One who spoke to Moses was the Father’s subsistent Word through whom God always ‘speaks out’ in his Spirit: it is through Christ that God approaches people and invites them to follow him as ὁ ὤν, ‘He who is’.273

271 Cf. VM II 219-255.
273 For Gregory, He is ‘It’, that is, the real-being which the Greek philosophers search ἄτολος, as ‘that which is’: the Greeks have not learned to identify their ‘to on’ as Christ. It is not necessary to think that the fact that Gregory uses both ὁ ὤν and ἄτολος of God or the divine nature would reveal Gregory’s Platonic aspirations. While Gregory addressed his writings to a Christian audience, the contemporary context of their writing was determined by the ongoing encounters and dialogue between the Christians and the Greeks – as W. Jaeger and others correctly have pointed out. In Gregory, as God is ‘He who is’, he also is, when put in universal philosophical language, ‘that which is’, the Existent above creation. In De vita Moysis Gregory writes that, in his opinion, the ‘definition of truth’ is ‘not to have mistaken apprehension of Being’. Clearly it is the universal, scientific definition of the philosophic concept of ‘truth’ (seeking relation to the Truth identified as Christ) Gregory then has in mind, the one he supports: one does not need to be a Christian to share this view with him. In the context, Gregory addresses ‘him who is’ ἄτολος, as ‘that which is’ – ὁ ὤν of which the Greek philosophers have wrong apprehension although they do recognise the existence of ‘That’ which is really-real and possessing being. Few lines down Gregory criticises the Greek conception for being ‘too fleshly’. It is not ‘evil passion’ he then has in mind. The essence of Gregory’s critic lies in his observation that the Greeks do not properly distinguish between the uncreated and the created natures, for example, when teaching that human soul is divine. Simultaneously they clothe their idea of Being in the ‘flesh of human conception’, that is, in ideas based on such knowledge which applies in reference to the created order. They ought to ‘come to the light of Incarnation’ – which is light of divine knowledge (ζηονωσία). In another words they ought to look to the divine οἰκονομία ‘of the flesh’ (ἡ σαρκὸς οἰκονομία) and ‘of the passion’ (κατὰ τὸ πάθος οἰκονομία) and look at the Cross, in order to begin to understand the true wonderfulness of the divine nature. In Christ, God has manifested his power to operate by means external to his own nature. It is through him that ἄτολος can be known as ὁ ὤν, by hearing ‘the preaching concerning the divine nature’ of Christ. Cf. VM II 112-116; CE III/III GNO II 107-133. For discussion, cf. A. MEREDITH 1990, 127-147; T. BOHM 1996.
The meeting of the two movements and activities, the divine movement of the ‘speaking out’ of the Holy Trinity (as described in *Ad Ablabium*) and the human movement of the ‘reaching out’ of the human soul (as described in *De vita Moysis*) would make a lot of sense in the context of Gregory’s thought. He conceives no final satiation in the ‘seeing of God’ but emphasises, instead, the significance of the Word’s invitation for the soul to ‘come and follow’ – and the idea of the presence of God in a soul that has received the Word. In Gregory, ‘seeing God’ takes place in an interaction of the divine call and the soul’s spiritual hearing of the divine voice, in faith which receives the Word and ‘sees’ it – sees Christ – even in ‘darkness’ where reason is unable to see anything. According to Gregory, Moses was person who heard ‘the One who summons’ and saw the One who calls – ‘face to face, as a man speaks with his friend’ (Ex 33.11). But what St. John writes must also be true: *No one has ever seen God* (Jn 1.18). ‘Seeing’ in the sense which is allowed to us, Gregory explains, means ‘following behind the divine voice’: it is ‘seeing God’s back’ as he is followed. In this account, in reference to ‘following’, seeing God’s ‘face’ is dangerous. *Never face your guide*, Gregory warns: it means you are going in the opposite direction. Follow closely behind your guide’s back wherever he may lead you, is Gregory’s advice: God is seen ‘face to face’ in his towards-coming Word calling to follow.

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274 Sense that culminates in Gregory’s most mature work *In Canticum Canticorum*. There Gregory gives a dynamic Trinitarian sense to the sentence in Song 2.5: ‘I am wounded by love’. He explains how the up-tending soul, the bride longing for her beloved, is being taken up and wounded by love as by an arrow: the ‘arrow’ is the Only-begotten Son, the ‘archer’ is love, God – and the ‘arrow’s tip’ is faith moistened by the Spirit of life. Cf. *Cant IV GNO VI* 127, 10-16. Much development takes place in Gregory’s thinking during his literary career. However, at all times this development shows Christocentric determination that remains the same from his first work to the last, from *De virginitate* to *In Canticum Canticorum*. For the issues of Gregory’s intellectual development and the Christological aspects of *Cant*, cf. H. R. DROBNER/C. KLOCK 1990, cf. the excellent trio of articles by A.A. MOSSHAMMER (language) 99-123; A. MEREDITH (idea of God) 127-147; L.F. MATEO-SECO (Christology in *Cant*) 173-190. See also A.A. MOSSHAMMER 2000, 359-387; F. DUNZL 1993; M. LAIRD 2004; S. DOUGLASS 2005.

275 VM II 249.

276 VM II 250-255. Recently M. Laird has introduced to Gregory scholarship the concept ‘logophasis’. It is a neo-logism as he admits, but not bad at all: by it, Laird draws attention to Gregory’s notion of the divine Word (logos) which ‘expresses (phasis) itself through the deeds and discourse of the one whom the Word indwells’. Cf. M. LAIRD 2004 154ff. In this thesis I am addressing basically the same thing as Laird in his study. I suggest, however, that Gregory already has a term for the Word which descends into created, human forms of expression which proclaim the divine, uncreated nature: *theologia*. ‘Theology’ in Gregory, I suggest, signifies the sensible embodiment of the essentially spiritual and non-corporeal Word.
Gregory gives a ‘new’ interpretation to St. Paul words in 1. Cor 13.12: 
then we see face to face. It is only that the interpretation is not really new: guided by his 
Judeo-Christian understanding of the Law proclaimed from the Mountain of God, 
Gregory has studied Deuteronomy and the Book of Exodus. This is no news to any 
student of Gregory – but for many it would be news if the image of Mountain were also 
right in the middle of Ad Ablabium which has been regarded as the key text to 
Gregory’s Trinitarian teaching as distinct from his spiritual vision as presented in De 
vida Moysis. Evidently, however, the two writings do derive from the same basic vision 
of a mountain – and we are then talking about a biblical vision, and about distinctively 
Christian spirituality. In De vita Moysis Gregory ‘makes use of the Scripture as a 
counsellor’ in the matter of perfection in virtue which consists in its growth in 
goodness.277 His aim there is to hear and follow the divine voice in context of the 
istoria of Moses as recounted in the Book of Exodus – and his wish is to hear the 
Word of truth, in order to follow Moses ‘up’ in his contemplative ascents as a lover of 
Christ.278 In Ad Ablabium Gregory’s aim is basically the same: to hear and follow the 
divine voice. But the orientation is ‘down’ as a servant of Christ, the Word of God – 
and the underlying wish is to make heard the Word of Truth.

The ‘religious virtue’ (kat’ eu kei an a et h)279 of Moses was not all 
about ascending. There was also the practical side in his virtue: descending with the

of God. In my view, it is in this sense that Gregory calls the ‘Mountain of God’ the ‘Mountain of 
Theology’ in De vita Moysis: it is the Mountain of Divine Preaching where the Word ‘comes down’ and 
finally takes a sensible body in human words and deeds. It seems that Gregory studies are heading 
towards better appreciation of the economic characteristics of Gregory’s theological thought. Besides 
Laird’s study, another promising discussion of this is G. Maspero’s dissertation (reported in Excerpta e 
dissertationibus in Sacra Theologia 45 Roma 2003, 383-451). An important study in this respect is also 
R. J. Kees 1995. In both studies, the continuity of theologica and oikonomia is emphasised instead of their 
separation. While my view is more ‘radical’, I also acknowledge and want to be clear in affirming that 
Gregory distinguishes between what he calls the ‘mystery of theology (theologia)’ and ‘the mystery of 
Incarnation (oikonomia)’. However, it is through the latter mystery that the former comes to be 
acknowledged, and wherever the eternal Word is present the mystery of theology is not absent: there is 
Father with the Son in the Holy Spirit. These are the things that Gregory has clearly taken into serious 
consideration, not against Basil or Gregory Nazianzen – i.e. not against his tradition, but for it.

277 VM II 10-11.

278 In this, he is being a Christian philosopher who identifies the wisdom loved as Christ, the Wisdom of 
God. Cf. the fourth article of this dissertation and the second paragraph of this summary.

279 cf. VM II 66
divine message for the benefit of ἐκκλησία so that people down in the valley, too, could hear the speaking of God and respond to it in reverence. The ‘virtue’ of Ad Ablabium consists of the showing of the down-coming ἀκολουθία of the divine speaking which constitutes, also, the way up through ‘good confession’ (cf. 1. Tim 6.12-13). The confession can take place only after the receiving of the divine message through hearing the words of the divine revelation according to their intention. Should Gregory succeed in his aim and wish in Ad Ablabium, it was shown how the Trinitarian confession of faith accords with the original message of the Holy Spirit proclaimed by God’s inspired saints – the eyewitnesses and servants of the Word who, in the God-inspired Holy

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280 In Ex 19 there is a divine commandment behind both Moses’ ascents to God and his descents to the people at the foot of the mountain. Both Moses’ ascents and descents take place according to God’s will. Also defending the Israelites against the attacks of adversaries, i.e. heresies and idolatry, was part of Moses’ mission and his ‘religious virtue’.

281 For Gregory’s references to ‘the eyewitnesses and servants of the Word’ from Luke 1,2, cf. CE II 101-102 GNO I 256, 7-25 and CE III/III 36-37GNO II 120, 11-29. In both cases he indicates that the notion concerning the unknowability of the divine essence is part of what we may learn to know about God according to the biblical testimonies. In CE II Gregory emphasises ‘the reliability of those attested by the Spirit himself’. One should ‘stay within the limitations of those writer’s learning and knowledge’ and ‘not tackle things which the intelligence of the saints did not attain’: God’s essence. Gregory thinks the adversary Eunomius is guilty of ‘making an idol’ of his own word and theory as he claims the word ‘Unbegotten’ reveals God’s essence. In CE III Gregory discusses the ‘scandals’ of the Cross and Incarnation. He says that the declarations of the ‘heralds of the faith’ concerning the Incarnation and the suffering of the Cross ‘increased the marvellous character of him who manifested the superabundance of his power by mean external to his own nature’. He continues by saying that Eunomius’ groups make ‘the οἰκονομία of the Cross a reason for partitioning off the Son from equality of glory with the Father’. The orthodox, in turn, believe – ‘as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word delivered to us by the Holy Scriptures’ – that the God who ‘was in the beginning’ (Jn 1.1) was ‘afterwards seen upon earth, and conversed with men’ (cf. Bar 3.37 which is exceptionally important and a frequently quoted passage in Gregory). Accordingly, the orthodox believe about the Only-begotten God that it was he who, by ‘becoming a ransom for our death, loosed by his own resurrection the bonds of death, and by himself made the resurrection a way for all flesh’. Being on the ‘same throne and in the same glory with his own Father’, he will ‘in the day of judgement give sentence upon those who are judged.’ Gregory then ends: ‘These are the things we believe concerning him who was crucified. For this cause we cease not to extol him exceedingly… that he who by reason of his unspeakable and unapproachable greatness is not comprehensible by any, save by himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit,…was able even to descend to community of our weakness.’ A few lines later Gregory speaks about ‘God who was made known upon the Cross’ – and elsewhere he calls the Cross ‘a theologian’. According to Gregory’s conception, obviously, theology is quite inseparable from the divine dispensations of Incarnation and the Cross: they both proclaim the divine nature according to its essential power – and there is no such theology over these proclamations that would make God known according to his essence.
Scripture, have given a body of human words\(^{282}\) to the spiritual Word from God (ἐκ του-κεου-λόγοι).

From Gregory’s point of view, the desired destination, the ‘Jerusalem’ he is aiming at in *Ad Ablabium*, had already come down to the ἐκκλησία in Constantinople 381. The Word of Truth had already descended, that is, it had been served and given a body of human words in the words of the confession of faith in the Holy Trinity. The λόγος πίστεως was celebrated in the liturgical living of the Church in her Mother-tongue of worship: in her ὁμολογία.\(^{284}\) In *Ad Ablabium* Gregory explains how the divine Word can be understood as being dispensed – as served by himself and others in the Council of Constantinople\(^{285}\) – κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν μαρτυρίαν, in the ὁμολογία of the Church.

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\(^{282}\) In *CE* III/V 8-9 GNO II 163, 3-13 Gregory writes: ‘The Scripture, ‘given by inspiration of God’ (ὁ ψευδευστὸς γραφή), as the Apostle calls it, is the Scripture of Holy Spirit (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἔστι γραφή), and its intention (βουλήμα) is the profit of men. For ‘every scripture’, he says, ‘is given by inspiration of God and is profitable’ (2. Tim 3.16).’

\(^{283}\) According to Gregory, human words are ‘physical’, that is, belong to the world of corporeality and difference (διάστήμα). Cf. *CE* II 200-202; 391-994 GNO I 283,11-284,7; 340,19-341,21. He distinguishes between ‘our word’ and ‘the Word that truly is’. Compared to the Word, our word is ‘nothing’ (οὐθέν) λόγος πρὸ τοῦ ὁμολογίαν ἐστίν οὐδέν: *CE* II 235 GNO I 295, 1-2); our words do not have an existence of their own – they vanish with a click of a tongue – but have their existence only in speech and writing. ‘The Word from God’ (ἐκ του-κεου-λόγοι), in turn, Gregory explains, ‘is God (ὁ θεός ἐστί), a Word that in the beginning is and for ever abides, through whom all things are and consist’. However, as we human beings are dependent of words in our communication, it is for our sake, for our instruction that ‘the Word comes down to make things plain in accordance with our own capacity’ (*CE* II 431 GNO 352, 21-23). In the Scripture, just as a compassionate mother joins the baby-talk of her babies, God, because of his philanthropy, passes on to human beings that which is capable of receiving and speaks in human manner though the words of his own servants, the saints instructed by the Spirit. Cf. *CE* II 417-419; 225 GNO I 348, 6-349,1; 291, 9-23.

\(^{284}\) According to Gregory, Mother’s milk that fed Moses as a child signifies the nourishment of ‘Church’s milk’, that is, her ‘laws and customs’. Cf. *VM* II 12. When Moses grew up, this man of divine ascents became a Lawgiver, meaning that he delivered nourishment to God’s people in the form of Law which was common to all of them and united them as one nation. The words of Confession belong to the Mother-tongue of Christians: by them God’s children are fed and become one as by them, ‘with one heart and mouth’, they ‘glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom 15.6).

\(^{285}\) However, that Gregory clearly regards the Nicean Creed as theologia is not due to his personal contributions in Constantinople but to the very character of confession, homologia, as something that ‘the people of God’ say together and the Church as one, in ‘one voice’. ‘Who wrote what’ in Constantinople is not important for Gregory: was he the one who held the pen that originally wrote the words of the
2.2.2. Hear, man: Lord your God is one Lord

In the first sentence – ‘we must confess one God according to the testimony of the Scripture, ‘Hear, Israel: Lord, your God, is one Lord’, even if the expression ‘divinity’ extends throughout the Holy Trinity – one may remark the immediacy between oμολογία and h(γραφή/μαρτυρία. Together they are distinct while not unrelated to the koinai ennoiai, i.e. universal notions of human reason which are addressed in a sentence that follows: ‘I say this according to our definition on the question of human nature where we have learned that we should not widen into a plural character the expression by which the nature is signified.’

Gregory indicates that we must confess essentially one God, ‘the Lord’ whom we have learned to identify as ‘our God’ and whom we worship as ‘one Lord’ – above all because of the imperative of the biblical testimony ‘Hear, Israel (!): Lord, your God, is one Lord!’ Our God is one although the human reason gets provoked by God’s identification as triune, after the divinity and lordship of Christ as the Son of God, and, subsequently, the divinity of the Holy Spirit are recognised. The divine Mystery itself cannot ever be resolved, but at this point Gregory can already argue for the rationale of the Trinitarian confession and its notion of the divine oneness, on the basis of his previous argument ἐπίθη-καὶ ἔσος, ‘of lower nature’, that is: according to his analysis in the case of the lover nature of man (κατὰ τὸν ἀπόδοχαν υἱόν ἡμῶν ἐπίθη- ἀνορῶ πιννῇ ταυτίζομαι). When starting to turn his focus towards the theological concept of the ‘oneness of God’, Gregory first addresses the essential ‘gap’ between divine and human natures. He implies that the ‘higher nature’ of God, whatever it is, at least is not any

pneumatological article of the Nicean Creed, we would not hear it from him. Gregory’s ‘pride’ resides in the fact that he was a defender of orthodoxy, not that he would have been its ‘inventor’.

The ‘common notions’ are not necessarily ‘Greek’. Gregory’s contemporary philosophical ‘universe’, naturally, may naturally be regarded as (mostly) ‘Greek’ when it comes to the natural philosophy and the scientific knowledge that he best knew and acknowledged.

less ‘one’ than the ‘lower nature’ of man. The logical starting point Gregory had just defined in his analysis was that if we agree that human nature (whether defined as ‘subsistent entity’ or ‘universal’) is ‘one’, it is not correct to say it is ‘many’. This is the basic argument. It concerns the use of human words in pointing out existences that we recognise: essentially it is a linguistic argument where a distinction is made between ‘word’ and ‘name’ in an ontological-epistemological context.

Put shortly, Gregory argues that if some word is used as a name by which some ‘one nature’ is assigned, logically it is not correct to use the word as a name in the plural although the word is still ‘usable’ in the plural. When we notice that Luke is man by nature and say ‘Luke is (a) man’, what we then actually mean is that ‘Luke is man by nature’. When we see or think Luke and Stephen – whom we also notice being ‘man by nature’ – it is not formally correct to say that what we then contemplate are ‘two men’, as if it were ‘two human natures’ for us to see by our abstractive power (ἐπιθεώρησις). We see two ‘individual existents’, Luke and Stephen, and contemplate one ‘existent nature’ in them. To the two ‘individual existents’ we assign the names ‘Luke’ and ‘Stephen’ – but for assigning their one and common ‘human nature’ we use the name ‘man’. In the purely linguistic level of names, ‘Luke’ is not ‘man’ any more than ‘father’ is ‘god’ – and neither is ‘Luke’ ‘Stephen’ any more than ‘Father’ is ‘Son’. At the formal linguistic level, the ‘name of ὑποστασία’ is not the ‘name of ὀυσία’ – or the ‘οἶκος of person’ the ‘οἶκος of nature’.

On this, there is universal agreement. One nature remains one even if someone happened to call it ‘many natures’. That fact that Gregory’s ‘reasoning is

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288 Gregory’s discourse included both manifestly Platonic and Aristotelian elements. He clearly invited the reader to contemplate ‘human nature’ as ‘universal’ that we recognise through the individuals, but gave also the Platonic definition of nature where the individuals participate in one nature as ‘subsisting entity’. Cf. G.C. Stead 1990.

289 ‘Existing’ whether as ‘abstraction’ or as ‘concrete’, subsisting entity – whether as ‘real-being’ or as ‘participating in being’. Gregory regards both human and divine natures as ‘concrete’. The idea of participation, however, is what ontologically distinguishes Gregory’s epistemological concept of the ‘higher nature’ of the Creator and the ‘lower nature’ of any created existent. God as the Creator possesses being both as ‘one nature’ and as ‘three persons’. Cf. the first article of this dissertation.

290 There would be yet the more basic and subtle linguistic level of words that we use to name different things, thoughts and existences. At this level, ‘hupostasis’ is not ‘prosopon’ and ‘ousia’ is not ‘phusis’.

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perfectly general’ when he argues ‘on purely logical grounds’ – as G. C. Stead has
correctly emphasised, with unnecessary disappointment however292 – is exactly what he
intended it to be. According to Gregory, both the biblical Revelation, i.e. ἡ γραφὴ/ 
marturία, and the Confession of faith in the Triune God, ἀμολογία, are expressed in
‘perfectly general’ human words based on ‘perfectly general’ human conventions. What
is revealed and confessed, however, is not a matter of convention. What is revealed is a
matter of divine will. How this will is expressed in perfectly general human words of the
Scriptural testimonies is a matter of human choice in the guidance of the Spirit. What
and how is concerted and confessed is a matter of faithfulness of many faithful to the
divine Revelation through the Scriptural testimonies - in perfectly general human
words.293 Therefore it is of crucial and vital importance to keep one’s mind sober when
hearing, interpreting and using the general human words by which God and the divine
nature are described.

Of both crucial and vital importance, indeed: for Gregory’s Christian
mind, both the Cross and the Life are issues to be kept in mind when he discusses the
character of theological language, the words that concern God.294 Theological language
is concerned with what God we confess, worship and reverence as our Lord who can be
but one295: is he the Life of the living, the Lord of all creation? Is he the one who created

291 So it is misuse of language to mix the linguistic categories of names, based on human convention
about what word names what thing.
293 On the subject of theological language, see the excellent article by ALDEN A. MOSSHAMMER 1990.
294 Cf. CE II 136 GNO I 265, 7-10: ‘The purpose of the words that concern God (ἡ τοῖς 
περὶ θεοῦ 
λόγοι) is not to think up resounding and harmonious verbal beauty, but to identify a reverent notion by
which what befits the thought of God may be kept intact.’
295 The categorical ‘philosophic source’ behind Gregory’s notion of ‘one God’ would be, not the
dialogues of Plato or the Enneads of Plotinus, but the Scriptures: the Law brought down from the
‘Mountain of theology’ by the Lawgiver Moses, proclaiming: ‘I am God your Lord, do not have any other
gods before Me’ and the Gospel as dispensed by the Evangelist Matthew who recounts Jesus’ – the true
lawgiver’s - words in his Sermon of the Mount, proclaiming: ‘No one can serve two Lords’. In Gregory,
the question of ‘divinity’ immediately intimates, and is identical with, the question of lordship. According
to his view, a man’s God is his ‘Lord’ and his Lord is his ‘God’. Should one think that he can draw some
final conclusion about ‘God’, about ‘what’ God is, his own conclusion becomes his God – but he has then
taken his own logos as the Lord to be followed, indeed, as the One who can save him from the ‘darkness
of the world’ (which Plato, too, had acknowledged and called the ‘darkness of the cave’). No one,
however, can be saved by one’s own conclusion or definition of God who ‘is not a concept’. A Christian
confesses, by the Spirit, that ‘Jesus is Lord’. As he confesses this, he says that Christ, his Lord, is God –
us, became incarnate for us and was crucified for our sake – the one who rose again and
gives us life eternal? Is he the one who presents us to the Father in the Holy Spirit who
anointed the apostles? Or do we regard our word and theory of God as the Lord we
follow? This is what Gregory thought Eunomius, the ‘new and clever theologian’, was
doing. He was idolising his own theory of God, making up God out of the human
word ‘Unbegottenness’ – and he was proclaiming a ‘new and strange God,’ since he
proclaimed Christ as ‘God’ who ‘once was not’. In

In Ad Ablabium Gregory discusses the logic behind the Trinitarian
confession. There Gregory gives his account of how Christians have come to recognise
and identify God as Triune, according to what they have received from God in the form
of ordinary human words of his prophets and apostles. Ad Ablabium is a treatise that
discusses the logic of hearing the Revelation with receptive ears. God gave man not
only ears but also reason, a power of intellectual reflection – and a speaking mouth
besides. To perfect man after his own likeness, the Creator gave man the natural and
universal ability to create through the exercise of will and abstract conception

and God is ‘the One’ who alone can save him, being as he is the Lord of all creation. It is a central
Gregorian – and Pauline – idea that in order to be saved, man must be subject to the Son, and in the Son,
to the Father: it is thought subjection to the Son as the Lord to be followed, that man finds his ultimatre
liberation. In other words, according to Gregory’s view, the theological questions concerning God can
never be isolated from the questions of worship and reverence. He believes that the human mind, when
admitting no lord over itself, either itself becomes or produces for itself an idol. Theology, in Gregory, is
conditioned by the subjection of the human mind to the Son as its Liberator. ‘Gregory’s mind’ is often in
research characterised as ‘Greek’ – but it takes a Christian mind, and a Christian concept of freedom, to
seek for the utmost liberation of the mind from servitude to Christ Jesus, the Lord Incarnate. Also the
divine knowledge concerning the tri-unity of God remains obscure for a ‘Greek mind’ seeking to
complete its own rational course in something to be called ‘theology’ regarded as ‘metaphysics of Being’.

Cf. CE II 100 GNO I 256, 4-7.
Cf. Ps 81,10; Ex 34,14; Deut 32.
Cf. CE III/VI 5-9 GNO II 187,11-189,11. Gregory begins another of his summarising ‘minor
dogmatic works’, Ad Simplicium: De fide, with this ‘divine denial’, denying the worship of a new and
strange God. The question of worship, what or who is revered as God, represents the most immediate
and proper context of Gregory’s discussions in the issue of God’s tri-unity.

In Gregory’s view, the saints were persons who knew how to use words in a creative way when
addressing God and his relation to creation and man. For example, the word ‘subjection’ expresses a
relation between the Master and a servant, as St. Paul knew. But he gave the term a fresh soteriological
content in reference to the Master-servant relation of Christ and the believer. Gregory explains that to be
subjected to Christ means ‘salvation’ and ‘being in faith’ according to Paul. Cf. Tunc et ipse GNO III/II
3-28. Cf. the second article of this dissertation.

As L. Ayres 2003 fittingly says, in Ad Gregory discusses ‘the grammar’ of Divinity.
Words as man’s creatures, however, do not subsist in being but vanish in the air once uttered. What God creates through his Word subsists in being, not by itself but by the all-encompassing power and will of God. Man’s words can be assigned to these beings, and serve in the distinctively human form of communication: only man uses language.

Studies in natural philosophy and sciences that are based on cosmological and psychological observation are not an irrelevant waste of time for someone who wants to become an observant hearer of divine speech. In Gregory’s view, God speaks to us people by means we are able to understand, by embodying his essentially spiritual message in created, physical forms. In fact, the whole creation proclaims the Wisdom of God: it is thus a part of the speaking of God, even though no sound of words is heard. To study and know well ones created, physical environment and how, for example, the skilled Greek philosophers and scientists have analysed it, is good preparation for listening to God’s speaking in the words of his Wisdom in the Scripture.

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301 Cf. CE II 246 GNO I 298, 10-17: ‘What springs up at God’s will is the reality, not the name, so that the reality which substantively exists (tolkag’upostasinob) is the work of the Maker’s power – but the sounds that identify things, by which our logos distinguishes things individually for accurate and distinct reference, these are the product and invention of the faculty of verbal reasoning (tauta thloganikh- 
dunamerejgeatakeilethmata), whereas this verbally rational faculty and nature itself is the work of God.’ What Gregory here discusses as hlogikhdu/nij, he elsewhere names ἐπινοια.

302 In the second book of Contra Eunomium Gregory discusses this issue comprehensively. The context of discussion is polemic – and the development in Gregory’s thought is most manifest during the Trinitarian debates. There is, however, no change of mind in the issue of language that Nyssen would undergo during the polemics; it is only that then it is very minutely discussed by him. Cf. E. MÜHLENBERG 1962; M. CANÉVET, 1982; A.A. MOSSHAMMER 1990; S. DOUGLASS 2005; T. KOBUS 1988.

303 In De vita Moysis, Gregory identifies the ‘loud sound of the trumpet’ (Ex 19.16) – heard in the Mountain of God which he calls qeologi/a – as preaching concerning the divine nature. Cf. VM 158-159. We who come after the biblical saints, may listen to the ‘trumpet sound’ in the proclamations of God’s prophets and apostles whose ‘voice goes through all the world, and their message to the end of the world’ (Ps 18.5). As ‘instruments loudly ringing out the Spirit’s sound’, they preach the divine nature in the Scripture: the Law and the Prophets trumpet the divine mystery of Incarnation, Gregory says, and through the preaching of the Gospel the sound becomes ever louder. For Moses who approached the cloud of thunder and lightning, there still was no ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’ to be listened to and to be guided by. The physical sound Moses learned to hear was that of ‘thunder’: the sound of heavens declaring the glory of God, proclaiming the power and wisdom of God. According to Gregory’s interpretation, Moses was led by the sound of the heavens ‘into the place where his intelligence let ‘him slip in where God is’ (VM II 169), into the ‘darkness signifying the unknown and unseen’, where he saw the tabernacle not made with hands: ‘this tabernacle would be Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God’ (VM II 174). Gregory’s idea is not that the profane philosophers contemplating the same reality as Moses could also make their way, around Christ somehow, into the sanctuaries of theognosis – but they must admit they
person is the wisdom and the power of God (1. Cor. 1.24), Gregory believes. Accordingly, Incarnation is the historical centre of divine speaking. Once, quite concretely, divine Word located himself in time and place: when the Word was made flesh, what is essentially spiritual and incorporeal became essentially physical as God took on human flesh and became a real man with a human body prepared in the womb of the Virgin. Accordingly, in the God-inspired Holy Scripture, Gregory believes, the saints have prepared, quite literally, a body of human words for the same Lord, who is still, as ever, inviting us: Come, follow me!

The sunergiā that is involved in the Scriptural testimonies of God is that between spiritual and physical. There is spiritual, divine intention embodied in the physical body of human words and letters. And it is a synergy Gregory is talking about, not a conflict: human words serve the divine Word. Accordingly universal concepts serve theology. The mere letter, however, kills whereas the Spirit makes alive (2. Cor 3,6). According to Gregory, even the Scripture can kill if it is taken only literally – and much less is there any salvation in ‘universal notions’. Werner Jaeger was convinced that Christianity was not, for Gregory, ‘mere dogmas’. This is right because there was no such thing as ‘mere dogmas’ for the bishop of Nyssa. Instead, however, have not discovered the divine essence if they are honest and decent philosophers (as Plotinus would have been, in this respect, in Gregory’s eyes). In the theophany of the burning bush Moses had already entered into the Light of Incarnation and divine knowledge, that is, he had been already ‘illumined’ and purified from the ‘mistaken apprehension of Being’ based on his previous ‘Egyptian’ learning. Moses was already led by Christ, by ‘Him who is’ whom Moses heard, in his heart, speaking to him in the thorny bush. It is in this sense that Gregory writes: ‘When he who has been purified and is sharp of hearing in his heart hears this sound [of ‘heavens’], he is led by it…in where God is […]and] sees the tabernacle not made with hands’ (169). The ‘seeing of the tabernacle’ is given the meaning of the ‘spiritual seeing of Christ’ beyond the ‘level’ of theology where the spiritually audible divine instruction is ‘wrapped’ in the physically sensible. Gregory highly respects the natural philosophy and moral teaching of the profane philosophers, and holds that their investigations on creation are trustworthy. But he is far from saying that one could hear theologia as an inspired preaching concerning the divine nature and, subsequently, learn theognosia from them as the recognition of Christ is missing from their discourses on God. Their speculation in theological issues is not too bad, and they may draw close – but, according to Gregory, they do always ‘miscarry before they come to the light of the knowledge of God’. Cf. VM II 11.

304 Cf. Abl GNO III/I 50,1. 1. Cor. 1.24 is one of the most outstanding centres of Gregory’s theological thinking – his ‘religious philosophy’ as von Balthasar called it in his pioneering study. Von Balthasar defined ‘the governing principle’ of Gregory’s thought as ‘none other than Gregory’s very Christianity’: ‘especially with regard to the idea of infinite progress in the knowledge of God, above all there is Christ, the living way.’ H. U. VON BALTHASAR 1995, 18.

305 Cf. Gregory’s discussion in CE III/V 10ff GNO II 163, 18ff.
there was something that he regarded as ‘mere Greek philosophy’ stuck on human conceptual, discursive knowledge because it has no ears for Christ, the Wisdom of God. Gregory acknowledges that both Abraham and Moses were learned men in their contemporary knowledge, but when facing God, their learning in ‘common notions’ did not in the end bring them before the face of God. Instead, God’s own Word did. This is Gregory’s idea also in Ad Ablabium, where he intellectually travels the distance between the highs of the Mountain and the ‘Greek’ soil, trying to identify and bring down a due and reverent notion of God, the Holy Trinity. According to his Pauline self-identification, \( \text{he is doing service, and his aim is to serve the Word. He is trying to make theology heard} \) – but does not identify himself as ‘a theologian’. Rather, his identity is that of a ‘servant of the Word’ – and, also, that of a veteran from the troops of Christ in the Eunomian battle, now giving instruction to the young man Ablabius whom he calls a ‘noble soldier of Christ’.

2.2.3. Hear: Lord our God is one Lord

In the third sentence Gregory invites the reader to examine carefully with him the name of ‘divinity’ (\( \text{to\o\h\oma th\j qeo\j hto\j} \)). Gregory’s most central and extensive argument in Ad Ablabium is based on his assertion that the name ‘God’, \( \text{qeo\j} \), is not actually an authoritative name (\( \text{kuri\j o\h\oma} \)) of nature. Instead, it is derived from a \textit{verb} which assigns the subject without revealing its nature. The verb is \( \text{qea\j sqai} \), ‘view’. Gregory’s notion is anything but artificial and mere improvisation as we shall see later on. From the viewpoint of his basic argument, however, Gregory needs not to be right about the etymology of the Greek word ‘\( \text{qeo\j} \)’. His basic argument is that God is named according to ‘the various activities of the transcendent power (\( \text{ta\j poikil\j th\j} \) \( \text{uperkeimen\j duname\j e\jergei\j} \) that are known to us (\( \text{tw\j h\j gnr\j rh\j n} \))’ – not according to his essential nature. That remains unnamed and, accordingly, unknown.

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\( ^306 \) Cf. the fourth article, \textit{Service or Mastery}?
in the name ‘qêô]’. What we call ‘apophasis’ in Gregory, is something that is presupposed, that is, belongs to the biblical premises in Ad Ablabium as its theological principle. Before addressing the contemplation (qêw rîb) of the activities of the divine power, Gregory had, again, named the substantial Source for his reasoning:

\[\text{h} \\text{h} \text{m} \text{e} \text{i} \text{j} \_ \text{d} \text{e} \\text{l} \text{t} \text{a} \text{i} \text{j} \_ \text{t} \text{h} \_ \text{g} \text{r} \text{a} \text{f} \text{h} \text{j} \_ \text{u} \text{p} \text{o} \text{q} \text{h} \text{k} \text{a} \text{i} \text{j} \_ \text{e} \text{p} \text{o} \text{m} \text{e} \text{n} \text{i} \text{o} \_ \text{a} \text{k} \text{a} \text{t} \text{o} \text{n} \text{o} \text{m} \text{a} \text{t} \text{o} \text{n} \_ \text{t} \text{e} \_ \text{k} \text{a} \text{i} \text{l} \_ \text{a} \text{f} \text{r} \text{a} \text{s} \text{t} \text{o} \text{n} \_ \text{a} \text{u} \text{t} \text{h} \text{b} \_ \text{m} \text{e} \text{m} \text{a} \text{q} \text{h} \text{k} \text{a} \text{m} \text{e} \text{n} \]

We who follow the counsels of the Scripture have learned to regard [the divine nature] as unnameable and ineffable.307

The human activity of contemplating ‘God’, or the divine nature, is universal, but ‘we’, Christians, have h|grafh| as the ultimate counsellor in this contemplation. By hearing this counselling we must hold true that the divine nature is unnameable and inexpressible. The essential nature (h|fûs|j kat| ou̱si|ān) of God – i.e., what he is – remains beyond human comprehension and naming.308 This is authoritative, divine counselling: what ever we may say about the divine nature we cannot say we have named it. The apophatic principle is derived from what God has revealed of himself in the Scripture: also divine denials belong to the revelation. Gregory continues: ‘Every name whether it has been discovered by human convention (para|th|j a|hrwpĩhj sunhqe|āj ekhu̱h|taij) or has been handed down to us by the Scriptures (para|tw|m grafw|m parade|dotai), we say express our thoughts (tw|m nōoμh|n e|mneutikoh eίh|ai) about the divine nature (peri|th|h qe|ān fûs|in), but the nature itself is not circumscribed by the signifier (ou̱k a|uth|h|j th|j fûse|w n peri|ekin|th|h shmasi|ān).309

Gregory writes that even without any etymology (ēṯumologi̱a) one would find that all the names by which the creation is assigned are accidentally (kata|tō|)

307 Abl GNO III/I 42, 19-20. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, in Or 30.17, accordingly: ‘Our starting-point must be the fact that God cannot be named.’
308 Abl GNO III/I 43, 15f. ‘au̱|oḻg̱a|ht| j̱ i̱ p̱ o̱ ṯ e̱ j̱ ṯ in, a|g̱ a|rṯ o̱ ē̱ ṯ j̱ ṯ in.’ All the names and attributes either forbid what we should not think concerning the divine nature (negative attributes like ‘incorruptible’) or teach how we should conceive it (the positive: ‘living’, ‘giver of life’), but none of the names and attributes includes an explanation of the nature itself. Cf. M. CANÊVET 1982, 34.
All names and attributes that direct us towards the contemplation of the divine nature are originally based on some human experience or recognition of God’s activities. As has been said, according to Gregory the word qeoj itself which we use for denoting the divine nature, is actually derived from an activity of the divine power that we may experience and recognise. The verb describing this experience is in Greek qeas sqai, ‘to view’.

Gregory is very laborious when first explaining and then employing his analysis of the etymology of the Greek concept of God. For Gregory, it is not ‘only’ Greek in the sense that the saints have approved the term, that is, have found it God-fitting to be used of one Lord. Gregory points out that both by custom and by the teachings of the Scripture (upo te thj sunhqei aj kai thj tw m grafw m didaskali aj), divinity is called ‘qeoj’. Gregory attaches three concepts to the one divine activity of ‘viewing’ whence qeoj is derived: e)poptikh/ , o(ratikh/ and

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310 Ibid. 43, 4-7. Behind this claim there hardly is any agreement that could be called universal, from the classical point of view, or within Gregory’s own Alexandrian tradition both orthodox and heretic. The Cappadocians where somewhat original, in the Christian context, in saying that names of things are not God-given, and hence, not-accidental. Origen most certainly would have disagreed on this issue; Philo would have addressed the divine assignment of Moses, to give proper names to things according to their essence. The philosopher Aristotle, however, would have agreed. Cf. R MORTLEY 1986a&b. Of Plato and Aristotle, Gregory regarded the latter as more scientific, more trustworthy in this sense – but he did not give priority to either of them over each other, not to mention that he would have sought theological models from them. The relation of Revelation and universal knowledge, clearly, was the issue Gregory was interested in and much studied, not the teaching of some particular philosophical school as such. Cf. H. R. DROBNER 2000, 69-101.

311 Cf. Ah/ GNO III/I 44,7-16(ff) Gregory is not merely making a minor etymological point. Nor is he just giving arbitrary or haphazard support to his claim that God is named according to his operations. He builds up a very comprehensive theory on a biblical Greek concept. Q eoj is a ‘Greek word’ with ‘Greek connotations’, but what else could it be: Christianity is already ‘Hellenized’ in the Greek words of the Septuagint and the New Testament. Before Gregory, there had already long existed a ‘Greek’ Christian tradition of paideia of Christ which Gregory belongs to. Jaeger’s Early Christianity and Greek Paideia (1961) is one of the finest introductions to this early tradition. Admittedly, there are some problems already in how the classical scholar indicates that the Greeks were civilised enough to ‘politely’ regard the Jewish sacred writings as philosophy: in fact, the Greeks may already have remarked, unlike Jaeger, the great philosophic implications of the Jewish paideia. The German scholar, however, totally disappears into his classical enthusiasm when introducing his own personal favourite Gregory of Nyssa: he quite forgets the whole long and authentic Christian tradition (paideia tou kuriou) he has previously well described. It is obvious that a ‘Hellenization’ of ‘Jesus-movement’ began in the very moment the disciples and the followers of Jesus began to preach the Gospel in Greek, and it has its due pre-history in the translation of the Jewish sacred writings in Greek. The translation known as the Septuagint was the ‘first Bible’ of the Church. For discussion of the Septuagint tradition, cf. M. MÜLLER 1996.
Together they are what God’s ‘power to view’ means. God oversees and watches over all things (τὰ πᾶντα ἐφορᾶ ἡμῶν καὶ πᾶντα ἐπίσκοπεῖ), observes our inner thoughts and invisible things by the power of theoretical vision (τὰ ἐφευμὴσεῖν βλέψων καὶ ἐπί τα ἡγίατα θῇ ἡγερθίκη δύναμις διά δομομον). Gregory then goes on to argue that it is after the concept of ‘vision’ that we name ‘divinity’ (ἐκ τῇ ἡγία τῆς ἡγεμόνασκαί) and call our ‘Overseer’ (ἡγερθήν / ἡγαθήν) ‘God’: ἡγοῦ.

Gregory continues that should one agree that viewing (ἡγασκαί) is the same as observing (βλέπειν), and that God who oversees all things, both is and is called the Overseer of the universe (τὸ ἐφορῶμεν πᾶντα ἡγοῦ ἐφορῶν τὸ πάντο ἐγεσκάι), let him further consider this activity of viewing (λογιασώμεν τὸ ἐγερέγειαν ταῦτα). Let him judge, whether it belongs to one of the persons whom we discuss the concepts more minutely in what follows.

One should not immediately connect the three-fold division Gregory here introduces to other three-fold divisions that relate to the Eastern tradition of Christian mysticism – like Origen’s ἠθική-ψυχική-ἐνοπτική, or Evagrius’ πρακτική-ψυχική-θεολογία. They relate to the idea of the human soul’s ascent to God in successive stages, whereas Gregory first introduces his division in reference to the divine, to God’s ‘seeing power’ and activity. Ἐποπτική, ἡρατική and θεατική are three simultaneous aspects of this divine power which one may recognise when contemplating ‘seeing’ as divine activity. Gregory’s analysis of God’s seeing power is a novelty which does have consequences in the way he perceives man as ‘image and likeness of God’, that is, as a sensible manifestation of God’s wisdom and power – Christ – able to see and think, and to ‘show’ his thoughts, like God, through deliberate actions.

Gregory’s argument, emphasising as it does God’s ‘seeing’ or ‘contemplative’ power, may first appear ‘only’ philosophical in keeping with his overall ‘Platonism’. Gregory makes no disjunction between ‘philosophical’ and ‘religious’ (or spiritual and dogmatic) thinking in his argument. But for someone who either celebrates or regrets that Gregory is not being religious when he finds the idea of ‘contemplating God’ attractive, it should be pointed out that Gregory’s argument succeeds in its claim of universality exactly because it addresses not only the ‘God of philosophers’ but also, and above all, the ‘God of religion’ (in no disjunction from ‘philosophy’). When talking about ‘seeing’, Gregory’s special emphasis is on the notion of the ruling power of God: he is talking about someone who watches and decides over all, ultimately, about someone to be reveredenced with ‘religious’, obedient fear. Any religious cult, with or without an advanced speculative dimensions, anywhere in the world knows the concept of a divine ruling power to be feared and obeyed. But Gregory’s argument succeeds also in being philosophically universal as it introduces the idea of a higher, essentially spiritual divine reality of contemplation. So far Gregory is very successful in intimating ‘universal notions’ both ‘philosophic’ and ‘religious’. How well he succeeds in showing his distinctively Christian, biblical colour is yet to come. The ground in all kinds of ‘universal notions’, however, is well prepared.
believe in the Holy Trinity – or whether the power extends throughout the three, `diathēkē h`|`du`|`h`|`mij`.\footnote{Abl GNO III/I 44, 17-21. As M. BARNES 2000 correctly emphasises, it very important to distinguish between the concepts of $\varepsilon\nu\varepsilon\gamma\varepsilon\alpha\iota\alpha\iota\iota\zeta$ and $\`du`|`h`|`mij` in Gregory. Energies manifest God’s natural power(s). Vladimir Lossky (much criticised by Barnes), for example, in his still very valuable works on the thinking of the Greek Fathers, saw the tradition in too harmonious light by neglecting the meaningful distinction between $\varepsilon\nu\varepsilon\gamma\varepsilon\alpha\iota\alpha\iota\iota\zeta$ and $\`du`|`h`|`mij` in the Cappadocians, in Gregory of Nyssa especially. Barnes’ study The Power of God (as well as his many valuable articles) is an important step forward in Gregory studies. However, there are many problems in his interpretation. For one thing, I think it still is as important as ever to maintain that Gregory makes a meaningful technical distinction between God’s unknowable ousia and energeia according to which God may be recognised and known according to his will, while his essential nature remains unknown. Also the concept and notion of diasthēma is central and fundamental in Gregory – whereas Barnes suggests that it is problematic, somehow, to emphasise the notion when interpreting his thought. Further, that God has the essential power to create, and that he is essentially ‘Creative Power’, are Gregorian ideas. Barnes, however, makes extremely problematic suggestions when he discusses the issue of oneness in terms of God’s ‘productivity’ as an intra-Trinitarian concept in Gregory and then harmonises his ideas with classical discussion of causality. Gregory would never have said that the Son is a product of the Father – this was the idea he fought against. While important, in many ways causality-language is secondary for Gregory. Father is Father and Only-begotten Son is Only-begotten Son: this is what we must confess as Christians according to God’s self-revelation. But if we must further express this in philosophical language, then we must say that one is the Cause (Father), another one is from the Cause (Son); this is what the Revelation allows us to think. But what is most important in Gregory’s view, is that when we hear ‘Son’, we at once both relate him with and distinguish him from the Father who must be assumed even as he is not mentioned when saying ‘Son’. Through the name ‘Son’ we immediately learn there is also the Father who is his Father. In his article in Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa [S. COAKLEY (ed.) 2003, 45-66] Barnes argues that in Gregory the ‘Father-Son language’ is used for denoting distinction. Very true, but the distinction is not denoted instead of relation, or over the relation as Barnes seems to indicate. Further, that the idea of ‘integrity of will in operation’ is the most central theological-anthropological category for considering the questions of oneness and unity in Gregory, is yet another excellent point made by Barnes. However, in theoretical order, the concept of will is not ‘first’ a distinctively anthropological-psychological concept which is then applied to the Trinitarian context of discussion in Gregory. In Nyssen’s view, I argue instead, the concept of ‘divine will’ is what actually constitutes the whole concept of theology as divine speaking: initially, theologia is a movement of the divine will.} Gregory is here making a link between ‘hfwn`|`h`|`qēq`|`|`asqai’ addressed at the beginning of the discussion based on Deut 6.4 and ‘qēq`|`asqai’ which denotes $\`du`|`h`|`mij$ behind our expression ‘qēq`|`’. Should he succeed, it is apparent that $\`du`|`h`|`mij$ and $\hfwn`|`h`|`are both something that reaches through the Holy Trinity: $\`dhkh$ $\`ag`|`h`|`|`tria`|`|`. Gregory’s idea would be that God has expressed himself to the saints as something whose existence is universally supposed: ‘divinity’. The saints who heard the spiritual address of the divine voice have found the word ‘qēq`|`’ fitting for denoting the God who expressed himself to them. Paul and his Old Testament

\footnote{Abl GNO III/I , 43,2-44,6. The term is qēp`|`|`ep`|`|`], God-fitting.
‘type’ Moses – Gregory’s two main teachers in his doctrine of ἐὰν ἀκούσει  – did hear God speaking, according to the Scripture. Moses gave us the ‘form of Christ’, the Law. Paul gave us the names of Christ who is the fulfilment of the Law. The Church, standing on the apostolic foundation, has now made confession according to its further ‘hearing of Christ’ through the testimonies of the apostles.

When Gregory’s argumentation in Ad Ablabium reaches the point where he is binding together the concepts of God’s ‘viewing power’ and his ‘voice’, the Greek philosophic sources are of no use: however excellent and universally valid their thinking, all that they can reliably say is that God exists. From that point on, everything is conjectural in the presentations of the Greek philosophers. The Holy Scripture alone with its mutually connected testimonies provides the context of ‘divine contemplation’ most properly so called. Contemplation means following the divine voice, by first listening, in faith, to the words of the saints. Vision grows up from hearing: it means viewing the voice of God which extends throughout the Holy Trinity. This would be ἑγνώσεια, viewing back the ‘Viewer’ in the divine light which appears darkness for the intellect. Hearing takes place in contemplation, ἑρωτία, understood as ἀκολούθια, following Christ according to his divinity beyond physical sense-perception. The inner ears and spiritual hearing are active when seeking the Lord’s face in order to have face to face encounters with him, and hear him speak as ‘one speaks with a friend’. For this, the voice of God is to be heard as embodied in the ‘cloud’ of human words, uttered by the spirited saints who have already conversed with God.

When Gregory moves on to his distinctively biblical argumentation, he continues: ‘If our interpretation of ‘divinity’ is true and we call what is seen ‘visions’, and ‘who views’ we call God, we may no longer reasonably distinguish any of the persons in the Trinity by the significance inherent in the sound of this word. For the Scripture attributes the act of seeing (ἵκεις ἐν) equally to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.’

317 Abl GNO III/1 44,21-45,4. Gregory moves on into discussion of what L. Ayres 2003, 15-44 has fittingly called ‘the grammar’ of divinity.
That each divine person can see, does not, of course, alone prove that God is one. Gregory himself addresses this problem when he stops in order to put a question to himself: is it not rather so that we then ought to speak of ‘many actors’ in the same pursuit? Even more it now seems that we should speak of ‘three Gods’ – ‘three viewers’. If ‘divinity’ actually names divine action instead of divine nature, are we not deeper in problems? Gregory’s further point concerning the oneness that is naturally applicable to the Holy Trinity alone, is that not only the divine nature (ἡ ἁπάντα) denoted by the name ‘ὁ θεός’ is one, but also the activity (ἡ ἐνέργεια) whence the name is derived is single (ἡ) and one (ὁ).

Once again Gregory emphasises the distinction between the created and the uncreated. He writes that in the case of the divine nature (ἡ ἁπάντα) we do not learn (οὐκ ἑξακοσίων) that the Father does anything by himself (ὁ πατὴρ ποιεῖ τι κατὰ ἑαυτόν) in which the Son does not work conjointly (οὐκ ἔχει τὴν εὐγενείαν) – or again, that the Son works anything separately in his own way apart from the Spirit (ὅπως ὁ θεός ἐνίας ἐνέργει τι σωματίζει τοῦ πνεύματος). Instead,

every activity that has come from God to creation and is named according to our manifold conceptions of it, emerges from the Father, proceeds through the Son and is perfected in the Holy Spirit.

318 Asking the critical questions that jeopardise the supported interpretation belongs to Gregory’s akolouthia method.

319 We notice that Gregory is not at this point speaking about what ‘we teach’ about God but what we learn about God from the Scripture when following its teaching. The theological argument is not immediately ‘dogmatic’ but first exegetic and hermeneutic. ‘What we have learned, we teach’, is the meaning. Dogma belongs to theologia but is not perfectly identical with it as concept. In this respect, Jaeger was right when distinguishing between them. He was wrong, however, in separating them as two opposite movements of human intellect or as two separate categories of human spirituality, ‘religious’ and ‘philosophical’. Jaeger was right also in saying that for Gregory Scripture is ‘paideia’. In Gregory’s case, however, this also means that what we learn from the ‘divine paideia’ is dogma – and in order to regard the Scripture as paideia, he did not need to acknowledge that the Greeks called the whole of their literature ‘paideia’ Cf. W. JAEGER 1961, 92.

141
Therefore, one does not divide the name of their activity (τοὶ ὁμοι τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ) according to the plurality of the those who are active (τῷ ἐνεργοῦν), because none of their effort is exclusive and specific to each one. Everything that happens, whether in reference to his acts of providence for us (εἰ τῇ ἁμετέραν προνοίαν) or to the management and support of the universe (πρὸ τῇ τοῦ πάντου οἰκονομίαν καὶ στασιν), happens through all three, but the events that happen are surely not three (διὰ τῷ τρῖν μὴ γίνεται, οὐ μὴ τριὰ ἐστὶν τὰ γίγνομενα).

Unlike the case of human persons who also have one common (human, created) nature, the divine activity is not divided among the three divine, uncreated persons who are active in the one activity of ‘viewing’. They are not ‘three viewers’ as human viewers would be, they act as one. There is One Viewer called Ὅιος – while simultaneously the name applies to all three persons.

When Gregory comes later to the conclusion of the presentation which began with quotation from Deut.6.4, ‘Hear, Israel: Lord, your God, is one Lord’, he points out that in the Scripture the word ‘Ὅιος’ is guardedly used in the singular form only: this is for ensuring that no different natures are attributed to the divine essence by a plural signification of ‘Gods’. He then adds,

Therefore it [the Scripture] says, ‘Lord, your God is one Lord’, and also proclaims (αἰ ἁρχὴς σε) the Only-begotten God, expressing his divinity without dividing the unity into a dual signification, so as to call the Father and the Son two Gods, although as each is proclaimed God by his saints.

– and concludes:

The Father is God; the Son is God; and yet by the same proclamation God is One, because no difference either of nature or of operation is contemplated in the divinity.

\[ \text{Qeōj meh o(\piath\', qeōj delο(\iub\', eij- deleh̓ τω \(\text{krhug\mati}(\text{qeoj) dia \(}\text{to̓}\text{ mhfe fuəswej mhf e} \text{eneregei}a\text{ e} \text{neqew reisqaitina dia for a} \text{\(\pi\text{hqe}of\hti} \]

\[ Abl GNO III/I 47, 21 – 48, 8. \]
This definition of divine oneness – according to which there is no difference *either of nature or of operation* in God – is the very definition of *perfect oneness* in Gregory, one that naturally applies only in the tri-unity of God. But it also corresponds with something that Jesus prayed for the whole humankind before his Crucifixion (Jn. 17), ‘*I pray for them…that they may be one as we are one.*’ In Gregory, the definition which takes notice of both *huphij* and *eine/rgeia*, has major anthropological implications when attached to the idea of oneness of a human individual, and finally to the ecclesiological and eschatological idea of the unity of the entire Body of Christ. The latter means not only general unity in human nature but, more importantly, oneness *in* Christ. In Christ there exists the unity of resurrected and pure human nature which the whole humankind, as one, is supposed to manifest in all the activities of each of its individual members.  

In the Trinitarian context of *Ad Ablabium* where the aim is to explain the *akolouthia* behind the Trinitarian confession, however, the anthropological implications are not discussed.

Before concluding with his definition of the divine oneness, Gregory has explained something that is part of the conclusion and lies beyond his concept of *one theology*, the activity of speaking which initiates from God. According to Gregory, there is one *qeo/j* whose activities are not divided among the persons who are active in the one and single operation; accordingly the accomplishment of each action is one, not many. Gregory takes ‘the highest of graces’, life, as his example. It is from the highest source that all the beings that have partaken of this grace have obtained their life, Gregory points out, and continues.

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321 Abl GNO III/I 55, 3-10.
322 Cf. the full discussion in the two first articles of this dissertation. The observation above gives me an occasion to comment upon the question of the possible ‘social analogy’ in Gregory’s *Ad Ablabium*. I think Gregory’s ‘three-man analogy’ does not, as such, imply the idea of ‘social analogy’. It is *in Christ* that a human person, and eventually in the *eschaton* the whole of humankind, is drawn into the divine life, or into the ‘Being as Communion’ (which is the excellent title of J. Zizioulas book [1985]). ‘Living in Christ’ is not a matter of natural analogy, but a matter of unification of wills. It takes place in a personal subjection of a human soul to the Son and through the Son to the Father. This is the ‘eschatological telos’ of Christian life which is the goal even of our every day life as Christians. ‘Communion’ is a quality of a divine form of life and living, attainable in and through Christ.
323 Abl GNO III/I 48, 9 – 49. 1. Gregory’s argument of ‘one life’ supports my argument presented in the previous note: as much as there is a ‘one gift’ of life, there is, in fact, one life that everything living shares.
When we inquire into the source of this good of ours, we find, through the guidance of the Scriptures, that it is from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But although we set forth three Persons and names (triá proswpá/te kalíphómata), we do not consider that we have had bestowed upon us three lives (one from each separately), but the same life is actualised by the Holy Spirit, is prepared by the Son and depends upon the will of the Father (h(au)thīzwh̄ kailīparaì toû-ağībû pneumaìkaî ēhgerēkaî kalīparaì toû-uîbû-etoimaz̄etaî kalītoû-patroj ēhptaî boulh̄sw̄j).

Thus based on our preceding discussion, the Holy Trinity does not operate all its activity separately according to the number of its subsistent entities (katâ tôn̂ άριμμôn āριμμôn), but there is –

and this Gregory’s definition of divine operation, ἐνέργεια:

– one single motion and disposition of good will which is conducted from the Father through the Son to the Spirit.

ἐνέργεια

Miā tij gĭhetai toû-āgaqoû-qelh̄matoj kih̄hsij tē kalīdiadosij, ektoû-patroj diā tōû-uîbû-proû tolpneuma diecagomenh̄.

Divine ἐνέργεια is here defined as one movement and disposition of divine will from the Father through the Son in/to the Holy Spirit, and it is repeated over and again in the text. One motion of divine will, ἐνέργεια, goes throughout the Holy Trinity in all acts of providence, care and superintendence (proñoia, khdemonia, ἐπιστασιά). While directed by the Holy Trinity, the activity is always one and not divided according to the number of the persons contemplated in faith (katalōn̄aριμμôn twm ēh t̄h̄-pístei qewroumenihn proswpwn). The movement of divine will is atemporal and adiastematic (ākronoj, āβiāstatoj), without time and intervals. The movement is not, however, āh̄arxoj, without beginning. When the Holy Spirit divides the good gifts and can be drawn into through faith in Christ: according to Gregory this is a birth of virtue (cf. VM II 1-5), to which a Christian is supposed to give birth again and again through his deliberate action.

‘Delibetare action’ is actually ‘subjection to Christ’, the only true Lord in whom there is liberation from all the powers that enslave human nature.

324 Note the verb diecāgw, indicating something that comes ‘out through’ (dīēk, diēt). God’s ‘voice’ (h(fw̄nh)) is such a thing in Gregory. The term ‘voice’ stands for a divine self-expression which comes ‘out through God’ into creation, that is, ‘extends’ throughout the Holy Trinity and is experienced as divine operation manifesting divinity.
of God to every man severally (1. Cor 12.11), we find that the Power which we conceive preceding this motion is the Only-begotten God, the maker of all things: Christ, the Wisdom and Power of God (1. Cor 1.24). Through him we notice that the good issues from the will of the Father, the Beginning (Jn. 1.1). In the omnipotent, atemporal and adiastematic divine action, the divine persons are regarded, in Gregory, as the Beginning (Father), the Power (Son) and the Actuality immediate with the Beginning (Holy Spirit) in the one movement of the divine will, ἐνεργεία.

This means that when we experience (in the Spirit) the actuality of the divine action issuing from the will of the Father, what we are able to notice is the divine Power: he is further known, by Christians, as Christ the Lord Incarnate. What is peculiar in Gregory is his idea that in all dealings with God, what we are able and meant to perceive is Christ. In Christ, through him, we see the Father – but already when recognising Christ according to his divinity as the pre-existent divine Power, we received the Spirit. Our recognition of the Holy Trinity, then, itself is a work of the Holy Trinity. It is a result of one activity that issues from the Father, and has its centre in Christ, God’s Power working all in the Spirit.

While we realise only gradually the presence of the Three in the one motion of will, the whole Trinity of God has been present in his action all the ‘time’. And it is we who need the time, not God: the creator of time ‘has’ all the time we need. In his Trinitarian argumentation, Gregory lays much emphasis on the notion of the Only-begotten as God’s power revealed to us in Christ. When we hear that Christ is God’s wisdom and power, we may understand that there could not have been time when Christ, the Only-begotten Son ‘was not’. If Christ did not pre-exist in the Beginning, in the Father who has no beginning, the Father had no power – or wisdom, for that matter – in his pre-existence. Powerless, unwise and alogos God is an impious thought, but not only that. It is a logical problem which results from the failure to follow the sequence of God’s self-revelation. If the Father existed without Power and Wisdom, how did

325 Abl GNO III/I 50, 13 – 52.2
creation ever come to be? Besides, St. John has something to add: not only was this *logos* of God *in* the ‘Mind’ called God, but already in the beginning *with* God.

One could not start contemplating these things had not God revealed himself in the words of his saints – nor did the saints themselves invent what they proclaimed. God has been active first, Gregory acknowledged: without God’s initial *revealing activity* there could be no such thing as ‘theology’. It, too, must be a good gift of God, and as such, it too proclaims his oneness. There are three persons but we do not have three life-givers and three saviours, not three lives, and three salvations, one from each person. Instead, we have one life, one salvation, because ‘Lord, our God is one Lord.’ And because there is one Lord and God, there is also one theology.

### 2.3. Hearing ‘*qeoj*’ in ‘*lo/goj*’

The claim that God is named God (*qeoj*) because of his viewing power is central in *Ad Ablabium*: according to Gregory, ‘God’ is ‘the Viewer’. Further, it has been shown that in that text Gregory’s aim is to introduce to the reader his idea of how the message of the Bible is heard according to its intention, which is to reveal God, the Viewer, as Holy Trinity. According to Gregory’s ‘Christian hearing’, then, in the central passage of Deut. 6.4, the divine voice addressed to Israel, God’s people, would say: Hear, Church: Viewer, your Lord, is one Lord! At first this may sound absurd (at least when put in English). Is God just a Viewer? It could be a Platonic notion – but, in that case, why not rather choose *qewri/a* root instead of *qea~sqai*, if ‘to be God’, ultimately, is all about ‘seeing’?

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326 *Abl* GNO III/I 49, 20 – 50, 12.
327 Cf. *CE* III/II 16-22 GNO II 57, 4 – 59, 7; *CE* III/VI 2ff GNO II 185,15ff.
328 And without theology, there could be *no theognosia*, knowing God through Christ, the Word of God.
329 *Abl* GNO III/I 52, 2 – 12.
330 This is the very point where previous research has failed to recognise the peculiar emphasis of Gregory in *Ad Ablabium*, one which subtly but decisively distinguishes him from the Greek tradition: he does not say that the root of *theologia* is *theoria*. The subtlety resides in his analysis of the etymology of the word *qeoj* where he has made some considerable progress since the writing of *Ad Graecos*. According to Gregory’s analysis in *Abl*, the name *qeoj* does not only imply God’s contemplative, but more
The ultimate meaning implied by Gregory’s concept of divine seeing, however, is emphatically Christian. It will shortly be seen that the etymology which Gregory suggests for the word θεός shows to which ethnic tradition his ‘Greek mind’ contemplates the Greek words of the Septuagint ultimately belongs: he gives the Greek word θεός a substantially Judeo-Christian, biblical interpretation. It is ‘Κύριος ο[θεός]’ of the Old Testament, and of the New – ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’: Gregory is talking about God who speaks with his people. The first pioneer of the modern ‘Gregory renaissance’, Hans Urs von Balthasar, was very right in emphasising the importance of the concept of ‘God who speaks’ (θεός λεγόν). That is the direction in which his mind tends from every Greek word he lays his eyes on in his Bible written in Greek – while he does not forsake the ‘κοιναὶ εἰμναί’ of the Greeks who, naturally, are most intimate with Greek words.

As said before, Gregory attaches three concepts to the one divine activity of ‘viewing’ whence the name θεός is derived: ἐποπτική, ὁρατική, qεατική. Of emphatically, also, God’s revelatory power. L. Ayres 2003, for example, who correctly speaks of Gregory’s exposition of the grammar of theology in Abl, writes only about ‘the divine activity of seeing or contemplating’ when discussing (p.29) Gregory’s argument on the basis of the term ‘Godhead’ (theotes). In other words the third, the most innovative and distinctive aspect of Gregory’s three-fold division horatike-epoptike-theatike has largely escaped the attention of scholars. Consequently, it has not influenced our way of reading his texts. The observant translation of B. Duvick correctly makes distinctions between God’s seeing, contemplating and revelatory powers: it would be important to publish the translation because in this respect, at least, it makes more manifest some important points which Gregory makes in his original Greek.

331 Gregory’s mind is often characterised as ‘Greek’ because of its tendency to speculate.

332 Von Balthasar writes: ‘The object of “theology” is strictly limited to what “the trumpet” clearly wants to make heard from on high, from θεός λεγόν.’ While agreeing with von Balthasar as it comes to the emphasis he puts to Gregory’s notion of ‘speaking God’, I disagree with his idea that ‘theology’, for Gregory, meant ‘merely an inventive approach’. In my view, theology in Gregory is not an ‘approach’ but the very thing which is approached when contemplating, ‘following’ the passages of the ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’ regarded as ‘divine speaking’. My suggestion is that in Gregory’s view, theology is what is trumpeted ‘from on high’, from θεός λεγόν. Cf. Von Balthasar 1995, 172-173.

333 According to Gregory both convention (sunhē̃a) and teaching of the Scripture (twn grã w̃ didaskalía) support his supposition: ‘divinity’ (θεότης) is named after (the power of) ‘vision’ (εἶδος θεός) – hence we call our ‘Overseer’ (tōn qewrõ h(μν θεός) ‘God’. As Gregory well knew this was not the only convention around: Nazianzen, for example supports another etymology. Gregory’s overall enthusiasm, as well as his emphasis on the etymology according to one particular ‘traditional convention’ he has chosen, is exceptional.

334 Abl GNO III/1 44, 10-12. By distinguishing between horatike, ẽpoptike and theatike in Ad Ablabium, Gregory develops further the argument originally made in Ad græcos written in 379: ‘[T]he specific property of the eternal substance, to which the Father and Son and Holy Spirit belong, is to watch
Rather it represents the final stage of long development in Gregory’s thinking where the concept of ‘will’ which reveals God – in distinction to the emphasis there given to the concept of God’s revelation, as the motion of the divine will as the root for the name θεότης in Ad graecos, and while his view would seem to culminate in God’s knowing of things, already in that source he identifies ‘seeing’ and ‘ruling’ individually. In Ad Ablabium there is new emphasis given to the concept of καθήμενη as the root of the ‘name of divinity’ (ὁμομα θαρ σωματος) – and to the notion of God’s ‘viewing’ as his divine activity of ‘revealing’ himself. This shift of emphasis according to his earlier intuition corresponds with Gregory’s noticeable development from his early Originian intellectualism to his later distinctive voluntarism, as A. MEREDITH 1995 59-61 expresses it, or from his early Platonism to his later more distinctively Christian ideas, as A.A. MOSSHAMMER 1997, 172 sees Gregory’s intellectual development. The turn begins to occur clearly in De hominis opificio written soon after Ad Graecos, but the Trinitarian polemics, as usual, provide the context for a stage when the development is most distinctive also in Gregory’s idea of the relevant etymology of the word ‘God’.

In CE II (149 GNO I 268 28-269,2) Gregory says that God gets his titles from the actions he is believed to perform for our lives. The title ‘God’ itself is given to the one who supervises, observes and with his vision penetrates hidden things: θεός γατ αυτοι λεγοντες τοβ αφενα και διαρατικον των κρυμμενων νουμενον επικαλουσθεσ. In that instance, he ends up by addressing the movement of the divine will as the root of the divine actions we observe before naming God according to them. In CE III (CE III/X 29 GNO II 292, 23f) Gregory explains: ‘[T]he name of Godhead itself (αυτολογη τοθθαρ ονμα [cf. the expression αυτολογη θαρ θαρ used in Abl]) – whether it indicates the authority of oversight or of foresight (ελεθα εποπτικαν ελεθα προνοηθικαν ετουσιαν σμαλην) – imports a certain relation to humanity (οικελων εκει το τολαχωρ κατων). For he who bestowed on all things that are the power of being, is the God and overseer of what he himself has produced (θεος και εποπτικαν των απο εκει παγων εθει).’ What Gregory has in mind is ‘God’s product’ is the human nature which ‘no longer preserved in itself the impress of the Father’s image but was transformed into the soul likeness of sin…by virtue of similarity of will (δια τοθ ταλακρωρ και ταλαχωρ πραοιςεαν ομοοπτικαν) into the evil family of the father of sin’. He can then begin explaining how, for the reason of his philanthropy, the Father sent his Son – the Shepherd of the whole rational creation – after the sheep (the human nature) which had gone astray: ‘having become what we are, through himself he again united humanity to God’ (γενομενοι απερ ημεις δια εκατου παλιν συνηγω τους τολαχωρ κατων). Gregory continues: ‘For having by purity brought into closest relationship (συγγενεια) the Father of our nature that new man which is created after God (τοβ καινοι εκεινων απο τους και τους Θεον κτισεντα, ειν δωειται αλλα τολαχωρ θεοδουλου θεον ημεις ημεις μεταμοιρωθεν εικονα εις αυτων). And so he introduces the woman, not to those disciples only [apostles], but also to all who up to the present day become disciples of the Word (παινε ουν των καινων ομαγις εομενοιν των ημεις ημεις).’ Word within a body where there the presence of the whole fullness of divinity, is ‘divine speaking’: divine action proclaiming God’s love of man. It attains disciples, identified as ‘disciples of the Word’ – called, a few lines later, children (ταπαιδα) that God have given to Christ (cf. Heb 2.13) – hearing and further proclaiming theology ‘bodily’ in human words and deeds according to God’s will, as partakers in Christ’s body. In this body, there is a koimonia of its members and suggeneia with the Father.

Whether or not Gregory is ‘right’ with his etymology of the word θεότης, his analysis of ομομα θαρ σωματος in Ad Ablabium clearly expresses his final and most mature view on the issue. The emphasis there given to the concept of God’s revelatory power, προνοηθικαν as the motion of the divine will which reveals God – in distinction to εποπτικαν God’s visionary power – is no sudden improvisation. Rather it represents the final stage of long development in Gregory’s thinking where the concept of ‘will’ – both divine and human – grew in significance over that of knowledge.
the three, ἐποπτικὸν/would seem to mean the ‘ability to see’ in the most general sense: just as we can see a walking man, so surely can God, only God sees all walking people. Between ἐποπτικὸν/and ἑωτικὸν/Gregory makes a meaningful technical distinction.335 After discussing in full his claim that the name ‘God’ is derived from the divine activity of watching, and showing that watching can be attributed to each of the divine persons, Gregory presents this particular activity as the basic category of all divine activity. Simultaneously he begins the discussion of ἐνεργεία as motion of divine will. The distinction between ἐποπτικὸν/and ἑωτικὸν/is then made in reference to Christ as the Wisdom and Power of God: through Christ, we notice all persons in one activity. Gregory writes:

\[\text{ἐπιτουθη} \text{ ἑωτικὸν \ τὸ καὶ \ ἑωτικὸν \ ὑπάρχει \ τὸ \ καὶ \ ἑωτικὸν \ ὑπάρχει \ τὸ \ καὶ \ ἑωτικὸν \ ὑπάρχει} \]

When Gregory few lines later proceeds, he reminds that it is now agreed that there is a single principle of both visionary and revelatory power in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: \[\text{ἐπιτουθη} \text{ ἑωτικὸν \ τὸ καὶ \ ἑωτικὸν \ ὑπάρχει \ τὸ \ καὶ \ ἑωτικὸν \ ὑπάρχει} \] He then begins the discussion of ‘all providence, care and attention’ (πᾶσα προνοια καὶ θησαυροῦ καὶ τουπαντο \ ἐπιστασια).338 The distinction between ἐποπτικὸν/and ἑωτικὸν/Gregory has laboriously prepared by his etymology of the name ὑπάρχει, looks very similar with the ‘two sides of religious virtue’, theoretical and practical, he introduces in De vita Moysis as the virtue of Moses.339 Man as God’s image is like God, and this is the indication of this similarity.340

335 Abl GNO III/I 49,20-50,5.
336 Ibid.
337 Abl GNO III/I 50, 13-14.
338 Abl GNO III/I 50, 13 ff.
339 Cf. VM II 166;192. One might further suggest that the distinction between ἐποπτικὸν/and ἑωτικὸν/has something to do with the distinction which Gregory, unlike his modern commentators, does make
Epoptikh/ is the transcendent power of theoretical vision whereby God does not only see ‘walking man’ but sees also the thoughts and aims of the walking man. By epoptikh/ God comprehends and searches out everything, even hidden and invisible things (ta\aγε\aτα): it is the contemplative and transcendent aspect of God’s spiritual vision where all things are immediate and present to him without any diastematic, spatial-temporal categories. In epoptikh/ there is immediacy between beginning and actualisation of the operation of the divine power beyond all human history, time and place.

between qeognwsi\a, ‘divine knowledge’ partly communicable and partly incommunicable for the human intellect, and qeologi\a. Should epoptike correspond theologically to something which Origen anthropologically called enoptike, the contemplation of God, Gregory has ‘saved’ the concept of theatike for some other use. And whereas Evagrius called the final stage of the soul’s ascent ‘theologia’, Gregory regarded the soul’s ascent as an infinite progress (epektasis) in the sanctuary of theognosia, and had still one concept – theologio – left for some other use intimate with the concept of theatike meaning God’s ‘revelatory power’. In Gregory’s view, it seems, the Voice that one follows in the divine ‘luminous darkness’ becomes theologio when it is incorporated into a sensible form that a human mind is able to recognise and begin to follow within the created realm. The ‘Voice’ without a sound corresponds with theologio in the inner sanctuary of theognosia, but is no more called ‘theologia’ by Gregory. This might indicate that in the inner sanctuary – which is Christ according to Gregory – one sees God ‘face to face’. This would not mean ‘seeing God’s essence’ but seeing Christ pro\a\a pro\j\a pro\sw\a\a pon (1. Cor 13.12) – as when a man speaks with his friend (Ex. 33.11). In the final beatitude after the eschaton, in fact, when the ‘whole man’ is then living in Christ and each soul has Christ living within herself, we would be able to see Christ already in the face of our neighbour, according to Gregory’s idea. Cf. the discussion that will follow.

340 As a living creature created in the image and likeness of God, human nature, ‘man’ – as reflected in the individuals who participate in that nature – should manifest in all its actions God’s wisdom and power, that is, Christ who reveals God as ‘man-loving’ and Triune. Only after acknowledging this central idea of Gregory, one may link his idea to Origenian idea of distinctions between ethike, fusike and enoptike (or praktike, fusike and theologio as Evagrius has it). Gregory’s idea relates to his notion of ‘man’ as one of God’s many words that proclaim him, insofar as human nature exists and acts according to God’s will; in this case human nature as a work of God belongs to his theatike. Gregory’s horatike-epoptike-theatike division relates to virtue, contemplation and union as the three aspects of ‘seeing Christ’: horatike relates to the observing of the virtuous, moral actions (in both words and deeds) of some person imitating Christ, epoptike to the contemplation of the divine nature of the power (Christ) behind those actions and theatike to hearing God speaking through the actions of the created, human agent. As shown, in Gregory’s account ‘hearing God’s voice’ is the same as ‘seeing God’. The other side of all this is that it is through the exercise of virtue that man is able to participate in God’s revelatory power, theatike. Virtue is thus not merely a means to an end. Rather, in virtue, that is, in the loving disposition of the will, it becomes manifest what human nature is all about ‘in the likeness of God’. In the activities of human nature, the divine nature ought to become proclaimed, and God as love manifested, as it is manifested in Christ. Gregory’s idea is that if someone was looking at St. Paul, for example, he or she would see Christ ‘acting’ – living and speaking – in him. It is just as St. Paul says of himself in Gal 2.20: ‘It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me’. In 2.Cor 13.3 Paul further indicates that Christ is speaking through him. For discussion of these issues, cf. especially the second and the fourth articles of this dissertation.
Qeατιkh/represents divine immanence in the creation: it is the practical aspect of ‘God’s view’. It connotes God’s revelatory power whereby we observe God in the first place and recognise him as God, our Over-seer: qeατιkh/ emphatically, lies behind our naming of the divinity, qeο/t'hj, according to verb qeασqαi as qeο/j, God. It is correct to say that qeατιkh/is divine action ad extra, dispensation (oικονομία): it includes creation, providence, judgement, all care and instruction. Ultimately, and very centrally, it includes also the Incarnation of the Word. It is not as such applied in Ad Ablabium, but salvation is emphasised,\textsuperscript{341} and Gregory says that all oikonomia is included in what he is talking about. As ‘the Viewer’, then, qeο/j is not just a Spectator, a ‘Watcher of walking people’. Neither does he only ‘contemplate the world’ in his transcendence: that God ‘looks at us’ does not only mean that he knows our most hidden secrets by his power of η)pοτιkh/ God is not only the ‘Seer of our inner man’ as we walk, or whatever we are doing. He also shows great concern for all the walking people whom he sees and knows through and through. Gregory has made a good point by indicating that the universal human ability of abstract conception\textsuperscript{342} universally carries an idea of ‘watching’ as an activity which does not mean merely ‘seeing’ some thing. A parent, for example, who watches his or her children, is a parent whose face the children can see simultaneously as the parent shows concern and is taking care of the children he or she watches over.

Such then is Gregory’s idea of qeατιkh/as presented in Ad Ablabium. God’s viewing or ‘looking’ means, most importantly, that he looks after us. This way, he also reveals himself to us as someone ‘who looks after us’ through his own Word. God ‘sees to it’, so to speak, that we come to know him according to his will – in and through Christ – as loving Father, ‘philanthropic God’.\textsuperscript{343} We in turn, as human beings, may ‘see God’ only insofar as he wills and – according to his will – reveals himself to us in the Spirit. And as we have remarked, seeing God, in Gregory, means following

\textsuperscript{341} Abl GNO III/I 52,3-52,12.
\textsuperscript{342} The gift of η)pοtιkh, ‘abstract conception’, is not a special gift given only for some individuals. According to Gregory, we all have it.
\textsuperscript{343} Cf. the fourth article of this dissertation.
In his view, the voice, ὑμοῦ, is clothed in the human words of the saints: this divine speaking is an expression of divine will which goes throughout the Holy Trinity.

One must be with God in order in order to hear and follow him. This is the anthropological consequence of Gregory’s theological idea of ‘hearing’, its anthropological ‘with-aspect’, or the aspect of distance (διαστήμα): man is diastematic being, defined by intervals and constant ‘becoming’. There is also the anthropological ‘in-aspect’ – the aspect of presence (παρουσία) – that we must not forget. It makes possible the crossing over of the gaps otherwise impossible for human being to cross over. In De beatitudinibus (Hom.6), when discussing Matthew 5.8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, Gregory writes: ‘the Lord does not say that knowing something about God is blessed, but to possess God in oneself’. ‘To see’, he has just explained, ‘in scriptural usage means the same as to possess’. In De vita Moysis, in turn, when Moses entered, by faith, into the darkness where God was, he was in God. Gregory has two dimensions to his ‘in-aspect’, then: to ‘possess God in oneself’ and to ‘be in God’.

Gregory thinks that when Moses was in God, he was nevertheless still with him, following behind him: stretching out towards Christ whom he possessed in himself. In Gregory the ‘with and in’ aspects are simultaneous: man can be, and is finally meant to be, in and with God simultaneously. It is not human dunamis that overcomes localisation and diastema, the natural condition of all creation. It is Christ, the power of God who crosses over and unites, indwells but still invites. It is he, our Κύριος: the divine λόγος who already in the beginning was in and with God. Christ can also be in and with us – in God and with God, as he himself is God, the Son who always is with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

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344 When having a discussion, we often ask our listening companion: ‘do you follow?’ If our listener does not understand something we say, he or she says: ‘wait, I do not follow!’ Hearing another one according to his or her intention gives us an inner vision, and makes us say: ‘Oh, I see! Now I hear you!’ Seeing and hearing relate to each other in our everyday, common language.
2.4. The heart of ἑπεκτασία

The anthropological *in* and *with* aspects are consequences of Gregory’s theological recognition of Christ as the divine *λόγος* in and with God in the beginning (Jn. 1.1-2). This recognition is the beating heart of Gregory’s theologically motivated, Christocentric anthropological vision. The notion of ἑπεκτασία, the soul’s *infinite* reaching out *towards* God even as it already is *in* God who, in turn, *indwells* the soul, is founded to the Trinitarian recognition of the divine *λόγος* which always exists in and with God – that is, was not and is not ever absorbed *in* God regarded as the Father. Accordingly the soul can be, paradoxically, ‘in God’ *with* *λόγος* and ‘with God’ *in* *λόγος*.

There is deep integration between ‘theological’ and ‘spiritual’ in Gregory. Evidently, ἑπεκτασία, presented as a *psychological* fact on the basis St. Paul’s testimony in Phil 3.13, described as following Christ according to his repeated call in the Gospels, has its *theological*, Trinitarian foundation on the prologue of the Gospel according St. John. This brings us to the reason why Gregory was willing to consider St. John as ‘the theologian’ among all the saints before and after him. It is St. John who proclaims:

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\text{Ἐν ἀρχῇ ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐπροέτοιμασεν τὸν θεὸν. καὶ θεὸν ἐπροέτοιμασεν ὁ λόγος. οὐκ ἐϕεξῆς ἡ ἀρχὴ ἔστι}
\]

345 God’s *logos* is uncreated and divine by essence: there is no *diastema* between the Father and the Son, and in reference to the *logos* of God, the ‘in’ and ‘with’ aspects exist according to this ‘perichoretic’ divine reality which human reason cannot comprehend. The Son as the divine *logos* does not ‘follow God’ but ‘is God’, willing what the Father wills and being himself what the Father wills. Man, in turn, never ceases to be, in essence, a created, diastematic being. Although in the final beatitude human nature, according to Gregory, is divinized, and the human ‘nothingness’ before the infinity of the divine nature seems to ‘disappear’ in God’s ‘everythingness’, the distinction between ‘the man who follows’ and ‘the God who is followed’ remains. Gregory’s idea of *epektasis* as *eternal* ascent without an end would collapse, if he thought otherwise. Evidently, in Gregory’s idea according to which human nature is eventually ‘commingled’ with the divine nature into which it disappears ‘like a drop of vinegar into the sea’, this ‘disappearing’ is to be understood in a relative, not in an absolute sense as an annihilation of the human nature. Gregory’s idea is not ‘crude’ – as J. H. STRAWLEY 1906 suggets – but very sensitive and subtle.

346 Cf. Mt. 8.22; Mk. 2.14; Lk 9.23; 14.27;18.22; Jn 12..26 – to list only a few.
In St. John, the very first we hear about ἡ λογος, God the Word, is that he was in God – ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ λόγος – with God and was God: in the beginning he was with God. In the third book of Contra Eunomium Gregory writes how the sublime John, the voice of thunder (ἱπτάει ὅ πνημα, ‘proclaims the mystery of theology’, το θεολογίαν κηρύσσει μορφήν) and purges his proclamation from all conceptions of passion (παρείη ὑπέρτερν ἐκκαίοτερεί το θεολογία). He does not speculate but proclaims – not for himself but for us. According to Gregory, the voice of John prepares our ears and trains our hearing so that we could form an adequate conception of the pure and passionless divine begetting of the Son.

Gregory has just previously argued that ‘Son’ is the highest divine name we have of Christ. Son is exceptional among all the names that we attach to ‘θεος’ – understood as the Father – with the relative conjunction ‘of’ or ‘with’ (Son of God, Word of God, Wisdom of God, Only-begotten of the Father etc.).

347 CE III/II 16-23 GNO II 57,4-59,27. For an an excellent recent article on the prologue of the Gospel of St. John, and its relation to Phil 2. 5-11, cf. L.F. MATEO-SECO 2005.

348 Ibid.: ιδού γεραπετρᾶ ἐκ υἱοθετησεν το ἐυαγγελιον... The idea of St. John proclaiming and us listening – and hearing with ears purged by the logos proclaimed through successive stages – permeates the whole of Gregory’s discourse on John 1.1-14. St. John has a great concern for the natural, ‘untrained’ condition of our hearing – but it would be simply ridiculous to claim that one needed to rush to read the dialogues of Plato in order to receive some valid training for hearing St. John right. The paideusis required is provided by St. John’s prologue itself.

349 The following analysis is based on CE III/I 131-138 (GNO II 47,26-50,5). See also Ibid.73-82

350 In distinction to such names as ‘shepherd’ or ‘physician’: Christ is not ‘a healer of God’ but ‘of us’. In this context Gregory makes a distinction between divine names that indicate his ‘lofty and unspeakable glory’ and ‘the variety of the providential dispensation’ (θη προνοητὴν οἰκονομὴν) – ‘as if it were by a scientific rule (αἱ ἐπαίδευσιν τινὰ τινὰ καὶ κάνον)’. One should notice that Gregory does not name this valid technical distinction as a distinction between θεολογία and οἰκονομία – as it is traditionally named. The reason is that while theology may culminate in the names of God’s lofty and unspeakable glory, all divine names proclaim God and by all divine names we also may glorify God. Gregory wants to reserve the term ‘theology’ for more comprehensive use. One may notice that in the context the name ‘light’ is not counted among the first class of names: Only-begotten is not the ‘light of God’ in the sense that he would be ‘light to God’. He is, rather, ‘Light from God’: Light ‘of us’, ‘Light of the world’. The concept of light, however, most certainly belongs to θεολογία. As the ‘Light of the world’ and ‘men’, Christ shines no other Light than that of God’s eternal Light. The analogy of light, in Gregory, purges our conception of the divine begetting as does the analogy of the word. Light is in fact a special ‘Trinitarian name’ (like ‘Life’ or ‘Truth’). ‘Word’ designates the Son: it is a name of Christ. One would not say: ‘Father is Word, Son is Word, Holy Spirit is Word’, or ‘the Holy Trinity is Word’ – but one could say these things if ‘Light’ were used instead. The Creed says that the Son is ‘Light of Light, very God of very God’. ‘Light’ is like the concept of God’s glory itself – the Son is the ‘brightness of the
Only the name ‘Son’ immediately presents to our mind also the existence of ‘Father’ who would not be Father without the Son: he is other than the Son in his person while he must be of the same essence as his own Son. The name ‘Son’, therefore, need not be understood in some more God-fitting sense than its natural meaning. The name ‘Only-begotten’ is a stone of stumbling for many: its natural meaning in the created order indicates one nature, but also space, time and passion. None of these belong to the spiritual, incorporeal and pre-temporal birth of the Only-begotten in divine pre-existence. Our conception of it is made pure, in John’s proclamation, by the natural glory (Heb.1.3). God is glorified in qeologiā, not only for what we regard him to be in his unspeakable glory but also what he has done and does for us: ‘man’ glorifies his Creator in qeologiā – and there is nothing that he can give back to God that has not been given to him by God. For the use of light-analogy, and other analogies purging our hearing, cf. Ref Eun 87-96 GNO II 348.3-352.11.

351 The name ‘Wisdom’ does not show relation as ‘Son’ does: every son has a father.
352 The analogy of Light purges our conception of the Only-begotten as the ‘Word’ of God which is not, as our words are, an audible, physical sound uttered in the air, heard by physical ears.
353 Modern readers often stumble in the way they ‘hear’ the word ‘passion’ (‘suffering’, pa/qoj) in Gregory, with ears spoiled by the presupposition of Hellenization. Cf. R.P.C. HANSON 1988, 122, cited and followed by C.M. LAUGNA 1991, 35, who loses even the last grasp of Gregory’s idea of ‘passion’ and ‘suffering’. Anthropologically, ‘the necessary routines of nature’ are ‘rather works than passion of nature’, Gregory writes. ‘Nothing is truly passion which does not tend to sin’: ‘truly passion’ is defined as ‘diseased condition of will’. Things like birth, nourishment, growth, sleep and toil, and emotions like pain, fear or temptation belong to human nature that experiences lack of some good. If ‘passion’ properly so called is defined as sin, but emotions and experiences, ‘sufferings’ that result from the lack of something, are separated from the concept of ‘passion’, there is nothing alien to Christianity, and nothing distinctively Greek, to say that ‘passion’ – sin! – is a bad thing. Theologically, in God who by nature is ‘Good-itself, ‘Life-itself’, etc – and ‘Love’ – there is no lack that in the case of man activates the ‘necessary routines of nature’. God did not save man because of a ‘lack of love’, not because of some ‘necessary routine of nature’, but because he loves man. He is, according to Gregory, a ‘man-loving nature’, but he did not create man because he needed to (be loved back). Instead, he wanted – wanted to express his love. Christ’s name ‘Word’ indicates God’s power to express: in and through Christ he expresses his love. God’s love meets man’s natural need. ‘The reason for the Incarnation was not that the Son should be made subject to suffering’, Gregory writes: rather, the Son came to man who was suffering, so that he – and through him, the Father – ‘should be manifested as a lover of men’. According to Gregory’s soteriological view, it was necessary that God took onto him the authentic sufferings of human nature, that is, suffered as man, not as God: what good for us would there have been, if the sufferings of Christ were but a divine show and not genuine sufferings of man? Surely by divine powers the human sufferings would have been ‘no big deal’ for God. Gregory’s idea is that in the one person of Christ, God knows our sufferings as man: in Christ we need not suffer any more overwhelmed by the ‘see’ of his divine nature when we are exalted and made ‘Christ and Lord’ – except the ‘sweet suffering’ of love, the chief routine of our nature, and of our will besides. This suffering of love is because Christ is not only in us and we in God, but Christ is also with us, inviting to follow still. Cf. CE III/IV 27-35 GNO II 144, 11 - 147, 20; CE III/III 30-69 GNO II 180, 14 - 133, 20.
meaning of the name ‘Word’. The analogy of Mind and Word helps us to hear the unpassionate character of the divine begetting. But it is only an analogy, one of many: it is not correct for Christians to pray or confess ‘in the name of the Mind, Word and Spirit’. Christian spirituality is not ‘spirituality of mind’ but of ‘indwelling Word’ who becomes known, in the Holy Spirit, as the Son of the Father.

In the ‘hierarchy’ of Christ’s divine names, one must be very clear, ‘Son’ is the highest in Gregory’s view. The name ‘Only-begotten’ addresses the Son’s uniqueness (‘only’) and names his hypostasis (as ‘begotten’, not ‘made’). The name ‘Word’ further clarifies the concept of begetting – but besides that, the name ‘Word’ has a special meaning of its own: it indicates the intellectual will-power of self-expression. This is what qēatikh, meaning ‘revelatory power’, behind the name qēo is, as we learn from Ad Ablabium.

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354 Cf. CE III/VI 15 GNO II 191, 1-11 where Gregory discusses the problem of analogies: ‘But if we are to confirm our statement [concerning the eternity of the Only-begotten] by further arguments, it may be possible to apprehend the doctrine on this point by the things cognisable by our senses. And let no one deride our statement, if it cannot find among existing things a likeness of the object of our enquiry such as may be in all respects sufficient for the presentation of the matter in hand by the way of analogy and resemblance.’ A few lines later (Ibid. 27-29 195, 22-196,24) Gregory begins his discussion of the biblical analogies that relate to the mystery of the ‘generation’ of the Only-begotten. Gregory says that it is important to examine the significance of word ‘generation’ (γεννήσις). According to him it is clear to anyone that it ‘presents to us the fact of being as the result of some cause’. He proceeds by pointing out that of things which are the result of something, some are (1) the result of matter and art, like the structure of buildings; others (2) the result of matter and nature, like the generation of animals; others (3) the result of material efflux, as there is the sun and its beam; finally, there is (4) ‘another species of generation in which the cause is immaterial and incorporeal, but the generation is an object of sense and takes place by corporeal means’, like ‘the word which is begotten by the mind’. A bit later (Ibid. 32-34 197,6-24) Gregory writes: ‘Now these modes of generation being well known to men, the men-loving dispensation of the Holy Spirit (ἡ φιλανθρωπία του ἁγίου πνεύματος οἰκονομία), in delivering us the divine mysteries, conveys its instruction (διδασκαλία) on those matters which transcend language by means of what is within our capacity…it employs the numerous forms of generation to present to us, from the inspired teaching, the unspeakable existence of the Only-begotten, taking just so much of each as may be reverently admitted into our conceptions concerning God (εἰς τὰ περὶ τοῦ ἐν τῷ ὑπὸ τοῦ ὑπ 页面的文本内容。
Gregory’s thinking is very subtle. Even conceptually, he thinks, there is \( \text{lo} \text{goj} \) επ \( \text{qew} \) ‘word’ in ‘God’: the concept of ‘God’ (\( \theta \text{e}os \)) already implies the idea of the expression of will which takes place through word (\( \text{lo} \text{gos} \)). This is not the only finesse of Gregory’s deeply integrated thinking. When we are ‘with \( \text{lo} \text{goj} \)’, i.e. hear the divine voice calling and follow it, the towards-coming Word itself washes our hearing: one is then in the ‘bath of the Word’.\(^{357}\) It is important to realise that Gregory distinguishes between α\( \text{fai} \text{res}i\) and κα\( \text{qars}i\), between ‘cutting off’ and ‘purifying’ in his notion of divine contemplation. This is something to which Gregory scholarship has not yet paid sufficient attention.\(^{358}\) In Gregory’s view, clearly, ap\( \text{haire} \text{s}i\) is acceptable to our senses. The universe was constituted by the will of God (\( \text{e} \text{didh} \text{gat} \) \( \text{qel} \text{hmati} \) \text{tou-}\( \text{qous-suneth} \text{talpanta} \)), and it is human habit to indicate our purpose (\( \text{tolbou} \text{hma} \)) first in a word (\( \text{lo} \text{goj} \)), and thus to add the deed (\( \text{tol} \text{e} \text{gon} \)) to match the purpose[...].Merely by willing God constructed the universe, and...without trouble and effort the divine will became reality (\( \text{tolqe} \text{ien} \text{bou} \text{hma} \) \( \text{fusij} \) \( \text{e} \text{he} \text{teo} \)).

\(^{357}\) Cf. Cant XI GNO XI 328. Gregory writes about the ‘bath of the Word’ and relates it to the ‘washing of the feet’ spoken of in the Song 5.3. The ‘feet’ are associated on the one hand with the ascent and with the delivering of the divine message on the other. For the bath, one must cast off the sandals (as Moses once did when approaching the burning bush): Gregory distinguishes between ‘washing’ and ‘casting off’. They necessarily relate to each other but they are not identical. By casting off the ‘dead skin’ which covers the ‘feet of the soul’ – i.e. by ap\( \text{haire} \text{s}i\) – the soul removes the fleshly ‘veil’ from her heart and opens, as the bride, a way for the Word who is the bridegroom: the Word washes the ‘feet of the soul’ as he dwells in the soul who ‘puts on Jesus’.

\(^{358}\) Cf. the recent and very valuable studies by T. BÖHM 1996 and by D. CARABINE 1995. The notion I wish to add to Böhm’s analysis, is Gregory’s distinction between α\( \text{fai} \text{res}i\) and κα\( \text{qars}i\), or κα\( \text{qars}i\). The distinction reveals the dialectical disposition Gregory conceives as operating between the human logos and the divine in the divine contemplation and the ascent of the soul. Böhm notices the dialogical character of Gregory’s idea as manifested in the fertile tension Nyssen conceives existing, through the instrument of α\( \text{ll} \text{egor} \text{i}\), between the \( \text{istori} \) and the \( \text{skopo} \) of the biblical texts. Böhm calls the whole process of progressing from the immediate textual and historical level of the biblical narratives into the hidden level of their spiritual meaning α\( \text{fai} \text{res}i\), ‘abstraction’. Accordingly D. Carabine describes Gregorian ap\( \text{ophasis} \) in terms of ap\( \text{haire} \text{s}i\). It is not, however, by the method of abstraction or that of denial (ap\( \text{ophasis} \)) that the human mind becomes silenced before God according to Gregory. Instead, there is the human feeling of incompetence, God saying ‘no’, and the human subjection to the will of God. When the human soul, in its desire to know the One she loves, accepts her natural intellectual disposition before the incomprehensibility of God’s infinite essence, subjects itself to God’s ‘no’ and strives to ‘walk by faith, not knowledge’, it becomes able to rise ever higher still in theo\( \text{gnosia} \), that is, knowing God in Christ. Gregory, then, departs from Origen as it comes to the question of the essential knowledge of God by giving new emphasis to the concept of faith and divine infinity. But formally Nyssen’s epistemology is similar with that of his Alexandrian processor who focused on the person of Christ in knowing God. In De vita Mysis, Gregory conceives Moses’ taking off the sandals and his son’s circumcision in terms of α\( \text{fai} \text{res}i\). It is forsaking the initial trust in natural discursive knowledge, and opening up to the divine instruction of the Word in theological issues. When the ‘fleshy’ knowledge, i.e., knowledge based on material, physical creation, is removed from the ‘feet of the soul’, then the Truth – the Word expressing the divine will – manifests itself to the soul. This is κα\( \text{qars}i\),
something that we can do according to our own decision when reflecting on things. But in *katharsion*, what washes and makes pure is another substance than that which is washed and made pure: when washing hands, for example, without the cleansing water it is no use rubbing one’s hands together, and it is the water that washes away all the filth without our ‘decision’. In the process of the contemplation of God and his uncreated nature, one must be ready to cut off from one’s conception all such ideas as have the material creation as their proper context or source.\(^{359}\) The Word, however, is actually the ‘water’ that washes the thinking and makes the human concept of God pure.

The technical word Gregory has for ‘conception’ or ‘notion of God’, whether correct or false, is *upo/lhyij*. According to Gregory’s ‘hearing’ and his spiritual exegesis of Ex. 3.5, ‘sandal’, *upo/dhma* equals *upo/lhyij*.\(^{360}\) At the hour of Moses’ coming into the ‘light of Incarnation’, God spoke to him from the thorny bush and first told him to take off his sandals on the holy ground. Gregory interprets this as Moses’ forsaking his former ‘Egyptian’ concepts of (real) Being: ‘taking off the sandals’ is not in this particular instance discussed in terms of ‘garments of skin’ which were put around human nature in transgression. This is one point where Gregory

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\(^{359}\) Gregory’s apophaticism does not mean a process of pursuing ideas more and more abstract, or a gradual process of having fewer and fewer ideas altogether. There is rather an infinite multitude of ideas that must all be left behind when entering the ‘divine darkness’ where – as Moses learned – God is. In the Mountain of *theognosia*, the cloud becomes *thicker* and the trumpet sound *louder* the more one advances in hearing *theologia*: human reason is overwhelmed before the divine infinity and the wonderful character of God. Entering the dark cloud is a final subjection of the human reason to the divine denial: ‘you cannot know me and live’. But Gregory sees there is a promise in this denial: you can follow me in faith and see, learn forever more of me. Before the thickest darkness, the human intellect which is silenced does not experience God’s ‘nothingness’ but his ‘otherness’ in his ‘everythingness’. The soul approaches ‘real-being’ instead of ‘non-being’ (or the One ‘beyond being and non-being’, as the Neoplatonist would have it), and ‘sees more clearly what of the divine nature is uncontemplated’. Cf. *VM* II 163f.

\(^{360}\) Cf. the fifth article of this dissertation.
research has a strong tradition of reading Gregory into the Greek mould whereas he himself is busy distinguishing his exegesis from it.\footnote{Cf. the discussion in A. MALHERBE/E. FERGUSON 1978, 160 note 29. Gregory’s appreciation of the concept of \textit{u pólyhij} (‘notion’, ‘supposition’, or ‘judgement’) is not without good Greek resonance, however. This concept which is not favoured in Platonists, has higher value in Aristotle. When discussing the issues of sense perception and imagination in \textit{De Anima} (\textit{De An} 427b) – in a source that Gregory most certainly new – Aristotle writes that there are varieties of supposition: knowledge, belief and understanding (\textit{thi u pólyhij ðiaforálēpisthm kai dòta kai fôrósij}) and their opposites. Simultaneously he distinguishes between \textit{u pólyhij} and \textit{nohøjij}. That Nyssen respected Aristotle’s view on the human soul ‘scientifically’, cf. Gregory’s \textit{De anima et resurrectione} PG 46 52 A. Instead of ‘scientific’, Plato is more ‘metaphysical’ in Gregory’s view.}

In Gregory’s view, when we follow St. John’s proclamation in human words in the prologue of the Gospel,\footnote{\textit{CE} III/II 16f GNO II 57,4ff. If there is any one particular place in Gregory’s whole corpus where one can be absolutely sure that theology, for Gregory, is something that is proclaimed in order to be heard, it is exactly here. The context is distinctively ‘theological’, Trinitarian – and it is all ‘proclaiming’ and ‘hearing’ that Gregory writes about.} the Word John proclaims itself purifies our ears, trains our hearing and prepares us to receive him as Only-begotten Son. With the Son we receive the Father: when we hear ‘Son’ we know there is ‘Father’, the Father of \textit{this} Son. Thus it is in the Son we receive also the Father dwelling in our soul through faith.\footnote{\textit{CE} III/II 18 GNO II 57,22-58,6. Gregory emphasises that Father and Son enter in us together with the faith when we hear from John that ‘in the beginning was the Word’. When following John’s proclamations, we shall eventually identify ‘Beginning’ as the Father, and ‘Logos’ as the Only-begotten Son. But then our hearing is trained and our heart pure to acknowledge the terms used correctly according to the divine intention which is the contents of the evangelist’s proclamations. \textit{Cf.} also \textit{CE} III/VI 22 GNO II 193, 23-194,7 where Gregory repeats his conviction that as John says that ‘in the Beginning was the Word’ who is God, he asserts ‘this fact to the end that the first idea present to the mind of his hearer may not be ‘the Beginning’ alone by itself.’ Instead: ‘before this has been impressed upon him [the hearer], there should also be presented to his mind, together with the Beginning, the Word who was in it, entering with it into the hearer’s understanding, and being present to his hearing at the same time with the Beginning.’} But we do not receive either the Son or the Father unless we have opened up for the Spirit. Should we let the Spirit open our fleshy ears, we received the divine \textit{logos} through hearing. And as we receive the \textit{logos} in faith, we attain visions of God. It is not the human soul who makes up the vision for herself, it is something that the indwelling \textit{logos} gives to her.

Gregory points out that it is only after a certain sequence that John reaches the culmination of his proclamation of \textit{theologia} and identifies \textit{lo/goj} he proclaims as the Only-begotten Son of the Father. Before this, his lofty speech is still reaching
towards its full height. It is still on the ascendant when he declares that this $\text{lo/goj}$ – who was in God with God in the beginning, and was himself God – is He by whom all things were made. It is He who is life, the light of men, true light that shines in the darkness: it is He who was made flesh and tabernacled by means of flesh in human nature. Then John names the Father and the Only-begotten. Incarnation, clearly, is included in the $\text{qeologi/a}$ proclaimed by St. John, Gregory thinks: it is included in what he regards as $\text{qeologi/a}$, accordingly.

Very clearly, theology, for Gregory, is $\text{to\peril\text{t\text{h\text{e\text{}}}qeij\text{f\text{u\text{\text{}}}\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a\text{\text{a\text{\text{}}}k\text{h\text{\text{}}}\text{\text{u\text{\text{}}}\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a\text{\text{a\text{\text{}}}do\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a\text{\text{a\text{\text{}}}k\text{h\text{\text{}}}\text{\text{u\text{\text{}}}\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a\text{\text{a\text{\text{}}}do\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a}$, ‘proclamation concerning the divine nature’. It is $\text{kerygma}$ which at once

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364 Cf. CE III/II 23 GNO II 59, 15-27: ‘when he [St. John] has first gone through this number and variety of statements, he then names the Father and the Only-begotten, when there can be no danger that what has been purified by so many precautions should be allowed, in consequence of the sense of the word ‘Father’, to sink down to any meaning tainted with pollution. We beheld his glory, he says, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.’ This ends Gregory’s explanation of St. John’s proclamation of the ‘mystery of theology’: the mystery concerns the divine begetting, but Incarnation (the mystery of $\text{oikonomia}$) is not isolated from the sublime activity of ‘proclaiming theology’. It is only that when ‘looking to the Incarnation’ in order to hear theology, one must distinguish between the notions that are uttered in reference to the Word’s incorporeal and passionless divinity from those that are uttered with reference to his corporeal and ‘suffering’ humanity. After discussing the ‘mystery of theology’ as proclaimed by St. John, Gregory criticises Eunomius for not distinguishing between the ‘mystery of theology’ and the ‘physiology of the unstable bodies’. In other words, in Gregory’s view, Eunomius does not distinguish between the ‘uncreated divine Word’ and its ‘created human body’ in theology – the corporation of divine intention – when approaching the divine mystery veiled, in the God-inspired Holy Scripture, in a body of human words.

365 This is very evident and explicit in De vita Moysis. Cf. VM II 158-160. That there have been problems in research in stating this clearly, is because $\text{qeologi/a}$ and $\text{qeognwsi/a}$ have been treated as two equivalent terms meaning ‘divine knowledge’ in the context of De vita Moysis especially, and because Basil distinguished between $\text{kh\text{\text{u\text{\text{}}}\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a\text{\text{a\text{\text{}}}do\text{\text{g\text{m}}}a}$ and $\text{dogma}$. This distinction, in turn, has prevented scholars saying that theology is $\text{kerygma}$ for Gregory; what would then become of the division which Gregory is supposed to make between $\text{theologia}$ and $\text{oikonomia}$, regarded as they have been as (mere) labels for the $\text{dogmas}$ of Trinity and Incarnation? There has been too much emphasis on the concept of $\text{dogma}$ in Gregory altogether: his dogmatic presentations have been separated too far from his exegetical writings – which, in turn, have been counted among his ‘spiritual works’ (especially De vita Moysis). This all ends in the reinforcement of the disturbing division conceived between ‘theological’ and ‘spiritual’ in Gregory. But the separation of $\text{dogma}$ and $\text{qewri/a}$ with reference to Gregory’s texts is clearly a projection of the separation which has actually existed in modern Gregory research itself: it was never made by the author himself.

Despite the fact that Gregory never really adopted Basil’s distinction between $\text{kerygma}$ and $\text{dogma}$, and endorsed $\text{kerygma}$ of the Scripture as $\text{theologia}$, Christianity, in his account, was not merely ‘a religion of a book’. This would be the concern of A. LOUTH 1983, 96ff (cf. also H. DE LUBACK 1961, 196-197) who celebrates the Basilian distinction (85-91), for safeguarding Christianity from a reduction into worship of the mere letter. In the case of Gregory, at least, all fear in this respect is unnecessary. The living tradition and the customs of Christianity were as important for Gregory who was always careful in maintaining his brother’s best intentions in his revisions. For Gregory, Christianity was
reveals God and conceals him from the uninitiated, and, importantly, maintains the ineffability of the divine mysteries. Further, it is necessary to realise that it is not by the physical ears that the spiritual message is eventually heard according to its deep intentions. What is first heard by physical ears in physical words, is received, in heart, by the *spiritual sense* of hearing in the Holy Spirit. The human words, however, *do* deliver us the divine Word. Ordinary words serve the ‘enigmatic teaching’ that even a child can sing out loud when singing the Psalms. Moreover, once the divine power and wisdom is identified as Christ, one searches for and looks at his face in the whole creation which proclaims the wisdom and power of God without uttering a sound. 

While the word *qēologīa* does not appear in *Ad Ablabium*, undoubtedly he speaks about it throughout his tractate. Divine nature is proclaimed in the manifestations of God’s will in the divine action. This is *qēatikh/*according to Gregory – and the reason why *qēo]/* is called *qēo]/* in the first place. Whether or not Gregory is right in his etymology, this very explicit, emphatically expressed conviction of his totally reveals *his thinking in the issue: qēologīa*, initially, is *a divine dispensation* – thus, *oikonomiā*. At least *qēologīa* does not connote ‘divine begetting’ as such but rather something that gives us a pure conception of the divine begetting which remains a mystery for our intellect. Most importantly, however, *theologia* proclaims the awe-

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*366* As well-known, the doctrine of ‘spiritual senses’ is central in Gregory. For a still very reliable account of Gregory’s developing of this Origenian theme, see J. DANIÉLOU 1944, 235-266. In fact, the thing that Gregory distinguishes between *theologia* and *theognosia*, corresponds with his notion of the spiritual senses in a way that has hitherto remained unnoticed by scholars. Logos as ‘word’, obviously, is for the ‘spiritual ears’: once the divine Logos of *theologia* has been received through the spiritual hearing, it effects visions of itself – which is *theognosia* matching with the idea of the ‘spiritual eyes’ and the spiritual sense of seeing.

*367* Cf. *CE* III/I 21ff GNO II 10, 25ff where Gregory explains, in the light of Proverbs, the character of divine revelation through the human words of the divinely inspired authors of the Scripture.

*368* Inscr I 3 GNO V 29, 18 – 30,10.

*369* Cf. *CE* II 219-232 GNO I 289, 9 – 293, 30; *VM* II 168-169.
inspiring character of the divine nature in the infinity of God’s love, made manifest in Christ.

We might go through the *akolouthia* of this idea which undergoes development during the debates with Eunomius and is completed, ‘matured’, in the third book of *Contra Eunomium*: it underlies and perfectly fits to the ideas presented in *De vita Moysis*.

The Son is the highest name of Christ. As the Only-begotten of God, he is ‘begotten’, not ‘said’, in his *hypostasis*. The name λογός purges our conception of the divine begetting and reveals the divine nature, not according to God’s essence but according to his *essential power* to create. The power of God is Christ, God the Logos: God creates by expressing his will through his λογός in the Spirit. When the λογός becomes identified, in the Spirit, as the Son the Father loves, God becomes revealed as love. The Son was born man and was named Jesus as the Son of Mary: the Father loved his Son even as he was made curse and sin, and was humiliated on the Cross. He was not humiliated by God but by men for whose sake he died as ‘the man Jesus’. But ‘this man Jesus’ was resurrected and made Lord and Christ by God as the Father exalted him to his right hand, Lord Christ back to his bosom in the divine honour. This all is God’s *oikonomia*, but it is also *theologia* as it proclaims the

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370 All things in *creation* are ‘said’ into existence by God through his own Word identical with his Power. Gregory has noticed that ‘Word’ as Christ’s divine name is thus is indicative, ultimately, of the Only-begotten Son’s *hypostasis*, but of him as God’s essential power to create by simply expressing his will through his Word. Gregory’s idea of *theologia*, ‘divine discourse’, as the revelatory *oikonomia* of God is clearly based on this notion. Cf. CE II 228-229 GNO I 292, 7-28: ‘[T]he scriptural narrative of creation [representing *theologia* as an embodiment of divine intention] is a sort of introduction to divine knowledge (ἡ θεολογία) for beginners, presenting the power of the divine nature by things more easily understood, since sense-perception is easier to take in for learning ideas. For this reason Moses, putting first ‘God said this should be’, presents the power of his initiating will, and by adding, ‘it was so’, he indicates that in the case of divine nature there is no difference between will and effect…the existence of things created is the work of divine will…and without trouble and effort the divine will became reality.’

371 Cf. the fifth article of the dissertation.

372 Cf. Gregory’s discussion in CE III/III GNO II 105-133.

373 In CE III/III moulds Basil’s original *theologia-oikonomia* distinction when defending its intention, that is, that the divine uncreated and the human created modes of existence, the divine and human births of the Lord, should not be confused. The defence of Basil’s previous presentation is the only occasion when Gregory explicates the *theologia-oikonomia* distinction in his writings in those exact terms, then quoting Basil. He approves that ‘theology’ speaks about the ‘mode of the divine existence’ – just as Basil had indicated when using the distinction. Apparently, however, Gregory is not content to isolate the
divine nature which cannot be known except according to his Power – who is Christ. In him the love of God for man and the superabundance of God’s Power became manifest and awe-inspiring ‘by means external to divine nature’. 374

Ο θεὸς ἀγάπη εστὶν, therefore, St. John (1. Jn 4.16) proclaims. For Gregory, clearly, he is the ‘type’ of ‘Man in love with God’: the ‘type’ of a soul loved by God, adoring and praising the One she loves in return. John was the disciple ‘whom Jesus loved’ and whom Jesus gave to his mother Mary as a son at the hour of his crucifixion (Jn 19.26); he was also the disciple who rested on the Lord’s breast (Jn 13.23-25) ‘hearing mysterious things’, as Gregory believes. The saint in love with Christ heard the human heartbeats of God when leaning his head and laying his ear on the human body of God. This would be ἡ θεολογία most innocent and pure according to Gregory: what John, the lover of Christ, heard from heart to heart, he proclaimed. 375

2.5. One man – one Voice

2.5.1 Ὁμολογία as θεολογία in Ad Ablabium

What about man speaking about God? According to Gregory, God does not need or use language which Gregory regards as the distinctively human form of communication. 376 God has spoken and still speaks in a way that man is able to perceive – that is, in human words - in the God-inspired Scripture, through his prophets and apostles. One might

οἰκονομία of Incarnation from the concept of theologia – which he intimates with the concept of ‘revelatory power of God’. Gregory’s own suggestion is that when ‘looking to the Incarnation’ through the biblical testimonies, one must learn how to separate anthropological and theological conceptions with reference to the one person of Jesus Christ, in order to follow the ‘divine voice’. Cf. the fifth article of the dissertation.

374 Cf. CE III/III 34-35 GNO II 119, 21 – 120, 11. In Gregory’s view wonder, καυμα, is the right and natural disposition of the soul before the divine mysteries to which God’s ‘dispensation of love for man’ belongs. It is the most awe-waking of them all: for Gregory it is unthinkable that Incarnation would not have anything to do with theology.

375 Cf. Cant I GNO VI 41. 7-10 where Gregory writes that John’s heart was filled with ‘an ineffable communication of the mysteries lying hidden in the heart of the Lord.’ Cf. also the account of M. LAIRD 2004, 145-147.
expect Gregory to call these saints ‘theologians’ - as was natural for his Alexandrian predecessors and fellow Cappadocians. Gregory endorses the idea behind this practice: in relation to us who listen to their words in order to hear theology, the saints may be regarded as ‘theologians’, the ‘divine trumpets’ of De vita Moysis. But Gregory himself never actually addresses them individually, one by one, with the title of theologos, not to mention that he would use the term in the plural, and write: ‘the theologians say…”’. Yet it is quite unmistakable that Gregory thinks they all proclaim theology - as all the Fathers in the apostolic succession have done after them. Indeed, every child who is singing a Psalm is in a business of announcing theology - which in the Psalms is made ‘sweet-sounding and easy to accept’. Why does not Gregory call the saints theologians?

It is because according to Gregory, Peter, James and John are one man. Theology manifests God’s will: it is something that ‘human nature’, i.e. humankind is supposed to proclaim as one of God’s works which came to be when God spoke the created existences into being through his own Word. Human nature is one of God’s ‘words’, existent beings. Human nature as such is one of God’s ‘sayings’ which originally existed, after being created and before the Fall, according to God’s will.

376 Cf. the third and the fourth article of the dissertation
377 In CE II 265-268 GNO I 303, 26 – 305, 4 Gregory writes: ‘To think that it is the cardinal point of true religion to attest God’s invention of words, when to him the world and the marvels in it are but slight praise – is it not the ultimate idiocy, to set aside the great things and worship the Divinity for human things? A creative command took precedence, spoken in human words by Moses, but divinely done. So the creative will behind what was by divine power constructed is declared by our shrewd biblical scholar into instruction about words…For all his study and learning in the Bible he had not even realised that the mental impulse is often called by the Scripture a word. A witness of this is Moses himself…As he comforted those stricken with horror and exhorted them to courage, there comes a voice from God addressing the prophet by name: ‘Why do you cry to me?’ Yet before those words the story mentions no word of Moses, but the God-ward thought of the prophet is called a voice, by implication uttered in the secret thinking of the heart. If Moses, then, on the testimony of him who hears ‘unspoken groanings, cries out without a sound, what is so strange if the prophet, too, knowing the divine will, insofar as he was able to speak and we to hear, made it plain to us in known and familiar words, describing a discourse of God in somewhat physical terms, though it did not happen in spoken words, but was proclaimed by the works themselves.’ For Gregory’s account of Ps 18,2-4, ‘The heavens tell God’s glory, and the firmament announces his handiwork…’, cf. CE II 219-225 GNO I 289, 19 – 291, 3. ‘The very heavens, he [David] says, by displaying the wisdom of their Maker, all but utter a sound as they cry out and proclaim the wisdom of their Designer, but without sound.’ However, says Gregory, ‘one may hear them instructing us as if in speech’. A few lines down he says that – when writing of creation – Moses and David had the same Instructor: ‘I mean the Holy Spirit’ In his Psalm, David ‘suggests not that God is the Designer of words, but of things which are denoted by what the words mean.’ Gregory indicates that what our words
Although humankind is just one lamb of the good Shepherd’s stock of one hundred, it is a very special lamb, as humankind alone is created in the image and likeness of God. Theology does not originate in human reason, it is not human thoughts and individual thinking about God. Even ‘Peter, James and John’ are not really ‘three theologians’ while they are three biblical saints and writers - and those besides who were with Jesus in the mountain of transfiguration. They have not, however, decided about theology, i.e., what they proclaim in their letters (and John, in the Gospel). It is not they who authorise theology, decide what to proclaim. They do control how they use their human apparatus of language in the service of the divine intention when proclaiming God according to what they have received in the Spirit, through the Son from the Father, according to the Father’s will.

For Gregory, obviously, ‘qeologiá’, ‘qeologoij’ and ‘aŋqorwpoij’ are intimate as concepts, like qea Stevenson, qeot lij and qeoj. It appears that whereas ‘man’ names the human nature in the image (elkwh) of God, ‘theologian’ would name ‘one man’ according to human nature’s initial natural activity in the likeness (omoij sij) of God. Man is and always remains God’s work, a very special ‘result’ of qeatikh, God’s revelatory power. As God’s image, ‘man’ ought to reflect this revelatory power of God in the most perfect sense, in perfect God-likeness in all activity: in words, thoughts and deeds. When seeing a person in human nature, one should see a reflection of God’s power revealed – ultimately, see the uncreated Son of God in the human, created image: see Christ. Human nature, like all created being, should manifest divine wisdom and power, but ‘man’ who is God’s image, should manifest God’s wisdom and power according to its revealed identity: Christ. This is the whole humankind’s special assignment, not an occupation of a few individuals as distinct from other individuals who have other occupations. Like ‘man’, ‘theologian’ ought to be one ‘in us’ – or, we ought to be ‘one theologian’ as much as we are ‘one man’.

378 According to Gregory, we are ‘the sheep’. Humanity in its entirety is the lost sheep that Christ came to save by becoming the ‘first-born’ ‘of the dead’, ‘of the creation’ and ‘among many brethren’. Cf. CE III/II 49ff GNO II 68, 13ff; CE III/X 11ff GNO II 293,13ff.
To use the term ‘theologian’, then, in the plural and say ‘many theologians’ – in Gregory’s view, apparently – is another case of customary ‘misuse’ of language. Like in the case of the word ‘man’, the misuse is ‘allowable’ and understandable but not recommendable. It is even less recommendable as there is a greater danger of confusing the uncreated and the created natures: when calling some human agents ‘theologians’ one easily errs in conceiving where theology initiates from and who authorises theology as God-talk. It is God himself, not ‘men’ – to use the word ‘man’ incorrectly (if we listen to Gregory).

Gregory is not making a fuss about words: the common habit of speaking about saints as ‘theologians’ is all right when the idea of the one divine origin of the saints’ proclaiming of God, and the subsequent ‘oneness’ of divine speech is kept clear in mind. But Gregory has decided not to promote this habit. He prefers to follow biblical practice and honour the saints by calling them ‘saints’ and ‘servants’ of God: this is also how he describes all the fathers in the apostolic succession and his own ‘heroes’ in this succession, Gregory the Wonderworker and his brother Basil.379

Behind Gregory’s unwillingness to say ‘(many) theologians’ there clearly is a concept of ‘theology’ as ‘proclamation concerning the divine nature’, and an idea according to which the proclaiming of God belongs to human nature, to the one humankind as such and as a whole – as ‘one body’, in ‘one voice’. Gregory thinks it is the main activity of man’s essential nature as God’s image always to manifest God in his likeness. This happens by participating the divine operation, the movement of the divine will according to which God is known. It is a special grace belonging to human nature alone to bring forth God-likeness by the use of words that are man’s very own. Of all God’s creatures, only man uses language, that is, has the power of creative self-expression according to the free choice in how to use this exceptional ability to express oneself in words. Only God who possesses being, can create existent beings through his own, subsisting Word. Man can create words that are not beings while they name and

379 Cf. the fourth article of this dissertation.
designate movements and abstractions of the human mind and existent beings created by God.

While anyone can invent a new word, human language as system of communication is essentially a collective thing: it is based not only on the creative ability of each human mind individually, but also on common agreement about how the words are used, what is meant and signified by them. When it comes to theology as human God-talk, this means two things. First, in theology the divine intention ‘commits’ itself with the net of the several meanings and indications of the human words as signs that enable the human mind to begin to reflect the divine message expressed through them. Thus ‘the divine words (qēologiā) of the Holy Scripture, set out for us by the persons inspired by the Holy Spirit’ have made a ‘commitment’ with ordinary language based on human conventions while the Revelation itself is not a matter of convention. It is a matter of divine intention, i.e., the will of God: what God wants us to hear and perceive. The words chosen by the inspired saints ‘dress’ and thus conceal the divine intention when spoken but reveal it when heard with the sensus fidei. Secondly, theology which is proclaimed in the Church according to the hearing of the divine Word in the words of the inspired saints of the Scripture, is again a collective, not a private thing. There must be an agreement of what is proclaimed in the Church, in one voice as one body, as theologia.

Individual philosophising in the Church, exercised by following the Word of Truth, has theology as its object and must agree with it, but it is not theology in the proper sense of the term. Instead, it is philosophy: loving of the true Wisdom, the

380 Cf. CE II 259-261 GNO I 302.1-24: ‘To accommodate speech to the ability of the hearers in order to help them one might suppose to be not unworthy of divine charity (filanqρωπiā), when Paul too, the imitator of the Lord knew how to adapt his speech appropriately to the capacity of his hearers (tω οἶκους ἀκουοτών), becoming milk to the infants and solid food for the adults (cf. Heb 5.12)....[W]hatever words of God (tou qeou-λογοί) are recorded by Moses or the prophets, they are indications of the divine will (eβδοματι εἰς τοῦ qeου qελματος), illuminating in one way and another the purity and intelligence of the saints with such share of the grace as their status merits. Thus Moses’ speech [concerning creation through God’s own ‘speaking’] accorded with his upbringing and education, but he attributes these words to God, as it has often been said, because of the infancy of those recently brought to the knowledge of God (qεωνωσία), to present the divine will (tou qeibou qelhmatou) clearly, and in order to make the hearers (tou] akouontai] reader to believe, once persuaded of the reliability of the account.
Wisdom of God which is Christ, the Lord Incarnate who reveals God. Through Christ God becomes recognised, identified and confessed as Holy Trinity.

Interestingly, and not accidentally, Gregory asserts in *Ad Ablabium* that while it is not correct to say ‘three (many) men’, it is correct to say ‘three philosophers’ or ‘orators’, as we say ‘many geometers’, ‘many farmers’ or ‘many shoemakers’.381 When Gregory writes distinctively about τρεις φιλόσοφοι ἡγίασαν, he clearly has in mind the distinction between divine ἐποτική/and ἄγαθος/— the two sides of God’s viewing power, ‘contemplation’ and ‘speaking’. In principle this distinction could be made between a philosopher and a theologian, between someone who contemplates God, and someone who proclaims God. Of course one person can do both, but Gregory is building an argument of the two aspects of the powers of intelligible nature of God. Besides, all human natural activity is divided and diastematic, thinking and speaking included. That Gregory does not actually use the word ‘theologian’ – although he does regard theology as expression, ‘speaking’ in a special sense – is very revealing in the context of *Ad Ablabium*. It is evident that for Gregory, ‘theology’ does not mean an ‘occupation’ of some group of individuals to be called ‘theologians’, but something that belongs to us all as human beings because ‘man in us’ is one. Why does he not say this explicitly in *Ad Ablabium*?

In fact he does: it is written all over the treatise, but he does not use the word *theologia*. The whole treatise is about the question: why do we confess our faith as we do confess it? For Gregory, ὁμολογία is ἴσημι: confession is something we all say together as one body and in one voice when we openly announce our faith for the whole world to hear. By confessing our faith we give glory to ‘Lord our God who is one Lord’, ‘in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’ as the Lord himself, the one head of his own one body, instructed us. Then we are one in faith, or one in Christ, who himself is the divine power who is able to overcome all diastematic distinctions. In

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381 Abl GNO III/I 46,3-23
the Power of God we are all united into one by the means of the Spirit, not only one in nature as we naturally are but one also in activity.\textsuperscript{382} in Christ there is perfect oneness.

Gregory does not make shoes. Someone else does shoes for him: the shoemaker is hopefully singing Psalms, announcing \textit{theologia} even if he is occupied in the service of his community. To philosophise about God and to give sermons belong to Gregory’s occupation. Just as there can be many orators, there \textit{can} be many kinds of philosophers, Platonic, Aristotelian, etc., but as a ‘Christian philosopher’ Gregory is following \textit{theologia}: the voice of God in the Holy Scripture, as heard within the apostolic tradition of the Church. When giving his account of the way to the truth in \textit{Ad Ablabium}, he uses all concepts that befit his purpose. Be it, then, the Psalm-singing shoemaker or Gregory, in all their pursuits they announce and proclaim the God they worship. They do it as two members of Christ’s body when they work and make their different kind of service in their individual occupations, but they are always one in their confession: just as there is one Word of God, they confess their one faith in one voice with the other Christians, who celebrate the one God in the Church, the one body of Christ.

\vspace{1cm}

\textbf{2.5.2. \textit{Qeologi/a} as \textit{ektomologi/a}}

Christ will elevate his body to divine honour one day. According to Gregory, at the \textit{eschaton} the man who was created as \textit{anthropos} in the beginning (\textit{arche}) will become one body in faith – and is exalted as \textit{ekklesia} in the end (\textit{telos}).\textsuperscript{383} The one ‘lost sheep’ of humanity is then returned back in the one flock where it belongs, saved by the one Good Shepherd it now follows, recognising his voice which is the voice of the one Lord of all creation. Everything that had no beginning in God’s will, is destroyed by the Son and returned to non-being. The whole creation becomes one body obedient to God in agreement (\textit{omofwnoj}) with humanity’s submission to the divine. Then ‘every knee

\textsuperscript{382} Cf. the second article of this dissertation.
shall bow and every tongue will confess (πασα γλωσσα ετομολογησαται) that Jesus Christ is Lord’ (cf. Phil 2, 10-11).

This ‘ετομολογία’ is what Gregory clearly identifies as theology in *In Illud, Tunc et ipse Filius* where he examines St. Paul’s eschatological teaching. It is no accident that in his sermon of the baptism of Christ, *In diem luminum*, Gregory uses the term *qεολογία* explicitly: the baptism of Christ is the institution of our joining to Christ’s body through baptism and faith, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel narrative of the Baptism, all the Trinitarian persons are also present in a discernable manner: the Son in his body, the Spirit in the form of a *landing* dove and the Father in his voice *coming down* from heaven. In Gregory’s sermon, *theologia* intimates the idea of man ‘joining in the song of the angels, offering the worship of their praise to God’. Then, also, the Lordship of Christ is Gregory’s direct point of reference. In his view, the confession the Lordship of Jesus Christ is, in essence, an authentic Trinitarian recognition, provided there is faith, ‘through’ Jesus, in Christ as the Lord of creation who himself is not part of creation, but a true Son in the

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383 Cf. the second article of the dissertation.
384 J. Daniélou believed that Gregory’s ‘mystical theology’ is an extension of ‘sacramental theology’ – and he was right, in my opinion. I think Daniélou’s interpretation, when seen as a whole and not only as an address of Gregory’s theory of *epetasis* (which I, too, have perhaps too one-sidedly done in the introduction of this summary), provides the correct platform for approaching Gregory’s theological thought. However, Daniélou’s interpretation also needs to be balanced when it comes to the notion of Gregory’s *spirituality* which has too one-sided concentration on *epetasis* (giving some justification to my one-sidedness). In critical distinction to Daniélou’s emphasis, one could say that Nyssen’s ‘dogmatic’, ‘down-to-earth’ endeavours essentially belong to his spirituality, as much as his uplifting spirituality substantially preserves a concern and intention which one well might call ‘dogmatic’. That would be the concern for the will of God which is *nomos* for us – i.e., is the law which is actually the constitution of our final most perfect freedom in Christ as the *ἄληθεν ἡμῶν* (cf. Rm 10.4). In Gregory’s view, it is in and through Christ that God has always revealed his will, in different ‘types’ of Christ, in a downward sequence of his speaking with his people. This Voice of Authority constitutes theology of which the *dogmas* of Trinity and Incarnation, to Gregory, are the Church’s authentic expression. For him, these Christian *dogmas* now belong to the ‘Mountain of theology’ whence they have been delivered to be attached to the Church’s explicit *kerugma* (Basilian *dogma-kerugma* distinction in reference to ‘theology’ as *kerugma* went out of date in Constantinople 381). Hence they provide also a source of infinite spiritual inspiration. Cf. the fifth article of this dissertation.
386 What is immediately evident to human cognition, is that the person one is looking at is ‘the man Jesus’, the Son of Mary – the crucified one. That ‘this man’, the same person is also the Lord Christ, the Son of God, is the decisive first ‘step’ of faith. It means ‘entering into the light of Incarnation’, the divine knowledge where there is ‘walking by faith’: each step ahead in divine knowledge is a step of faith which the reason follows as far as it is able.
same nature with the Father. According to St. Paul, no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1. Cor 12.3): the recognition of the Lord in Jesus is based on the activity of the Spirit, Gregory observes. In his view, it must therefore begin from the will of the Father which is completed in the Spirit through the Son. Gregory’s conclusion is that the human confession is based on a divine initiative to which it responds: this response of faith and worship is identified as ‘theologia’ by him. The recognition of the divinity and Lordship of Christ ‘in Jesus’ is the most authentic Trinitarian recognition of which the Trinitarian confession of the Church is a faithful extension, in accordance with Jesus’ commissioning of his disciples in the mountain in Galilee (Mt 28. 16-20), Gregory thinks.

In Ad Simplicium, De fide, Gregory ends his discourse by citing 1. Cor 12.3 for the verification of his assertion that ‘it is God who by establishing the voice of the Gospel makes the believer spirit: and he who is born of the Spirit and made spirit by such thunder, declares Christ.’ Gregory’s intention is not to say that when the believer is ‘made spirit’, the human corporeality would be lost. Instead, he follows Paul who teaches that even after the resurrection of the dead – when ‘we change’ – there will be a spiritual body (σώμα πνευματικόν) as an ‘image of the heavenly one’ (εἰκών τοῦ εἰπουρανίου), Christ. Accordingly, Gregory thinks that the whole humanity should be considered as ‘one image of him who is’. This idea which is presented in De hominis opificio discussing the arche of humankind, is very close to Pauline teaching on eschatological human perfection where many spiritual bodies join as one in the one

387 Corresponding, when applied to us members of Christ’s body, with the Pauline proclamation of ‘Christ in us’ (or ‘Christ in you’, as the original expression goes), Paul prays that his readers may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Cf. Col 1.1-29
388 Mountain: Gregory’s ‘mould’ of theology! Insofar the Scripture provides any material for conceptual model-making, and there was ever a single Christian Father seeking for a pattern of his thought from the Scripture instead of from the classics, one of the most standard models that the Scripture – the Old, and the New Testament alike – provides, is the idea of ‘going up’ as a disciple in order to hear and receive instruction from the Teacher who teaches with divine authority. Gregory draws a model of ‘theology’ from the Scripture, as the discourse to be heard up in the mountain, and repeated or put into action down in the valley. Cf. Deut 4.36: ‘So Moses came [down from the Mountain] and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgements. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we shall do”.’
389 Cf. Simpl GNO III/I 67, 18-23
390 Cf. Hom op PG 44, 185 D.
body of Christ. The notion of humanity as ‘one image’ has in Gregory an *eschatological determination* which is original in Paul’s **εἰκών του ἐπουρανίου**, and well defines Nyssen’s anthropological intention. Gregory believes in a basic correlation between the beginning and the end in God: he thinks that *telos* cannot be very different from *arche* any more that *Omega* would be different from *Alpha*.\(^{391}\)

In *In Illud, Tunc et ipsé Filius*, Gregory says that in our *telos* in Christ, our new existence can no longer be compared to the many and varied examples of our present life.\(^{392}\) In other words we have changed, as Paul teaches: following the Apostle, Gregory thinks the flesh has then become what the Word is, and the ‘whole man’ proclaims the Lord in its members, as one spiritual body and image of Christ where he lives, speaks and acts. In the *telos*, ‘Man’ will exist in the perfect likeness of God, the Holy Trinity, by manifesting what Christ made manifest to the Glory of the Father: God’s loving will and his love for man. God’s *philanthropia* is the image of the pre-eternal love between the Father and the Son, the ‘divine philosophy’ where the Father loves Wisdom in his Son who loves the Father in Spirit. ‘The Father who loves his Son loves the Son’s body just as the Son himself: we are the Son’s body that the Father loves’, Gregory says.\(^{393}\) Further, Gregory’s idea would seem to be that in the *telos*, as the Son’s body, *we* are his humanity and *he* is our divinity as our Head. There would be a perfect *communicatio idiomatum*: all our natural weakness mingles like a drop of vinegar into the sea (the relation of finite with infinite) in the presence and power of the Lord, and the human nature perfectly manifests the divine, in loving activity and all its charasteristics, having been made ‘Lord and Christ’. Essentially, however, our nature as the Son’s body (the Son of God does not have a natural body) never ceases to be

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\(^{391}\) One question that relates to this matter is that Gregory does seem to think that the final corporeal *state* of ‘new Adam’, the ‘man of heaven’, is actually higher than the ‘original state’ of ‘old Adam’, ‘the man of earth’. I am not thinking only the question of carnality, but the character of Gregory’s idea of *apokatastasis*. ‘Salvation’ is a restoration (*apokatastasis*) to the original state according to Gregory – but it would seem that the final state is not just ‘salvation’, but something yet more, even before the elevation to the Father. I have not elaborated the issue much, but the second article is based on the assumption that it is not ‘only’ *apokatastasis* that Gregory has in mind and teaches – although it is clear that he has this theory.

\(^{392}\) Cf. the discussion of the second article of this dissertation.

human, i.e. a created nature in a ‘mission’ to manifest God. ‘Man’, the human nature, does not essentially become the ‘God’ it mirrors, even when ‘divinized’. Neither will the human souls disappear according to Gregory: a sure token of that is his teaching of *epektasis*.

According to Gregory, it is the especial task of humanity to proclaim Christ ‘fully’, by making manifest the love of God which is beyond all rational comprehension. Man’s confession represents the high-point of ‘theology’ where the uncreated is present in the created that manifests Christ to the glory of God. Man proclaims ‘theology proper’ as a spiritual-intelligible-corporeal created existent. The ‘angels singing’ is the ‘natural theology’ of the spiritual-intelligible creation. The whole cosmos is ‘natural theology’ of the sensible creation proclaimed by the ‘heavens’. Visibly but silently, the heavens manifest the existence of the wise and powerful Creator. The Cross is the ‘theology proper’ of the sensible creation, as it proclaims Christ as the Wisdom and Power of God who made manifest God’s love for man. In the *telos*, when God is all in all, the whole creation, then all existing according to God’s will, is one body of confession, a symphony concerting Christ in different ways to the glory of God. In the end, ο(α)ξηρόν as ἡ(ε)κκλησία will lead the whole chorus of creation in *qeologiā*, in her confession of the one Lord in Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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394 Cf. *CE* III/III 68 GNO II 132, 7-133.4. In his famous analogy of ‘drop of vinegar’, Gregory is talking about the *properties* of the human nature as ‘servant’, not the human essence. Neither ‘man’ nor the ‘human soul’ disappears in God.
3. ONE NATION: IMITATIONS OF CHRIST IN *DE PERFECTIONE* AND *DE VITA MOYISIS*

3.1. The treatises

*De perfectione*\(^{395}\) is also, like *Ad Ablabium*, most probably written after the Trinitarian debates, in 385-390.\(^{396}\) In this source Gregory comprehensively discusses the issue of Christian perfection as an *imitation of Christ* according to the names by which St. Paul addresses him in his Epistles. I regard this work as a twin-work of Gregory’s most famous and celebrated writing *De vita Moysis*\(^{397}\), subtitled ‘perfection in virtue’, written during the same period as ‘On Perfection’.\(^{398}\) In *De perfectione* the emphasis is not put ‘vertically’ in the ascents – and descents – of some individual person like Moses as in *De vita Moysis*. Instead, the concentration is in *what* such person, namely Paul, brought down to be ‘horizontally’ shared in the Church, for the common benefit of ‘man’ as ‘one nature’ – and of each person severally. The idea of inter-relatedness of *De perfectione* and *De vita Moysis* is my suggestion how to approach these two treatises, which both discuss the theme of Christian perfection. In what follows my aim is to open this view, and comment the application of ‘general paradigm’ of Hellenization for interpreting Gregory’s thought, in a context that is traditionally called ‘spiritual’ in distinction from the ‘dogmatic’ context.


\(^{396}\) Cf. J. DANIÉLOU 1966, 159-169; G. MAY 1971, 51-66. Cf. also MOSSHAMMER 1988. I agree with Daniélou who suggests late dating, and argue against Mosshammer who proposes *De perfectione* is one of the earliest work of Gregory.

\(^{397}\) In references to *De vita Moysis* (VM), instead of GNO edition, I have used the more user-friendly edition by J. DANIÉLOU in Sources Chrétienes 1bis, Paris 1955.

\(^{398}\) The late dating around 390 is commonly supported. R. HEINE 1975, however, suggests that VM still belongs to Eunomian controversy and is written in the mid of 380s. I do not agree with Heine, although it is true that the memory of the controversy is very much alive in VM. There is also very little that Gregory could not have written right after the third book of Contra Eunomium. I think, however, that VM does belong to the latter part of 380s as it is usually suggested. *Oratio Catechetica* is perhaps the landmark here. There Gregory gives an account of Christian teaching some time after the Trinitarian controversy and the Christological debate with Apollinarius: *De vita Moysis*, in my opinion, is a later writing than *Or cat*. Basically, I agree with ZACHHUBER 2000, in the dating of Gregory’s works.
3.2. Living history of God’s people

For Gregory, the Old Testament is - besides relevant history (ἰστορία) - a source of ‘types’. As narratives (ἰστορία), the books of Genesis and Exodus especially provide at all times a relevant and ongoing ‘story’ of the living of God’s people – the ‘Israel’ now called ‘Church’ – throughout the ages, on their journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. The Old Testament books already give an account of the whole ongoing historical sequence of creation, on its way from arche to telos through its centre, Christ, who himself is the Alpha and the Omega of the historical time. The Old Testament is thus a revelation of Christ in the form of types and promises to be fulfilled in Christ who reveals God and saves his people – the Lord who, according to Gregory, is the spiritual ‘contents’ of the whole of the Holy Scripture. The Old Testament narratives and prophecies, and the Wisdom literature provide all the patterns, introduce all the relevant sequences of thought for the reflective intellect to follow in the divine contemplation, whereas the New Testament Revelation finally illuminates the timeless contents of the patterns, and through Christ illumines God as Holy Trinity.


400 For example, in the opposing of the Nicean Creed, and especially in the Arian and Neo-Arian worship of Christ as ‘created God’, recently defeated by the orthodox, Gregory sees a parallel to the way the Israelites had fallen into idolatry at the time when Moses descended from the mountain carrying ‘in his hands the tables, written by God, which contain the divine Law’. Gregory explains: ‘The history prophetically proclaimed at that time the things which have now come to pass in our own time. The error of idolatry utterly disappeared from life, being swallowed by pious mouths which through good confession bring about the destruction of the material godlessness. The mysteries established of old by idolaters became running water, completely liquid, a water swallowed by the very mouths of those who were at one time idol-mad. When you see those who formerly stooped under such vanity now destroying those things in which they have trusted, does the history then not seem to you to cry out clearly that every idol will then be swallowed by the mouths of those who have left error for true religion?’ VM. II 202-203. Translation from E. FERGUSON/A.J. MALHERBE 1978, 170.

401 CE III,5 7-16; III,6 32-41. ‘If the bodily veil of the words were removed’, writes Gregory about the Holy Scripture, ‘that which remains is Lord and life and Spirit’.
For Gregory, St. Paul represents the ‘Moses’ of the New Testament. Moses is the ‘type’ of the ‘true Lawgiver’, Christ, and the biblical archetype of a perfect servant of God to be followed by the later servants in his ‘order and sequence’: for example, Gregory considered Basil as his ‘contemporary Moses’. In De vita Moysis Gregory describes not only the ascents of the saintly lawgiver who followed the Word ever higher in the Mountain of divine knowledge (theognosia) and of divine trumpets (theologia) but also his acts as a servant of God in ‘God’s oikonomia’. Moses’ duty as God’s minister was to deliver the message of the ‘sound of the trumpets’ – theologia – to be heard by all people willing to ‘give ear’ to Moses down in the camp at the foot of the mountain. Moses was able to hear what the trumpets were trumpeting, and his hearing developed during his ascent up until the summit of the mountain where he entered into the dark cloud where God was - and where he ‘saw God’. Everything that Moses was shown and told by the ‘divine voice’ up in the Mountain, the Voice - Lord - ordered him to deliver ‘in material imitations’ down to the valley for all his people to participate. What Moses saw and heard was the Word: Christ, the heavenly Tabernacle - the archetype of the Church - from within. He was ordered to build the earthly tabernacle in exact imitation of the ‘heavenly type’ down in the valley.

Always when Moses came down from the Mountain, he brought down Christ in different ‘forms’ expressing God’s will, most centrally, in the form of Law. Moses’ God-likeness – the reason why he was a ‘type’ of Christ (the ‘true Lawgiver’) – was brought into realisation in his virtuous ‘descents’ for his people, not in his ascents for divine knowledge by which he was rewarded and which meant advancing the in the contemplative side of ‘religious virtue’. Moses was able to ascent ever higher ‘up’ in the mountain according to his advancing in virtue which was practised ‘down’ in the valley, *i.e.* through advancing in the practical side of religious virtue.

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402 VM II 78:216.
403 Bas GNO XI 110-111.
404 Cf. VM II 152 (theognosia); 158 (theologia); 160, 279 (oikonomia).
405 VM II169-174.
406 VM II 170ff.
407 When compared with Pseudo-Dionysius’ lists of negations in his Mystical Theology, Gregory’s cumulative list is very different. It consists not of negations but of what Moses did for his people in
‘down’, all advancing in virtue in the life of Moses, was advancing in Christ: according to Gregory, Christ is Virtue.\textsuperscript{408}

What is remarkable in Gregory’s idea of ‘religious virtue’ is that of the two equally important sides of it, the practical side of giving (giving Christ), obviously, is conceived more God-like than the contemplative side of receiving (receiving Christ). The latter is something desirable and great. It happens to a human soul when approaching God in Christ-loving faith. Simultaneously, it is something essentially human. The Christian beauty of Gregory’s idea lies in that, initially, it is always God who gives himself to be shared and always man who receives God – importantly, in theology as much as in the oikononia of Incarnation, should the distinction be made.\textsuperscript{409}

A human agent can participate in theology – the trumpet sound coming downwards to meet the ear - by delivering to others something one has oneself first received: Christ. The receiving of Christ does not take place only up in the Mountain. It takes place also down in the camp at the foot of the Mountain, according to what God dispenses of himself to be delivered down by his faithful servants. Such servants do not deliver their own word but God’s Word in human words. Down in the valley, the instruction becomes action in people’s words and deeds which ‘proclaim Christ’, and can thus ‘give Christ’, as human actions that initiate from and accord with God’s will.

Moses brought down the Law, the will of God, in the tables, so that everyone in the valley could follow God’s will, and worship the only true Lord

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\textsuperscript{408} a\acute{	ext{t}}\text{h} \text{h} \text{id} \text{e} \text{o} \text{[k} \text{u} /\text{ri} \text{o}j] \text{ CE III/VII GNO II 236, 12. Cf. VM prol. 7: a\text{u} \text{t} \text{o} \text{[e} \text{t} \text{i} \text{n} \text{h} \text{[p} \text{a} \text{n} \text{e} \text{t} \text{e} \text{h} \text{]} a\acute{	ext{t}}\text{h} \text{h}] \text{. Gregory refers in VM to Q}e\text{o}j - the person whom Moses encounters with, when encountering God, is Christ. To give birth to Virtue is task of a Christian; it is giving birth to Christ. Moses’ birth is, according to Gregory, the archetypal description of the birth of virtue threatened by a tyrant. Cf. VM II 1-5.

\textsuperscript{409} One may safely say that in Gregory’s view also theologia is something which starts from God, that is, belongs to God’s oikonomia – as much as the oikonomia of Incarnation, as an activity of the divine nature revealing God, belongs to theologia. The way into the acknowledgement of the Holy Trinity goes through the recognition of the Incarnation of the Second person of the Holy Trinity as proclaimed in the Scriptures. The recognition is expressed in the Trinitarian dogma, named ‘theologia’ in Gregory’s tradition, whereas the doctrine of Incarnation was labelled as ‘oikonomia’. Gregory approved this dogmatic procedure, but was not happy with the application of the term ‘theology’ to human theoretic or dogmatic speculation about God. Human authorisation of ‘theology’ was the idea that Greory was not very happy about.
according to God’s will. Later the Word – whom Moses followed in his ascents, and served in his descents – descended to his own people in his own person. Lord Christ, God, was born man, Jesus. As God, the Lord made also ‘this man Jesus’ Lord and Christ. In Christ the Word incarnated in human flesh and fully revealed the will of God - himself, the Son of God. In Christ Jesus’ human words the Word called disciples by inviting them to follow himself. After Christ, there came his disciples: his followers and servants, the inspired apostles of Christ and the ministers of the Word. Among them was Paul who instructed: ‘be imitators of me as I am of Christ.’ This servant who ascended ‘the third heaven’ brought down Christ in the names of Christ. In De perfectione Gregory reflects what it means to imitate Christ by means of Paul, instructed by the names that the Christ’s servant dispensed as a steward of the divine mysteries, for the common benefit of Christ’s body.

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De vita Moysis and De perfectione thus complete each other. What once took place in the history (iστορία) of God’s people in the life Moses according to the narrative (iστορία) of Exodus, took place also in the life of Paul within the same history of the ‘divine nation’ of Israel now called Church. De vita Moysis displays the pattern of the life of the ‘steward of the divine mysteries’, whereas De perfectione displays what Paul brought down to the ‘valley’ for God’s people, to all the servants of Christ with different duties and occupations.

410 In CE III/III GNO II 107-159 Gregory discusses the issue comprehensively.
411 In Perf GNO VIII/I 181 – before beginning his discourse on Christ’s names from Paul’s naming him ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’ in 1.Cor 1.24 – Gregory indicates that the ‘lover of virtue’ (φίλος ἁρετοῦ) knows what the name of Christ means. In VM II 173-176 – again with a reference to 1.Cor 1.24 – he writes that the ‘lover of Christ’ (φίλος Χριστοῦ) should not hesitate to call Christ a ‘tabernacle’ as he is the Only-begotten God who encompasses everything in himself but who also pitched his own tabernacle among us. ‘Loving of Christ’ is hence true ‘loving of virtue’ according to Gregory. Accordingly, ‘knowing virtue’ is ‘knowing Christ’: we know him as the God Incarnate through the names of Christ Paul gave to us instructed by the Word himself. Paul gave the names so that ‘Christians’ could became what the name ‘Christ’ implies – so that we could give birth to Christ in our lives – through imitation and worship. There are names, Gregory says, that we can imitate, and names we illustrate through reverence and worship. Cf. Perf GNO VIII/I 178 2 – 19.
3.3. Image of a Mountain – up and down

Gregory’s idea is very clear – and in the middle of all his ‘up-tending spirituality’, unlike it is commonly expected and claimed, there is a strong emphasis put on the descending line, that is, the theological line of the ‘sound of trumpets’ coming down from up above. The naming of Gregory a ‘mystic’ is quite proper, but the too one-sided emphasis put on the ascending line of his thought has effected confusion in the way the concept of theologia is commonly interpreted in his use.

To think Gregory’s account of the life of Moses is like drawing a picture of a mountain: first the hand goes up - but then it must come down in order to finish the picture. Someone who uses his pen only to draw the ascending line – which is basically what Gregory thought his adversary Eunomius was doing in his writings as he was ‘thinking up’ a harmonious line of words⁴¹² – is only spilling ink and fails to complete a presentation of the mountain. In Gregory’s idea of the pattern for someone who wishes to follow Moses and Paul in the divine ministry of the Word, the ascending and descending lines are equally important and constitutive. The important implication of this balance is that not everyone in the Church, according to Gregory, need to become a ‘Moses’ in order to follow Christ who is Virtue and its perfection.

The difference between De vita Moysis and De perfectione is that they are obviously written for different audiences. The dates of their writing are probably very close, and the order would seem to be: first De vita Moysis, then De perfectione.⁴¹³ This does not mean that the spiritual-intellectual experiences of light, cloud and darkness which are spoken of in De vita Moysis would not apply to the audience of De perfectione. It is only that the latter text is not planned to be instruction in priesthood in

⁴¹² CE II 136 GNO I 265.7-10.
⁴¹³ If Gregory wrote the two treatises according to a preconceived plan, it would be natural first to sketch the ‘way of Moses’ – Moses being the ‘type’ of a perfect servant of God – up, and then to describe what, eventually, was brought down by (the second Moses) Paul as a steward of the divine mysteries. Also, if the two writing were accidentally written because of two direct questions addressed to Gregory, the question with which De perfectione begins, ‘how may anyone become perfect through a life of virtue?’, would be a natural one to address to Gregory after reading De vita Moysis which examines the perfection in the life of someone who is chosen to lead and advise others.
particular but to be instruction for every Christian whether the Christian is a minister or a shoemaker. ‘It is said, Not all are apostles, nor all prophets’, Gregory recalls in his ‘Life of Moses, perfection in [religious] virtue’ – while the question by which he begins his ‘On Perfection’ is: ‘how anyone may become perfect through a life of virtue?’. Given, then, that the works have different - equally important - purposes as they come to their planned audience, it is not surprising that not every aspect of De vita Moysis is presented in De perfectione. Importantly, however, the idea of eternal progress in perfection appears in them both.

Gregory has many works from the period after the Trinitarian debate with Eunomius that are planned for selected audiences. Most clear examples are Oratio Catechetica (priests, ‘elders’ in the congregations) and De instituto Christiano (ascetics in the monasteries). It is probable that De vita Moysis and De perfectione, as well as Ad Ablabium belong to the same group of works written as an elderly ‘father’. There might also be a conscious plan behind their composition. Gregory obviously identified his own role as God’s servant after the biblical ‘types’ in his contemporary context. Especially after the Trinitarian debates one notices a change in Gregory’s self-image and tone as a writer. In the debates he was conducting – after his brother Basil, whom he acknowledged as his contemporary Moses – the virtue of Moses. He was defending God’s people against the attacks of the adversary and protecting them from falling into idolatry, that is, into material worship of creation. He was also victorious and celebrated

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414 1. Cor 12.29. Cf. VM II 160-161. Gregory continues: ‘…but this is not now heeded in many of the churches. For many, still in need of being purified from the way they have lived, unwashed and and full of spots in their life’s garment and protecting themselves only with their irrational senses, make an assault on the divine mountain. So it happens that they are stoned by their own reasonings, for heretical opinions are in effect stones which crush the inventor of evil doctrines.’


416 Perf ends with words: ‘For this is truly perfection: never to stop growing towards what is better and never placing any limit on perfection.’ Ibid. 214, 4-6. Accordingly in the preface to VM (10), Gregory writes: ‘For the perfection of human nature consists perhaps in its very growth in goodness.’

417 If indeed there was a plan, the natural motivation for it would derive from the fact that Gregory was, evidently, originally asked to write a catechism (Oratio Catechetica) for the purpose of the teaching of Christian doctrines in local congregations. Further, it would then be natural to think that the Commentary on the Song of Songs was Gregory’s last, culminating work after the writing of which he retired, satisfied, from his literary activities.
in and after the Council of Constantinople.\footnote{418} After the Trinitarian debates Gregory’s position in the Church – when seen in the light of the biblical types – was such that he saw it as his duty, as he was also asked, to provide instruction according to the best of his abilities in all relevant sectors of the life of Church, but especially when it comes to the ministers.

Gregory never claimed himself to be a ‘Moses’ – he even often emphasizes that he has not reached his level\footnote{419} – but it was clearly his ‘type’ as illumined by the proclamations of Paul he aimed to follow, as a ‘servant of Christ’ and a ‘steward of God’s mysteries’ (1 Cor. 4,1). This Pauline distinction explicates well the distinction that can be made between \textit{De perfectione} and \textit{De vita Moysis}. The first is for all Christ’s servants and the second for the stewards of divine mysteries: the experiences of luminous darkness belong to all Christians in the liturgical life of the Church, where the ministers of the divine mysteries do their service in the earthly tabernacle, which is an imitation of the heavenly one. It is not necessary for everyone to risk the Mountain because the fullness of Christ to the glory of the Father has descended into the valley, and can be participated in worship and imitated in virtue even there. But it is necessary that some do risk the Mountain, because in the world and in us the battle between virtue and vice still continues until the second coming of the Lord. Until then, the people of God need shepherds who follow and are instructed by the Shepherd of all shepherds in his art.

\footnote{418}{A good introduction to this theme is M.A.G. HAYKIN 1994. Cf. also A. M. RITTER 1968 and A. MEREDITH 1995, 53.}
\footnote{419}{Cf. VM II 173 where Gregory writes: It seems to me to leave the precise meaning of these things to those who have by the Spirit the power to search the depths of God (1 Cor. 2.10), to someone who is able, as the Apostle says, \textit{in the Spirit} to speak about \textit{mysterious things} (1. Cor. 14.2). We shall leave what we say conjecturally and by supposition on the thought at hand to the judgement of our readers. Their critical intelligence must decide whether it should be rejected or accepted.}
3.4. Riches of the barren princess and the Emperor’s new clothes

Insofar as the considerations above are valid, they mean that to read Gregory’s thinking into classical Platonic mould seriously damages the interpretation of his thought.\textsuperscript{420} It is ‘closing one eye’, to read Gregory with only an eye for the Greek characteristics of his thought – which are not hard to find. Gregory does not hide them but rather calls them the ‘riches of [universal] reason’.\textsuperscript{421} There is really no hostility against the ‘barren Egyptian Princess’,\textsuperscript{422} i.e. the foreign paideia unable to deliver a child, give birth to Christ who is Virtue. There is rather a sense of sympathy for this mother who is ‘always in labour’ but ‘always miscarries before the coming into light of theognosia’ which is the light of Incarnation.\textsuperscript{423}

From Gregory one finds no neurotic Christianity based on building an identity on systematic disagreement with and rejection of everything from outside Christianity. Neither does Gregory’s thinking reflect any concern for being a good disciple of Plato or of any other Greek philosopher. Instead, one finds a steady Christian identity acknowledging one common humanity in every human individual whether Christian, Greek, Egyptian etc., and equal ability in each, in spite of race or religion, to reflect the one and same created reality we all share. According to Gregory, no man can have any clue about the uncreated reality unless the uncreated nature is active, that is,

\textsuperscript{420} This is not to say that the Greek ideas of polis and civil virtues would have been insignificant, somehow, for the Greeks. But they did not provide Gregory the pattern for his idea of the Church as Christ’s Body, ‘the earthly tabernacle’ as an imitation of the heavenly one. Gregory’s idea of the central importance of virtue – a loving disposition of the soul towards God and the neighbour to be ‘incarnated’ in the actions of the followers and lovers of Christ – becomes distorted if it is forced into the ‘Greek mould’. Gregory’s appreciation of St. Paul’s ‘mystery revealed to the saints, Christ in us’ is then trivialized whereas it provides him his whole identity as a ‘philosopher’. To use Gregorian vocabulary, reading Gregory into the Greek mould is forcing his thinking into the ‘barren womb of the profane wisdom’ – which, according to the author, is unable to give birth to Virtue that is Christ.

\textsuperscript{421} Cf. \textit{VM II} 115-116. ‘Many bring to the Church of God their profane learning as a kind of gift. Such a man was the great Basil, who acquired the Egyptian wealth in every respect during his youth and dedicated this wealth to God for the adornment of the Church, the true tabernacle.’

\textsuperscript{422} The Pharaoh who hates virtue is hated, not the Princess who has gentle affections for the baby-boy Moses whose birth as described in the Exodus narrative, for Gregory, symbolises the birth of virtue, or giving birth to virtue.

\textsuperscript{423} \textit{VM II} 10-12; 19-21.
unless God reveals himself. As a Christian Gregory is convinced this revelation has been given in Christ, the Wisdom of God. Gregory knows how to distinguish between human and divine wisdom as well as between Greek paideia and the paideia of Christ. He has means to evaluate the Greek paideusis critically and use it in ways that he finds appropriate. One may ask whether Gregory is always right – but that is not the same as shouting ‘Plato!’ whenever Gregory writes ‘Paul’.

By closing one eye and hearing Gregory’s Greek words with ears shut to what he actually says, one may, perhaps, see Odysseus when viewing Gregory – but what has the viewer then become but a Cyclops with only one eye, threatening the poor man who has actually something wooden (‘wood’ means the Cross in Gregory’s account of the life of Moses) in his hand. Such a Giant has modern Gregory research often been, having its late start shortly after Adolf von Harnack presented his influential thesis on the Hellenization of Christianity during the patristic era. At the dawn of the ‘Gregory renaissance’, the Giant showed, in some cases, a very benevolent and tender face (W. Jaeger), distant and sad sometimes (A. von Harnack who gave the general impulse awaking the one-eyed Giant), and in some cases a face just plain rude (H. Cherniss424). Eventually, two open eyes have proven more reliable and far-reaching (H.U. von Balthasar and J. Daniélou) – while there still remains more to discover of Gregory’s thinking, with two open eyes and ears.

The problem is that the Giant was once nominated an Emperor of the new kingdom named Dogmengeschichte, and that one still sees the errors and the bad judgements of the Emperor recapitulated in the research, especially in literature that describes the history of the development of Christian thinking without any particular concentration on Gregory of Nyssa and his actual sources. As in H. C. Andersen’s story, two skilful tailors – two ‘bodies’ of scholars either hating or loving ‘Hellenization’ – clothed the Emperor for the 20th century parade. It was made to appear as if only the very stupid, those unfitting for the service of the offices of the new academic kingdom, were unable to see the Emperor’s clothes made of riches of Greek reason, in Platonic

424 Rude – when it comes to the appreciation of the unique Christian substance of Gregory’s thinking.
pattern with fine classical cuts and lines. The Emperor is not as celebrated as he used to be any more, but too often one can still notice him showing his ‘new clothes’ in the literature taking notice of ancient Christianity. Gregory may be spoken of as the ‘most Platonic of all’ the Fathers without any definition what is actually meant by such a saying.  

What is sad is that the all too careless sayings void of meaning keep on appearing even in very high quality studies. I have to admit that I belong to the stupid and childish ones. While I do recognise Gregory’s appreciation of the riches of

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425 A. MEREDITH 1999, 11 is right in saying that to the question ‘how Platonic was Gregory?’ the answer must be: ‘It all depends what is meant by Platonism’.

426 Cf. D. T URNER 1995, 17-18. Turner calls Gregory ‘the most Platonic of Old Testament exegetes’. But by this all too the hasty definition, based on a highly questionable interpretation of one isolated passage from Gregory’s VM II 162-164, Turner adds ideas to Gregory’s original presentation. Turner indicates that Nyssen conceives the ‘seeing by not seeing’ as a painful experience – just as Plato thought the leaving of the cave is. But, in fact, in Gregory one leaves ‘the cave’ – the darkness of this world – already when entering the light of Incarnation, and there is nothing to suggest that this would be a painful experience. Further, according to Gregory there is no point in the divine ascent when the soul would leave the body as something which it has been imprisoned by. Instead, there is a point of joining the body of Christ and giving one’s own body to the service of Christ. Moreover, it is in the created bodies that the uncreated, invisible and incorporeal logos becomes visible. This embodiment of the essentially spiritual Word is regarded as no decline of the divine: rather, the descent of the logos is something very positive in Gregory’s view which is hardly Platonic. Gregory believes that Moses, unlike Plato (or any of the representatives of the exothen paideusis for that matter), had a prophetic recognition of the Incarnation: this made him able to grow in ‘divine knowledge’ and, eventually, enabled him to enter ‘the inner sanctuary of divine knowledge’. The divine Word itself purged the hearing of Moses and the rest of the prophets for the contemplation of the Real-Being. Through their right identification of the Wisdom who ‘has built her house’ (Prov 9.1, cf. CE III/I 44 GNO II 19, 3-8) they knew, unlike the profane philosophers, the Wisdom who is glorified ‘by the heavens’ (Ps 19.1, cf. VM II 168).

It is quite simply incorrect to say that as an Old Testament exegete, Gregory is the ‘most Platonic’ of them all. In agreement with the traditional Platonists, Nyssen does identify God as the Real-Being. But he also believes that the ‘divine statements’ (theologiai) of the God-inspired Holy Scripture finally purge, by proclaiming Christ, the hearing of the ‘disciples of the Word’ who learn who ‘it’ is that truly exists. In De vita Moysis Gregory explains that when coming to the divine light, the followers of the Word exercise aphairesis, that is, they strip off from their understanding misconceptions concerning being: in Gregory’s view, Platonists and the rest of the Greek philosophers had erred in their conception of Being by not categorically distinguishing between that which is uncreated and divine and that which is created and not divine. But ‘he who has been purified and is sharp of hearing in his heart’, Gregory writes, hears the sound of the ‘heavenly trumpets’. Through the contemplation of reality, such a person attains knowledge of the divine power – who is Christ – and is led by the sound of trumpets ‘to the place where his intelligence lets him slip in where God is’. Gregory continues: ‘This is called darkness by the Scripture, which signifies…the unknown and unseen. When he arrives there, he sees that tabernacle not made with hands [i.e. Christ] which he shows to those below by means of material likeness.’ Neither Plato nor Plotinus was able to build a material imitation of the heavenly tabernacle on earth: Gregory clearly does not have Plato or Plotinus in mind when discussing the issues of theognosia that the saints learned in their ascents, and embodied according to God’s will when they descended.
universal reason, I cannot see the one-eyed Emperor’s clothes: according to my judgement, the Emperor’s riches must be in the pockets of the skilful tailors.

In spite of what Werner Jaeger says, Gregory’s concern for ‘man’ and his salvation does not culminate in his ‘ascetic theory’ in the way Jaeger wanted to see it, and wanted also make everybody else to see it. He made his magic by speaking over Gregory’s head, claiming, for example, that there is much calculating and pretending, and tactical subordination of reason to the Scripture – how else could it be – in his De vita Moysis as he there calls the ‘outside’ or ‘foreign’ teaching and philosophy (ἡ ἑξωγενεῖς παιδευσι; ἡ ἐξω Φιλοσοφία) a barren Princess. Such speaking fits well to Gregory’s own scheme but poorly to that of Jaeger’s.

Clearly Gregory’s idea of monastery-living is one part of his more comprehensive vision of Church as the Body of Christ where there are many members with different duties. Gregory’s vision of the ideal Christian society is not that each person should live his or her life in exactly the same manner as the ascetics who live ‘philosophic life’. While Gregory’s one very special and dear concern was the contemplative life of the monasteries, his major concerns relate to his idea of man as a multitude which is ‘one man’: one Body of Christ, the Church, ‘one image of Him who is’. In Gregory’s view, the divine call to follow and imitate Christ meets each human soul at her own level. It encourages each person to live according to virtue – Christ – in his or her own position and task in the service of the one Body of Christ, as one of its members. The aim for perfection is for everyone – again, for a minister and a shoemaker alike – who follow and imitate Christ in several ways in faith, and partake the sacramental living of the Church.

Faith, in Gregory, is not ‘mere faith’ in relation to the ‘higher state’ of gnosis – as claimed by Werner Jaeger, who saw in Gregory the saviour of the classical tradition from its contemporary Stoic and Epicurean decadence into ‘mere dogmas’. Gregory did not really baptise and ‘resurrect’ Plato and his doctrines but rather baptised the good old Greek concept of Φιλοσοφία. Φιλό means ‘friend’ or

‘lover’ and σοφία ‘wisdom’. What would be more fitting title for such a Christian lover and friend of Christ who dedicates his or her life for contemplating and serving the divine wisdom, than philosopher? Did not Paul say that the crucified Christ is the Wisdom of God? Did not Christ, the pre-existent Wisdom himself call his servants his friends (Jh 15,15): ‘I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father.’ And was not God’s servant Moses called a friend by the same Wisdom? 429

3.5. Christian lover of wisdom – a lover of Christ

Filosophos would not sound a bad title at all for a Christian ‘lover of true Wisdom’, in the ears of a Greek-speaking unprejudiced Christian with steady Christian identity. Full grown identity is not based on rejection and enmity. Philosophos can be a genuine Christian self-identification with such words – philos and sophia – that quite naturally arise from one’s own ‘religious’, Judeo-Christian context of thought. Where the Cyclops with one eye sees nothing but a classical Greek concept and shouts out Plato by name, two open eyes may see a Greek word but a Christian concept: instead of Plato one may then see Gregory, an imitator of Paul, who was the ‘apostle to the Gentiles’ (Rm 11,13) and, in many ways, the first serious ‘Hellenizer’ of Christianity.

Filokristos would perhaps make the point more clear, ‘lover of Christ’? Twice in De vita Moysis Gregory distinguishes the Christian lover of Wisdom from the profane by this concept, in order to indicate what kind of Wisdom the Christians love and what is the philosophy they know in Christ: what is the Wisdom of God, the true Wisdom – and the philosophy of God. In Gregory’s account, the philosophy of God is

429 Cf. VM II 319-320. In saying that Moses was named a friend of God, Gregory refers to Ex 33.11. According to Gregory, Moses’ encounter with God meant encountering Christ. Interpretation according to which it was Christ who spoke to Moses in the thorny bush was common to both the orthodox and the Anomaeans.
manifested in God’s coming down for man’s sake to elevate man up. Christ-lovers take first notice of the Only-begotten’s incarnation and of man’s resurrection in the Lord. Then they take notice of Christ as ‘Church’, that is, of the ‘tabernacle not made with hands’ (Christ) of which the ‘earthly tabernacle’ (Church) is an imitation. Finally the Christ-lovers take notice of all that is natural, ‘fitting’ to Christ as God – but not without noticing, what he became ‘for our sake’: how he became lowly to make us lofty, and how low, ultimately, God’s Wisdom descended. Fundamental knowledge for a Christ-lover, is the Pauline account of the crucified Christ – who was made sin for our sake (2. Cor 5,21) – as the very power and the wisdom of God (1. Cor 1,24) who, for our sake, as we hear from St. John, consented to be born like us as he tabernacled among us (Jn 1,14). These are the things that Gregory takes notice of when he addresses the characteristics of ‘Christian philosophy’ by the concept of filokristo. It is used of the person who knows divine philosophy, i.e. that God loved his own Wisdom, the Son, even as he was made sin - for our sake.

In Gregory’s vision of Christianity, perfection is not only for the ‘philosophers’ or ascetics who, for their love for the true wisdom Christ, dedicate themselves to ‘philosophic life’. These persons strive for divine knowledge, in order to reach ‘intellectual maturity’ as Christ grows in them, but it does not mean higher life in terms of faith. Faith is one in the Church: it is confessed together as one body with one voice in the one ineffable name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – in the name with which the Christians are baptized. Further, those who lead others in the Church must strive, in Gregory’s view, for ‘religious perfection’. This, again, does not mean becoming perfect in ‘speculative theology’ attempting to ‘intellectualize the supraintellectual’ which, according to W. Jaeger, called ‘theology into being’. Gregory was a friend of speculation, and in his texts we may certainly recognise something that we are accustomed to call ‘speculative theology’. We may do so: my point is not to argue against the habit. But Gregory himself does not have any positive concept of

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430 VM II 31; 176.
431 Cf. the discussion in CE III/III GNO II 105-133
432 CE III/IV 60f GNO II 157, 7 f.
‘speculative theology’: these two words together are something he would not have allowed even if there were others among the orthodox who might have. In Gregory, the way he would like to see the term used, speculation does not belong to theology. St. John did not speculate but proclaimed the divine nature when proclaiming Christ as God who in the beginning was in and with God. While theology is not speculation, it can be an object of speculation – and, in Gregory’s view, it is important to distinguish between human speculation and theology. This is the point we need to take from Gregory when interpreting him.

We lose the most constitutive dimension in Gregory’s theological thinking if we do not acknowledge the primal and essentially divine, descending orientation in Gregory’s concept of theology, and make this acknowledgement a part of our scientific view of his thinking. Gregory was quite happy to call the theological speculation by means of reason ‘philosophy’, as human love-driven reaching-out for God and his wisdom. For Gregory, the following of the Word in the human words of his saints was philosophy. For the term ‘theology’ he had another use. It was ‘sound of words’ trumpeted from above coming downwards, proclaiming God in Christ Jesus, the Word tabernacled. The saints’ preaching of the divinity of Christ we are thus able to perceive as ‘theology’, as ‘preaching concerning the divine nature’. By hearing theologia well, one attains theognosia of the Holy Trinity who is worshipped and celebrated in the Church. His glory is proclaimed in both words and deeds in theologia where the divine Word is present in a body – and may be ‘heard’ according to its presence.

In Gregory, ‘perfection in religious virtue’ means perfect stewardship as God’s servant in delivering the divine mysteries to be participated in by all members of the one Body, in the sacramental living of the Church. In Gregory’s vision, ‘the virtue of Moses’ – like all Christian perfection – means perfect God-likeness through serving, not by knowing ‘like the divine Archetype’. The Archetype is known in the person of Christ who in the Incarnation became the Prototype of ‘new man’ (Eph 4.24). In the ‘form of the servant’ (Phil 2.7) the Lord was among his own ‘as the one who serves’ (Lk 22.27). Even as the Master of his own servants he made service to these disciples
and followers of his — whom he could even call his friends. ‘Philosophic life’, in Gregory’s vision, is life of contemplation and service, not for individual gain and personal beatitude but for the common benefit of the one Body.

In the Church there is no virtue outside the common benefit. The individual soul does not find salvation and beatitude except as a member of the Body. When one imitates Christ through imitating Paul, one imitates a servant who is a member in a Body whose head and governing mind is Christ. It is evident that Gregory’s concept of mimesis – as a stewardship in the membership of one body – is essentially Pauline. Paul, the imitator of Christ to be imitated in the pursuit, instructed the Ephesians in a letter that contains his ecclesiological teaching: ‘Be imitators of God’, gi/nesqe ou/* mimhtai| tou~ qeou~ (Eph 5.1). This exhortation crowns Paul’s teaching of the unity of the one body of Christ who builds up his body and joins together its members, who all work in their individual pursuits of love. Paul mentions in particular those who work in special missions as the ministers of God’s will. He points out that to some Christ has given to become apostles, to some prophets, to some evangelists and to some teachers. Paul writes how the ‘saints are perfected for the work of service (diakonia) for the edifying of the body of Christ’ (Eph 4.12): Christ ‘descended into the lower parts of the earth’ and again ascended far above so that he might fill all things and give gifts to men (4.8-10). The descent was the ultimate act of God’s love for us (2.4-7). At the present, the ‘filling all things from far above’ and the ‘giving’ of the gifts (2.8 – above all, the gift of faith) are again ‘downward’ movements from God to the servants. Paul also speaks of (the body’s and its members’) growing into Christ, the head, in the ‘unity of faith (pistis) and knowledge (epignosis) of the Son

433 Cf. Steph GNO X/1 78-79 where Gregory writes: ‘Stephen, who was wealthy in wisdom and grace by the Spirit, was summoned to assist the Apostles (Acts 6.5). Let no one think that the name of minister (th| diakonh| opomati) made him inferior to the dignity of the Apostles. Since Paul realized that he was a minister of the mysteries of Christ (diakonon mystein Xristou-cf. 1Cor 4.1) and the Lord of the universe brought salvation by assuming human, he was not ashamed to be called a minister. As the Apostle says, he was in their midst as one who serves (o| diakonw, cf. Lk 22.27) and as one who provides a variety of ministries (o|ta| diaireseij twv diakoniw ekergw, cf. 1Cor 12.5-6).’

434 In other words, the pre-existent Wisdom ‘made friends’ with her human followers: this idea constitutes Gregory’s idea of ‘philosophy’, the ‘befriending of wisdom’, the Christians are familiar with.
of God’, unto a ‘perfect man’. This kind of discourse – clearly! – motivates Gregory’s reflection and his idea of the imitation of God.  

From the same context we find Gregory’s motivation for his concept of ‘one theology’. Eph 4. 1-6 intensifies into a hymn on the Christian concept of unity:

So I exhort you, prisoner as I am in the Lord, to conduct yourselves worthy of the calling you have received, with unalloyed humility and gentleness, to bear patiently with one another in a loving way, making every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is

one body and one Spirit,  
just as also you received your calling, with  
one hope;  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;  
one God and Father of all,  
who governs all  
and pervades all  
and is in us all

Gregory’s apophatic concept of theology is an expression of his faith according to which there is ‘one baptism’ in the one unknowable, unnameable and ineffable name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It joins us in the ‘one body’ where there is ‘one Spirit’ that creates its unity and calls us into ‘one hope’. We are baptised into ‘one faith’ in ‘one Lord’ whereby we are joined, in the ‘one Spirit’ through ‘one Lord’ to ‘one God, the Father of all’ who ‘governs all and pervades all and is in us all’. The Church confesses her one faith in one Lord in the name of Christ Jesus, and her one faith to one God – just as people are baptised and joined as members to the body of Christ – according to the command of the Lord: in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy

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435 What A. A. Mosshammer 1988, 372 says is true: the notions of participation and imitation ‘could never have been derived from the Biblical “image of God”.’ But Gregory did not need to restrict his interest on that passage alone! Even the idea of becoming a participant in the divine nature is clearly expressed in 2. Pe 1.4, with rich references to knowledge (epignosis) of God and Jesus Christ, as well as to virtue (arete), attainable by the power of Christ. It is all too much to say that without ‘indebtedness to Platonism’, Gregory could not have come into any ideas concerning either participation or imitation. It is another question, what kind of relation the biblical writers might have had to their contemporary Platonism (or other Greek schools of philosophy); for Gregory, anyhow, the ‘God-inspired Holy Scripture’ represented ‘authentic Christianity’. With a Christian identity, he listened and aimed to follow the words of the Scripture as theologia: ‘God’s speaking’ through his servants.
Spirit. The Church proclaims ‘one theology’ in its members by both confessions – in words, but also in deeds ‘according to the calling’ the members have received: in humility, gentleness, and patience, by loving each other and by striving to preserve the bond of peace.

Gregory suggests that there is _theological_ but not ontological correlation between the ‘one name’ of God and the ‘name’ of the one Lord, the one person of Christ. God is unknowable and unnameable in his _essence_. But he is _knowable in the person_ of ‘Lord the King’, _i.e_. Lord Christ, who has been given a _human name_ that, according to Paul, surpasses every name (Phil 2.9.\textsuperscript{436}): Jesus. Gregory says that neither ‘Lord’ nor ‘Christ’ are names of ‘essence’ but of ‘authority’.\textsuperscript{437} When ‘Jesus’, indicating the human nature of Christ, was made Christ and Lord as he became elevated into divine glory, he was given the divine authority of Christ and Lord. The human nature was not made divine in essence, but everything belonging to the Lord ‘who was in the beginning’ was given to ‘Jesus’. The name ‘Jesus’ was elevated into equal honour as the ‘name which is above every name’. Gregory says that God the Word – who is, has always been and will always be ‘Lord and Christ’ – made the ‘man Jesus’

to be Lord from being a servant, to be King from being a subject, to be Christ from being in subordination. He highly exalted that which was lowly,... _and gave to him that had the human name that name which is above every name_.\textsuperscript{438}

In Christ there is an exchange of properties, an ‘uspeakable mixture and conjunction of human littleness commingled with divine greatness’: the divine names are applicable to humanity, and the divinity is spoken of by human names. The reason is that there is one essentially divine person of Christ who may be addressed in both ways: ‘the same person who both has the name which is above every name is worshipped by all creation in the human name of Jesus’.\textsuperscript{439} Jesus is the name of ‘him who was made Lord and

\textsuperscript{436}Cf. Phil 2.9: \textit{tolòkoma to lúpèt pàmòkoma}.

\textsuperscript{437}Cf. \textit{CE} III/IV 59ff. GNO II 157, 3ff.

\textsuperscript{438}Cf. \textit{CE} III/IV 63 GNO II 188, 16-25.

\textsuperscript{439}Cf. \textit{CE} III/IV 64 188,26-159,2.
Christ’ according to his humanity in brotherhood with us who partake the resurrected humanity through baptism and faith. The loftiness of God’s glory is proclaimed in Christ’s human nature, through us. In other words ‘apophatic theology’ and ‘Christocentric anthropology’ mean, ultimately, the same thing in Gregory of Nyssa.

Apophasis and Christocentricism unify in Gregory in a biblical way. The biblical writers do tell us of some form of knowledge of God which is not allowed for us men – while St. Paul, in turn, promises us some kind of perfect ‘face-to-face knowledge’ (cf. 1.Cor 13.12) of him. Accordingly, Gregory never promises that God will be known ‘in essence’, but he is known ‘in person’, and will be known perfectly ‘face to face’ in the person of Christ who is the ‘express image of the Father’s person’ (cf. Hbr 1.3.): ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’, says Christ in St. John. The ‘Father’s face’ seen in Christ is all love: Gregory believes that humanity as the body of Christ should mirror the loving face of God in all its members in all activities of the one body. His idea is that eventually, when the ‘whole man’ is perfected in one in the Son, we may look and see the ‘face of God’ in the face of each other. When elevated into divine honour, ‘one man’ has authority in theology: it has become one Body of Love, \textit{living} the ‘mystery revealed to his saints’: Christ in us.
CONCLUSION

My task has been to examine the inner coherency of the Trinitarian and anthropological thinking of Gregory of Nyssa. To this issue has been applied an ‘apophatic approach’ with a ‘Christological focus’. The general hypothesis has been that the coherent sequence connecting the two Schwerpunkte of his thought, Trinitarian and anthropological, is Christological in substance, corresponding with his teaching of the two natures of the one person of Jesus Christ. The aim of exposing the sequence has been pursued by the method of identification, a combination of the modern critical ‘problematic method’ and Gregory’s own aphairetic method of ‘following’ (akolouthia). The principles of Gregory’s own method have been used as methodological devices for identifying and analysing the relevant problems and the sequences of his thought ‘according to the author’s intention’. The studies have been a process of learning, as both a ‘critical’ and a ‘self-critical’ student of Gregory.

By apophatic approach and Christological focus, the method has resulted in a recognition of the deep Christocentric integration of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought. The studies can be concluded with an affirmation of their coherent inner connection. The connection is in substance a Christological sequence, where anthropological theory is dependent on apophatic Trinitarian teaching and is pursued towards a Christological-eschatological goal, ‘life in Christ’. This telos is identical with the overarching Trinitarian skopos of anthropology: the likeness of the human image to the divine Archetype, in becoming ‘perfectly one’ in both nature and operation as the Triune God is one, not only according to his nature but also according to his operation. Such a God-like perfection in oneness is attainable for humankind only in and through Christ, the Mediator between God and men, and the Prototype of man in whom the likeness of the human image to the divine Archetype is restored.

The apophatically qualified Trinitarian concept of perfect oneness has been identified as the ‘theological-anthropological problem’ to which Gregory’s teaching of the two natures of the one person of Jesus Christ provides the
'Christological solution’. Gregory’s motivation is biblical. It derives from the notion of man’s creation ‘in the image and likeness of God’ (Gen 1. 26-27) and from the high priestly prayer of Jesus (Jn 17. 1-26): That they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; that they also may be one in us [...] I in them, and you in me; that the may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me (Jn 17.21,23).

‘In Christ’, each person is a partaker in Christ’s pure human nature and is one in will with the Son as the Son is one in will with the Father: the Son’s human body becomes perfected, in the Spirit through the Son, into the divine likeness as ‘one image of Him who is’. The body of Christ acts as one in its members according to the will of God. In the union of love – meaning universal human subjection to the loving will of God, accomplished through personal subjection (i.e. faith) to Christ – there is a union of wills between God and man. The ‘man’ will be in Christ, as Christ will be in each person: ‘man’ will then exist as a perfect work of God, proclaiming God’s infinite love in participation to God’s own activity, the ‘one motion and disposition of the good will from the Father through the Son to the Holy Spirit’. ‘Through the Son’ means also ‘through his human body’, that is, through his humanity: through us.

The way Gregory uses the term θεολογία, incorporates the whole Christocentric intention of his anthropology. It most perfectly exposes the inner coherency of Gregory’s Trinitarian and anthropological thought, and makes it manifest – provided that his apophatic concept of theology is connected with the biblical context it is initially derived from, and is viewed in that light.

In Gregory, apophasis is not based on a human negation, but on the divine denial concerning the possibility of knowledge of his essential nature. Gregory thinks that only such things can be known concerning the uncreated divine nature as God has revealed to his servants according to his will: God has revealed of himself that his essence cannot be known. For Gregory, the ‘unknowability of the divine essence’ hence represents a theological principle (arche) for the theory of God. In a discourse, it becomes supported by a system of arguments that maintain the principle in a coherent
sequence (akolouthia). The studies have revealed that the same arguments that support the apophatic notion of God in Gregory qualify also his discussion of the divine oneness and, subsequently, determine his idea of human perfection in oneness.

What underlies Gregory’s apophatic position is his concept of theology which is based on the traditional Judeo-Christian notion of ‘God who speaks with his people’. In Gregory, qelologiā names the activity of divine speaking concerning the divine nature: it names the oi̔konomiā of God’s self-revelation through Christ as a triune and man-loving nature. Nyssen thinks that speech providing qeognwsiā, divine knowledge concerning what is uncreated, cannot be authorised except by God himself. However, it is spoken in (eĥ) his servants and proclaimed through (di̔) their mouths. Above all, God has spoken to us in his Son (eĥ ui̔w | cf. Hebr 1-2) who became man as he was incarnate and took on a human body for our sake because of his love. The ‘clothing’ of man in flesh in which he dies was a preparation for the Incarnation and the resurrection of the dead in Christ. The ‘mystery of theology’ resides in the ‘mystery of Incarnation’ proclaiming God’s love through Christ who is the Power and the Wisdom of God. In theology, the Uncreated is present in the created body which ‘sings’, proclaims the present God, the superabundance and the wonder of his love, wisdom and power. In theology, there is Word in the body of flesh, Spirit in the body of the letter, God in the body of man. Ultimately, there is Father in the human body of his Son: in theology, there is Christ in us. Together with Christ there dwells in us the whole fullness of God, the Holy Trinity: where Christ, the Word and the Son of God, is, there is also the Father dwelling together with the Holy Spirit.

According to Gregory’s apophatic and Christocentric teaching, the whole a̔hqrwpoj was originally intended to be – and will in the end as ekklhsiā become – what qelologiā is: one Body proclaiming the Word of God with one Voice, by confessing Lord Christ in the name of Jesus, to the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In faith given by the Spirit, souls are joined as members to the Son’s human body which the Father loves just as he loved his Son before the beginning of time. In Christ, humanity is hence made a participant in the Divine Philosophy: Christ is the
Wisdom the Father loves, the Son is the Wisdom who loves the Father – and God is love, its communion and actualisation. ‘In God’ there is Father and Son loving each other in the Holy Spirit in infinite eternity, in a perfect union of their loving wills. Their will is one in creation and in loving humankind: humankind is created as the ultimate expression of God’s love. The especial task of humanity is to make the divine love manifest within the creation by all human loving activities in the likeness of God. This may be accomplished in Christ by way of following and imitating him. Following and imitating culminate not in knowing like God but in a loving service according to the example of the Lord who served his servants: through loving service the ‘one image of Him who is’ exists in a perfect likeness of the triune Archetype and proclaims theology as one body in one voice.

The human soul loving Christ participates in the divine communion of love as the ‘Son’s own’. God is love: ‘In Christ’ the soul is literally ‘in love with Christ’, that is, she is ‘in God with God’ as the Word was in God with God ‘in the Beginning’, that is, as the Son has always been and will always be in the Father with the Father. ‘In God’ – in Love – the soul follows her Beloved one wherever he may lead. In her members the whole Church follows and mirrors Christ, proclaiming the divine nature and God’s infinite loving character as one, governed by the mind of Christ.

The key to the unique integration of Trinitarian, anthropological and apophatic thinking of Gregory of Nyssa is Christ. In Christ, the ‘name of Jesus’ – the name of God’s assumed humanity – is elevated to the Son’s eternal divine Glory that is beyond every name and every conception of God. ‘Faith in Christ’, in Gregory, means not ‘a state’ of rest of a final intellectual decision of God but a wonderful quest in God with God, an eternal enjoyment of the discovery of the overwhelming love of God. Above all, it means living of a life everlasting according to the call of the Beloved one:

Come, follow me!
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<tr>
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Or dom | De oratione dominica

Perf | De perfectione

Ref Eun | Refutatio confessionis Eunomii

Simpl | Ad Simplicium de fide
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