

ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
Popular Patristics Series

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ST GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

On God and Christ

The Five Theological Orations
and Two Letters to Cledonius

*The Five Theological Orations (Orations 27–31) translated
into English by FREDERICK WILLIAMS (Oration 27) and
LIONEL WICKHAM (Orations 28–31) with Introduction
and Notes by LIONEL WICKHAM*

*The Two Letters to Cledonius (Letters 101 and 102) translated
into English by LIONEL WICKHAM with Introduction and
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ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
CRESTWOOD, NEW YORK 10707

- ¹⁵²Col 1:17.
¹⁵³1 Cor 1:30.
¹⁵⁴Col 1:17.
¹⁵⁵Cf. Rom 1:4; Col 1:15–19.
¹⁵⁶Cf. Jn 1:3.
¹⁵⁷Jn 14:6.
¹⁵⁸Jn 6:27.
¹⁵⁹Heb 1:3.
¹⁶⁰Col 1:15.
¹⁶¹Cf. Gen 4:25.
¹⁶²Jn 8:12; 9:5.
¹⁶³Jn 14:6.
¹⁶⁴Acts 17:28.
¹⁶⁵Cf. Gen 2:7; Jn 20:22.
¹⁶⁶Ps 118:131 [LXX].
¹⁶⁷1 Cor 1:30.
¹⁶⁸Cf. Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6.
¹⁶⁹Rom 6:14.
¹⁷⁰1 Cor 1:30.
¹⁷¹Ibid.
¹⁷²Jn 11:25.
¹⁷³Cf. Tob 13:2; Wis 16:13; Deut 32:39; 1 Sam (1 Kg) 2:6.
¹⁷⁴Jn 9:11.
¹⁷⁵Mt 9:6.
¹⁷⁶Mt 1:16.
¹⁷⁷Cf. Ex 30:30; 1 Sam (1 Kg) 10:1.
¹⁷⁸Jn 14:6.
¹⁷⁹Jn 10:9.
¹⁸⁰Jn 10:11.
¹⁸¹Ps 23(22):2.
¹⁸²Cf. Jn 10:4.
¹⁸³Cf. Ezek 34:25.
¹⁸⁴Ezek 34:16.
¹⁸⁵Is 40:11.
¹⁸⁶Is 53:7.
¹⁸⁷Ibid.
¹⁸⁸Ex 12:5.
¹⁸⁹Heb 6:20.
¹⁹⁰Heb 7:1.
¹⁹¹Heb 7:3.
¹⁹²Is 53:8.
¹⁹³Heb 7:1–2.
¹⁹⁴Heb 13:8.

The Fifth Theological Oration

ORATION 31

On the Holy Spirit

1

So stands the doctrine of the Son. It has passed through the midst of its adversaries unscathed by their stones.¹ The Word cannot be stoned. The Word, if you like, flings stones, striking the wild beasts, the arguments, which mischievously approach the mount.

But what do you say, they ask, about the Holy Spirit? Where did you get this strange, unscriptural "God" you are bringing in?

This is the view of people already fairly sound so far as the Son is concerned. You find roads and rivers will divide and join up again, and the same thing occurs here because there is a wealth of irreligion. People elsewhere divided concur on some points, and the result is that it is impossible to get a clear idea of what they agree on and on what they disagree.

2

Of course there is something especially difficult in the doctrine of the Spirit. It is not just that men exhausted by discussions of the Son are more eager to take on the Spirit—they must have something to blaspheme or life would be unlivable—but also that we become worn out by the quantity of issues. We are in the same condition as men who lose their appetite for all food regardless of what it is, after

being disgusted with some particular dish; we take an equal dislike to all doctrinal discussion. All the same, let the Spirit aid us, and the Word will have its course and God be glorified. We leave to others a careful, critical analysis of the many different senses in which “spirit” and “holy” are used in Scripture, with the texts that bear upon the enquiry. We leave too the additional problem of the particular sense resulting from the combination of the terms—I mean “Holy Spirit.” Others² have benefited themselves and us, as we too have benefited them, by systematic studies here. We, though, shall now turn to a further stage in the discussion.

3

Yes, some people, very eager to defend the letter, are angry with us for introducing a God, the Holy Spirit, who is a stranger and an intruder. They must understand that “they are afraid where no fear is.”³ They must recognize clearly that their love for the letter is a cloak⁴ for irreligion, as shall be proved presently when we do our best to refute their objections. For our part we have such confidence in the Godhead of the Spirit, that, rash though some may find it, we shall begin our theological exposition by applying identical expressions to the Three. “He was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world”⁵—yes, the Father. “He was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world”⁶—yes, the Son. “He was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world”—yes, the Comforter.⁷ These are three subjects and three verbs—he was and he was and he was. But a single reality was. There are three predicates—light and light and light. But the light is one, God is one. This is the meaning of David’s prophetic vision: “In your light we shall see light.”⁸ We receive the Son’s light from the Father’s light⁹ in the light of the Spirit: that is what we ourselves have seen and what we now proclaim—it is the plain and simple explanation of the Trinity. Let the treacherous deal treacherously, let the

transgressor transgress⁹—we shall preach what we know. We shall climb a lofty mountain and shout it out, if we are not given a hearing below. We shall extol the Spirit; we shall not be afraid.¹⁰ If we do have fear, it will be of silence not of preaching.

4

If there was a “when” when the Father did not exist, there was a “when” when the Son did not exist. If there was a “when” when the Son did not exist, there was a “when” when the Holy Spirit did not exist. If one existed from the beginning,¹¹ so did all three. If you cast one down, I make bold to tell you not to exalt the other two. What use is incomplete deity? Or rather what is deity if it is incomplete? Something is missing if it does not have Holiness, and how could it have Holiness without having the Holy Spirit? Either God’s Holiness is independent of the Holy Spirit (and in that case I should like to be told what it is supposed to be) or if it is identical with the Holy Spirit, how, I ask, could it fail to be from the beginning¹²—as if it had at one time been to God’s advantage to be incomplete and without his Spirit. If he did not exist from the beginning,¹³ he has the same rank as I have, though with a slight priority—we are both separated from God by time. If he has the same rank as I have, how can he make me God,¹⁴ how can he link me with deity?

5

But I will now take the investigation a stage further back for you—we have discussed the Trinity earlier. The Sadducees alleged that the Holy Spirit does not exist at all and that there are no angels and no resurrection. I do not know what grounds they had for their scornful rejection of so many important proof-texts in the Old Testament. Amongst non-Christians,¹⁵ on the other hand, the more

theologically-minded, with views nearer our own, had, I think, some mental picture of him. They were divided, though, as to his name; “mind of the universe,” “external mind,” and suchlike were the titles they gave him. Amongst our own experts,¹⁶ some took the Holy Spirit as an active process, some as a creature, some as God. Others were agnostic on this point *out of reverence*, as they put it, *for Scripture, which has given no clear revelation either way*.

On these grounds they offer him neither worship nor disrespect; they take up a sort of halfway (or should I say “a thoroughly pitiful”?) position about him. Amongst those who take him as God, some keep their devotion to their own minds, others venture to express it with their lips as well. I understand that there are others besides, even more expert at measuring out Godhead. These acknowledge as we do that it is three beings that are spiritually discerned, but they put a vast distance between them. One is infinite in substance and power; one is infinite in power but not in substance, and one is finite on both counts. These people copy, if in a slightly different form, those who use the names “Creator,” “Co-worker,” and “Minister,” alleging that the rank inherent in the names coincides with the quality of the realities.

6

We shall not argue with those who deny the Holy Spirit’s existence or with pagan chitchat—we must forgo the luxury of the “oil of sinners”¹⁷ and get on with the sermon. With the rest though we shall take issue. The Holy Spirit must be presumed to be either a being existing in its own right or an inherent property of something else—what the subtle here call a “substance” or an “accident” respectively. If “accident” applies here, the Holy Spirit must be an activity of God. What otherwise, whose otherwise, could it be? The Holy Spirit has, after all, a certain superiority and is unscathed by composition. If an activity, clearly it must be activated, because he has no active power

and ceases with the cessation of his production—that is the kind of thing an activity is. How comes it then that he *does* act?¹⁸ He says things,¹⁹ he decrees,²⁰ he is grieved,²¹ he is vexed²²—all of which belong to a being *with* motion, not to the process of motion. If he is a substance, not the attribute of a substance, he must be taken either as a creature or as God. Not even the inventors of fabulous goat-stags could envisage a halfway being here, or anything that belonged to, or was composed out of, both sides. But if he is a creature why do you believe in him, why are we baptized in him? “Believing *in*” is not the same thing as “believing a fact *about*.” The first applies to God, the second to everything. If he is God, then he is not a “creature,” or a “product” or a “fellow-slave”—none of these lowly names belongs to him at all.

7

Now for your say! Let the slings fly and the subtle inferences be drawn!

The Holy Spirit must either be ingenerate or begotten. If he is ingenerate, there are two unoriginate beings. If he is begotten, we again have alternatives: either begotten from the Father or from the Son. If from the Father, there will be two sons who are brothers.

Make them twins if you like, or one older than the other, since you have a penchant for corporeal ideas. If he is begotten from the Son, our God apparently has a grandson, and what could be odder than that? We certainly have here the arguments of people “wise to do evil,”²³ but unwilling to write what is good. For my part, if I saw the necessity for the alternatives, I should accept the realities without being put off by the names. But because the Son is “Son” in a more elevated sense of the word, and since we have no other term to express his consubstantial derivation from God, it does not follow that we ought to think it essential to transfer wholesale to the divine sphere the earthly names of human family ties. Do you take it, by the

same token, that our God is a male, because of the masculine nouns “God” and “Father”? Is the Godhead a female, because in Greek the word is feminine? Is the word “Spirit” neuter in Greek, because the Spirit is sterile? If you want to take the joke further you could say, as the trashy myths of old did, that God coupled with his own will and fathered the Son. We should then be faced with the bisexual God of Marcion, who pictured those outlandish aeons.²⁴

8

But since we do not admit your first dilemma with its assumption that there is no midway term between ingeneracy and generacy, away go your “brothers” and “grandsons” at once along with the pompous dilemma, beating a retreat from theology, dissolved, so to say, along with the dissolution of the first link in the complex chain. Explain to me where you are going to put “procession” which is evidently a mean term between alternatives and was introduced by a better theologian than you, our Savior? I take it that you have not composed a new New Testament and on the strength of it removed the phrase: “The Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father.”²⁵ Insofar as he proceeds from the Father, he is no creature; inasmuch as he is not begotten, he is no Son; and to the extent that procession is the mean between ingeneracy and generacy, he is God. Thus God escapes your syllogistic toils and shows himself stronger than your exclusive alternatives. What, then, is “proceeding”? You explain the ingeneracy of the Father and I will give you a biological account of the Son’s begetting and the Spirit’s proceeding—and let us go mad the pair of us for prying into God’s secrets. What competence have we here? We cannot understand what lies under our feet, cannot count the sand in the sea, “the drops of rain or the days of this world!”²⁶ much less enter into the “depths of God”²⁷ and render a verbal account of a nature so mysterious, so much beyond words.

9

In what particular, then, it may be asked, does the Spirit fall short of being Son? If there were not something missing, he would be Son.

We say there is no deficiency—God lacks nothing. It is their difference in, so to say, “manifestation” or mutual relationship, which has caused the difference in names. The Son does not fall short in some particular of being Father. Sonship is no defect, yet that does not mean he is Father. By the same token, the Father would fall short of being Son—the Father is *not* Son. No, the language here gives no grounds for any deficiency, for any subordination in being. The very facts of not being begotten, of being begotten and of proceeding, give them whatever names are applied to them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively. The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three hypostases within the single nature and quality of the Godhead. The Son is not Father; there is *one* Father, yet he is whatever the Father is. The Spirit is not Son because he is from God; there is *one* Only-begotten.²⁸ Yet whatever the Son is, he is. The three are a single whole in their Godhead and the single whole is three in personalities.²⁹ Thus there will be no Sabellian “One,” no three to be mischievously divided by our contemporaries.

10

What, then? Is the Spirit God?

Certainly.

Is he consubstantial?

Yes, if he is God.

Present me then, someone may say, with two things from the same source, one a Son, the other not a son but, despite that, of the same substance, and I get God plus God.

Yes, and you give me one more “God” and grant me God’s nature, and I will present you with the same Trinity along with the

same names and realities. If there is one God, one supreme nature, where can I find an analogy to show you? Are you looking for one from your environment here in this world? It is a singularly graceless, and not just graceless but a pretty well futile, notion to get a picture of things heavenly from things of earth, of things fixed immutably from this transitory element. As Isaiah says, it is "seeking the living among the dead."³⁰ All the same, to oblige you, I shall try to get a picture even from this source to give my argument some support. There are, of course, many illustrations I could give (all of which I have resolved to leave out) drawn from natural history, about nature's devices for the production of living things. Some of the facts are known to us all, others only to a few. For example, it is asserted that not only do we have identity and difference in the parents reflected exactly in the offspring, but identical offspring can also result from different parents and *vice versa*. If the story is at all reliable, there is a further kind of parentage when a thing is spontaneously consumed and reproduced. There are, in addition, things that, through nature's munificence, stop being themselves and change, transformed from one living thing into another. Indeed two things of the same substance, one an offspring, the other not an offspring, can be from the same source—an example which is rather more to the point at issue. I will mention one case, well known to everybody, from human history, before passing on to another subject.

11

What was Adam? Something molded by God.³¹ What was Eve? A portion of that molded creation.³² Seth? He was the offspring of the pair.³³ Are they not, in your view, the same thing—the molded creation, the portion, and the offspring? Yes, of course they are. Were they consubstantial? Yes, of course they were. It is agreed, then, that things with a different individual being can be of the same

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

What does this amount to? people will say. There cannot be two things, one an offspring and the other something else, coming from the single source.

Why not? Were not Eve and Seth of the same Adam? Whose else? Were they both offspring? Certainly not. Why?—because one was a portion of Adam, the other an offspring. Yet they had a mutual identity—they were both human beings, nobody can gainsay that. You have grasped the possibility of our position by means of human illustrations, so will you stop fighting desperately against the Spirit for your view that he must either be an offspring or not consubstantial and not God? I think it would be as well for you if you did, unless you are extremely determined to argue and fight plain facts.

12

But who worshipped the Spirit? it might be asked. Is there any ancient or modern example? Who prays to the Spirit? Where is the scriptural authority for worshipping or praying to him, from where did you get the idea?

We shall give fuller grounds when we discuss the question of what is not in the Bible, but for the present it will be sufficient for us to say just this: it is the Spirit in whom we worship and through whom we pray. "God," it says, "is Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth."³⁴ And again: "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."³⁵ And again: "I will pray with the Spirit but I will pray with the mind also"³⁶—meaning, in mind and spirit. Worshipping, then, and praying in the Spirit seem to me to be

simply the Spirit presenting prayer and worship to himself. Would any inspired, any really knowledgeable man, disapprove of the idea that the worship of one is the worship of all three, in virtue of the equal rank and equal deity inherent in all three? Moreover, I shall not be put off by the argument that all things were, according to Scripture, made by the Son,³⁷ the Spirit being one of the things included in the “all.” What Scripture says is that all things *which were made*,³⁸ were made by the Son, not all things without further qualification—neither the Father nor all things unmade are included. Prove that the Spirit was made before assigning him to the Son, and grouping him along with creatures. Until you can do that, the inclusive phrase offers you irrelevant no comfort. If he was made, he must have been made through Christ—I shall not deny it. But if he was not made, how could he be included in the “all,” or have been made through Christ? Stop giving a false dignity to the Father at the expense of the Only-begotten (it is a poor kind of honor, giving him a creature by robbing him of that nobler thing, a Son!) and to the Son at the expense of the Spirit. He is no creator of a fellow-slave like us, but is glorified with a peer in honor. Do not put yourself alongside the Trinity, lest you be banished from the Trinity. Do not truncate the single and equally august nature at any point. Because whichever of the Trinity you destroy, you will have destroyed the whole—or rather, you will have been banished from the whole. It is better to have a meager idea of the union than to venture on total blasphemy.

13

Our sermon has reached the fundamental point. Though I lament the reopening now of a long dead enquiry that had yielded to faith, we must nonetheless make a stand against babblers and not allow the case to go by default. The Word is on our side as we plead the Spirit’s cause.

If, it is asserted, we use the word “God” three times, must there not be three Gods? How can the object of glorification fail to be a plurality of powers?

Who are the spokesmen here? Is it the thoroughgoing in irreligion or is it also those of the second class, meaning people fairly sound on the Son? My argument applies to both, but is specially directed to the latter. This is indeed the approach I would adopt towards them. “Though,” I should say, “you are in revolt from the Spirit, you worship the Son. What right have you to accuse us of tritheism—are you not ditheists? If you deny worship to the Only-begotten as well, you clearly align yourselves with our opponents. Why should we deal tenderly with you, as though you were not utterly dead? But if you do revere the Son, if you have that much disposition towards salvation, we shall put a question to you: What defense would you make here, were you charged with ditheism? If you have any words of wisdom, give us an answer and provide us with a way to reply. The very arguments you can use to rebut the accusation of ditheism will suffice for us against the charge of tritheism.” Thus we win our case by using the prosecution to plead our cause. Could there be a nobler triumph than that?

14

But what is our case, our battle, against both parties alike? We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible. To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided. It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns. When we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the sole sovereignty, we

have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, and at those who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause, we have three objects of worship.

15

But what does that amount to? they might say. Do not non-Christians too, according to their more expert theoreticians, hold to a single God-head, and do not we also hold to a single humanity, the whole human race? Nonetheless they think that there is a plurality of gods and not just one, in the way that there is a plurality of men.

Yes, but in these cases the universal is only a unity for speculative thought. The individuals are widely separated from one another by time, temperament, and capacity. We human beings are not merely composite; we are mutually opposed and inconsistent even with ourselves. We do not stay exactly the same for one day, let alone a lifetime. In our bodies and in our souls we are ever fluctuating, ever changing. I do not know whether this is true of angels and of all that exalted nature which comes next after the Trinity, or not. They, though, are not composite, and by their nearness to the crown of beauty are more firmly fixed in their relation to beauty than we are.

16

The “gods” and (as they themselves style them) “demons” worshipped by the pagans have no need of us to accuse them. They stand convicted by their own theologians of being affected by evil emotions, of being quarrelsome, of being brimful of mischief in all its varieties. They are opposed not simply to one another but also to their first causes, who are called Ocean, Tethys, Phanes, and I do not

know what else. To cap it all, one god (according to these theologians) had such a lust for power that he hated his children and so insatiable was his desire to be the father of gods and men alike that he gobbled up all the rest of the gods; the ill-starred meal was then regurgitated. If these are mythical, allegorical tales (as those theologians, trying to avoid the ugly character these stories have, aver), how can they explain the phrase, “All things are thrice divided,” the fact that different gods preside over different things and that they have distinct elements under them and different grades?

But this is not the kind of thing we believe. “This portion does not belong to Jacob,”³⁹ says my theologian. No, each of the Trinity is in entire unity as much with himself as with the partnership, by identity of being and power. This is how we explain the unity to the best of our ability to understand it. If the explanation here is convincing, we ought to thank God for the insight. If not, we should look for a better one.

17

I do not know whether we are to take jokingly or seriously the arguments you are using to undermine our account of the unity. Indeed, what is the argument?

Consubstantial things, it goes, are counted together
—meaning by “counting together,” “aggregation into one number.”

Things that are not consubstantial are not counted together. The result is that by your present argument you cannot avoid mentioning three Gods. We run no risk here, since we deny that they are consubstantial.

Yes, you have relieved yourself of trouble with a single word. Yet you gain a poor kind of victory—it is rather like people hanging themselves because they are afraid of death. To save yourself the exertion of defending monotheism, you have denied the Godhead

and surrendered the point at issue to the enemy. For my part, I will not give up the thing we worship, even if it means some hard work. But I do not see what labor is involved here.

18

Consubstantial things, you say, are counted together, but things that are not consubstantial can only be indicated singly.

What school of mythology did you get that idea from? Do you not know that every number indicates an amount of objects, not their nature? I am old-fashioned enough, or rather, uncouth enough, to use the word “three” of things that amount to three, even if they differ in nature. But I say “one and one and one,” at all events so many units, even if the things in question are linked together in their substance. In doing so I am not attending to things, so much as to the *amount* of things referred to in counting them. Since you have such a strong attachment to the written word, despite the fact indeed that you are doing battle with the written word, you shall have my proofs from it. In the book of Proverbs there are three things with a stately walk—a lion, a goat, and a cock; and fourthly, there is a king making a speech amongst his people.⁴⁰ I forbear to mention all the other sets of four things listed there, which are different in nature. In addition, I find two cherubim counted singly by Moses.⁴¹ How, according to your system, could those things in the book of Proverbs, which are utterly different in their nature, be “three”? How could the cherubim, which are of the same stock and closely connected, be counted singly? Were I to mention two masters, God and Mammon,⁴² counted as one group despite their remoteness from each other, I might well be laughed at even more for my way of counting things together.

19

But someone may say, what I am talking about is things of the same substance being counted together that have nouns, which are mentioned as well, to match them. For example: Three men, three gods—not three odds and ends.

What answer are we to make? This is the behavior of a man who lays down the law for words, not one who uses them to speak the truth. What I am talking about is Peter, Paul, and John’s not being three or consubstantial, so long as three Pauls, three Peters, and as many Johns cannot be spoken of. We shall demand that you apply to more specific nouns the new-fangled rule you have kept to in the case of the more generic ones. Or will you break the rule by not conceding whatever rights you have assumed? Why does John in the Catholic Epistles say that there are “three who bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood?”⁴³ Is he not talking nonsense in your opinion? First, because he has been rash enough to count together things that are not consubstantial—and that right you only allow to things that are consubstantial. Who could call these “of one substance”? Secondly, because he happens to have got his grammar wrong. He puts the Greek word for “three” in the masculine and then tacks on three words in the neuter, in defiance of your definitive rules of grammar. Yet what is the difference between putting “three” in the masculine and tacking on single things in the neuter, and using “one” thrice in the masculine without calling them “three” in the masculine but instead “three” in the neuter? This is the very proposition you reject in the case of the Godhead!

What do we make of the fact that the same Greek word can mean the animal a crab, a pair of tongs, or the sign of the zodiac, Cancer? What about the word that can denote a dog, a dog-fish, or the dog-star in the sky? Do you not agree that people talk about “three crabs” or “three dogs”? Of course you do. Does that mean that they are of the same substance? What man in his senses would assert that? You see how your argument about counting things together has

collapsed under the weight of so many proofs to the contrary. If consubstantial things are not always counted together and nonconsubstantial things are counted together, and if in both cases nouns are used along with the numerals, what is left of your doctrinaire pronouncement?

20

Let us look at an additional point which lies, I take it, within the present area of discussion. One plus one makes two, and two resolves into one plus one? Yes, of course. So if things added together are consubstantial and things separated are of different substances, what will happen according to you? The same things will have to be *both* consubstantial *and* of different substances. I scorn the way you pride yourself on putting things in numbered lists, as if the realities depended upon the sequence of the names. If that were really the case, what is to prevent the same things, by this argument, being both superior and inferior in worth to themselves, seeing that the same things are sometimes higher up, sometimes lower down the lists given in the Bible, just because they have an equal natural worth? I find that this same principle applies to “God” and “Lord,” and even more strongly to the prepositions “from,” “through,” and “in,”⁴⁴ which you use to make an artificial system of the divinity, saying that “*from whom*” applies to the Father, “*through whom*” to the Son and “*in whom*” applies to the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

What would you have got up to if each expression *had* been given a fixed allocation? As it is, you use them as a means of introducing such a deal of inequality in rank and nature, despite the fact that it is clear, to those who take the trouble to find out, that the prepositions are used jointly of all three.

That will do for men with at least *some* intelligence! But you have made one assault upon the Spirit and so you find it hard to have your impetus checked. Boars of the fiercer kind find it hard not to

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struggle on to the finish, and force themselves towards the sword. So do you, till you get its thrust full in you. Come then, let us look at the remainder of your argument.

21

Time and time again you repeat the argument about

not being in the Bible.

Yet we are dealing here not with a smuggled-in alien, but with something disclosed to the consciousness of men past and present. The fact stands already proved by a host of people who have discussed the subject, all men who read the Holy Scriptures not in a frivolous, cursory way, but with penetration so that they saw inside the written text to its inner meaning. They were found fit to perceive the hidden loveliness; they were illuminated by the light of knowledge. We shall, so far as possible, summarize their views, building on the “foundations of others”⁴⁶—we do not want to appear improperly and extravagantly ambitious. If the fact that the Biblical text does not very clearly or very often call him “God” (as it calls the Father “God,” in the Old Testament, and the Son “God,” in the New Testament) if this fact, I say, is the cause of your blasphemy, your inordinately verbose irreligion, we shall release you from this mischief by a brief disquisition on things and names, with special reference to Biblical usage.

22

Some things mentioned in the Bible are not factual; some factual things are not mentioned; some nonfactual things receive no mention there; some things are both factual and mentioned. Do you ask for my proofs here? I am ready to offer them. In the Bible, God “sleeps,”⁴⁷ “wakes up,”⁴⁸ “is angered,”⁴⁹ “walks,”⁵⁰ and has a “throne

of cherubim.⁵¹ Yet when has God ever been subject to emotion? When do you ever hear that God is a bodily being? This is a nonfactual, mental picture. We have used names derived from human experience and applied them, so far as we could, to aspects of God. His retirement from us, for reasons known to himself into an almost unconcerned inactivity, is his “sleeping.” Human sleeping, after all, has the character of restless inaction. When he alters and suddenly benefits us, that is his “waking up.” Waking up puts an end to sleep, just as looking at somebody puts an end to turning away from him. We have made his punishing of us his “being angered”; for with us, punishment is born of anger. His acting in different places, we call “walking,” for walking is a transition from one place to another. His abiding among the heavenly powers, making them almost his haunt, we call his “sitting” and “being enthroned”; this too is human language: the divine abides in none as it abides in the saints. God’s swift motion we call “flight”;⁵² his watching over us is his “face”;⁵³ his giving and receiving is his “hand.”⁵⁴ Indeed every faculty or activity of God has given us a corresponding picture in terms of something bodily.

23

Again, where do you get those fortresses of yours, “Ingenerate” and “Unoriginate” from—or we the term “Immortal,” come to that? Show us the express words or we cross them out as unscriptural, and you will be dead as a result of your own principles, since the words, the wall of defense you trusted in,⁵⁵ will have been destroyed. Is it not plain that these terms are derived from passages that imply, without actually mentioning them? The passages? What about: “I am the first and I am hereafter”⁵⁶ and “Before me there is no other God and after me there shall be none”⁵⁷ for all “is-ness”⁵⁸ (God is saying) is mine, without beginning or ending? You have taken the truths that there is nothing before God and that he has no prior

cause, and given him the titles “unoriginate” and “ingenerate.” The fact that there is no halt to his ongoing existence means he is “immortal” and “indestructible.”

The first two pairs stand accounted for. But what of the nonfactual things not mentioned in the Bible—such as “deity is evil,” “a sphere has four corners” or “man is not a compound”? Do you know anybody who has reached such a pitch of insanity as to venture to think, or show that he thinks, anything like that?

It remains then to exemplify things which are *both* factual and mentioned: “God,” “man,” “angel,” “judgment,” and “futility”—which is what your deductive arguments are, besides being an over-throwing of “the faith” and an emptying of “the mystery.”⁵⁹

24

There really is a great deal of diversity inherent in names and things, so why are you so dreadfully servile to the letter, so much the partisan of Jewish lore, following the syllables while you let the realities go? Supposing you mention “twice five” or “twice seven” and I infer from your words “ten” or “fourteen,” or suppose from your mentioning a “rational, mortal animal” I draw the conclusion a “man,” would you allege I was talking rubbish? How could I be? I am saying what *you* said. The words belong just as much to the man who infers the logical grounds for using them as they do to their actual user. In the examples I have just given I should be considering meanings rather than words, and so, in the same way, if I hit upon something meant, though not mentioned, or not stated in clear terms, by Scripture, I should not be put off by your quibbling charge about names—I should give expression to the meaning. This is how we shall make our stand against people whose views are only half right!

I cannot say as much to you. You deny so many really crystal-clear titles belonging to the Son that it is evident you would not respect them even if you got to know a host of even plainer ones.

I shall go on now to take the argument a short stage further back and explain to you (experts though you are supposed to be) the reason for all this concealment.

25

There have been two remarkable transformations of the human way of life in the course of the world's history. These are called two "covenants," and, so famous was the business involved, two "shakings of the earth."⁶⁰ The first was the transition from idols to the Law;⁶¹ the second, from the Law to the Gospel.⁶² The Gospel also tells of the third "shaking," the change from this present state of things to what lies unremoved, unshaken,⁶³ beyond. An identical feature occurs in both covenants. The feature? They were not suddenly changed, even at the first moment the changes were put in hand. We need to know why. It was so that we should be persuaded, not forced. The unspontaneous is the impermanent—as when force is used to keep streams or plants in check. The spontaneous both lasts longer and is more secure. It belongs to despotic power to use force; it is a mark of God's reasonableness that the issue should be ours. God thought it wrong to do men good against their will but right to benefit those with a mind to it. For this reason, he acts like a schoolmaster or doctor, taking away some ancestral customs, allowing others. He yields on some trifles which make for happiness, just as physicians do with the sick to get the medicine taken along with the sweeter ingredients artfully blended in. A departure from time-honored, customary ways is, after all, not easy. Am I making my point? The first change cut away idols but allowed sacrifices to remain; the second stripped away sacrifices but did not forbid circumcision. Then, when people had been reconciled to the withdrawal, they agreed to let go what had been left them as a concession. Under the first covenant that concession was sacrifice, and they became Jews instead of Gentiles; under the second, circumcision—and they

became Christians instead of Jews, brought round gradually, bit by bit, to the Gospel. Paul shall convince you here. He progressed from circumcising⁶⁴ and keeping ceremonial cleansings⁶⁵ to the point of declaring, "But if I, brethren, preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?"⁶⁶ His earlier conduct was an accommodation to circumstance; his later conduct belonged to the full truth.

26

I can make a comparison here with the progress of the doctrine of God, except that the order is exactly the reverse. In the former case change arose from omissions; here, growth towards perfection comes through additions. In this way, the old covenant made clear proclamation of the Father, a less definite one of the Son. The new covenant made the Son manifest⁶⁷ and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit's Godhead. At the present time, the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before. It was dangerous for the Son to be preached openly when the Godhead of the Father was still unacknowledged. It was dangerous, too, for the Holy Spirit to be made (and here I use a rather rash expression) an extra burden, when the Son had not been received. It could mean men jeopardizing what did lie within their powers, as happens to those encumbered with a diet too strong for them or who gaze at sunlight with eyes as yet too feeble for it. No, God meant it to be by piecemeal additions, "ascents"⁶⁸ as David called them, by progress and advance from glory to glory,⁶⁹ that the light of the Trinity should shine upon more illustrious souls. This was, I believe, the motive for the Spirit's making his home in the disciples in gradual stages proportionate to their capacity to receive him—at the outset of the gospel when he performs miracles,⁷⁰ after the Passion when he is breathed into the disciples,⁷¹ after the Ascension when he appears in fiery tongues.⁷² He was gradually revealed by Jesus also, as you too can substantiate by a more careful reading. "I will ask the Father," he says, "and he will

send you another Comforter; the Spirit of Truth”⁷³—intending that the Spirit should not appear to be a rival God and spokesman of another power. Later he says: “He will send him in my name”⁷⁴—leaving out “I will ask” but retaining “He will send.” Later on he says: “I shall send”⁷⁵—indicating the Son’s own rank; and later: “He will come”⁷⁶—indicating the Spirit’s power.

27

You see how light shines on us bit by bit, you see in the doctrine of God an order, which we had better observe, neither revealing it suddenly nor concealing it to the last. To reveal it suddenly would be clumsy, would shock outsiders. Ultimately to conceal it would be a denial of God, would make outsiders of our own people. Let me add to these remarks a thought which well may have occurred to others already, but which I suspect of being a product of my own mind. The Savior had certain truths which he said could not at that time be borne by the disciples,⁷⁷ filled though they had been with a host of teachings. These truths, for reasons I well may have mentioned, were therefore concealed. He also said that we should be taught “all things” by the Holy Spirit,⁷⁸ when he made his dwelling in us. One of these truths I take to be the *Godhead* of the Spirit, which becomes clear at a later stage, when the knowledge is timely and capable of being taken in, when after our Savior’s return to heaven, it is, because of that miracle, no longer an object of disbelief. What greater truth could the Son promise or the Spirit teach than this one? If any promise or teaching ought to be deemed great, this ought.

28

Thus do I stand, thus may I stand, and those I love as well, on these issues, able to worship the Father as God, the Son as God, the

Holy Spirit as God—“three personalities, one Godhead undivided in glory, honor, substance, and sovereignty,” as one inspired saint of recent times wisely expressed it.⁷⁹ May he who does not stand thus, who is a time-serving turncoat, irresolute on matters of most import—may such a man, as Scripture has it, “not see the day star rising”⁸⁰ nor the glory of its heavenly brilliance! Were the Spirit not to be worshipped, how could he deify me through baptism? If he is to be worshipped, why not adored? And if to be adored, how can he fail to be God? One links with the other, a truly golden chain of salvation. From the Spirit comes our rebirth,⁸¹ from rebirth comes a new creating, from new creating a recognition of the worth of him who effected it.

29

Yes, this is what one can say on the premise that *it is not in the Bible*.

But now you shall have a swarm of proof-texts, from which the Godhead of the Holy Spirit can be proved thoroughly scriptural at least to those not utterly dense or utterly alien to the Spirit. Look at the facts: Christ is born, the Spirit is his forerunner;⁸² Christ is baptized, the Spirit bears him witness;⁸³ Christ is tempted, the Spirit leads him up;⁸⁴ Christ performs miracles, the Spirit accompanies him;⁸⁵ Christ ascends, the Spirit fills his place.⁸⁶ Is there any significant function belonging to God, which the Spirit does not perform? Is there any title belonging to God, which cannot apply to him, except “ingenerate” and “begotten”? The Father and the Son, after all, continue to have their personalities; there must be no confusion with the Godhead, which brings all other things into harmonious order. I shudder to think of the wealth of titles, the mass of names, outraged by resistance to the Spirit. He is called “Spirit of God,”⁸⁷ “Spirit of Christ,”⁸⁸ “Mind of Christ,”⁸⁹ “Spirit of the Lord,”⁹⁰ and “Lord”⁹¹ absolutely; “Spirit of Adoption,”⁹² “of Truth,”⁹³ “of Freedom,”⁹⁴ “Spirit of Wisdom,” “Understanding,” “Counsel,” “Might,”

“Knowledge,” “True Religion” and of “The Fear of God.”⁹⁵ The Spirit indeed effects all these things, filling the universe with his being, sustaining the universe. His being “fills the world,”⁹⁶ his power is beyond the world’s capacity to contain it. It is his nature, not his given function, to be good,⁹⁷ to be righteous⁹⁸ and to be in command.⁹⁹ He is the subject, not the object, of hallowing,¹⁰⁰ appointing,¹⁰¹ participating,¹⁰² filling, sustaining;¹⁰³ we share in him and he shares in nothing.¹⁰⁴ He is our inheritance,¹⁰⁵ he is glorified,¹⁰⁶ counted together with Father and Son;¹⁰⁷ he is a dire warning to us.¹⁰⁸ The “finger of God,”¹⁰⁹ he is, like God, a “fire,”¹¹⁰ which proves, I think, that he is consubstantial. The Spirit it is who created¹¹¹ and creates anew through baptism¹¹² and resurrection.¹¹³ The Spirit it is who knows all things,¹¹⁴ who teaches all things,¹¹⁵ who blows where, and as strongly as, he wills,¹¹⁶ who leads,¹¹⁷ speaks, sends out, separates,¹¹⁸ who is vexed¹¹⁹ and tempted.¹²⁰ He reveals,¹²¹ illumines,¹²² gives life—or, rather, is absolutely Light and Life.¹²³ He makes us his temple,¹²⁴ he deifies, he makes us complete,¹²⁵ and he initiates us in such a way that he both precedes baptism¹²⁶ and is wanted after it.¹²⁷ All that God actively performs, he performs.¹²⁸ Divided in fiery tongues,¹²⁹ he distributes graces,¹³⁰ makes Apostles, prophets,¹³¹ evangelists, pastors, and teachers.¹³² He is “intelligent, manifold, clear, distinct, irresistible, unpoluted”¹³³—or in other words, he is utterly wise, his operations are multifarious,¹³⁴ he clarifies all things distinctly, his authority is absolute and he is free from mutability. He is “all-powerful, overseeing all and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle”¹³⁵—meaning, I think, angelic powers as well as prophets and Apostles. He penetrates them simultaneously, though they are distributed in various places;¹³⁶ which shows that he is not tied down by spatial limitations.

Oration 31

141

30

Men who speak and teach thus, who use the expression “another Comforter”¹³⁷ with almost the meaning “an additional God,” men who are conscious that blasphemy against him is uniquely unpardonable,¹³⁸ who so frighteningly placarded the guilty Ananias and Sapphira, when they lied to the Spirit, as “liars to God not to man”¹³⁹—are those men, in your opinion, preaching that the Holy Spirit is God or that he is something else? You must be literally impenetrable, utterly unspiritual, if you feel any hesitancy here or need any further instruction.

Yes, the titles are so many and so striking, what need have you of texts in full quotation? All the less exalted expressions which talk of his being given,¹⁴⁰ sent,¹⁴¹ divided,¹⁴² or his being a grace,¹⁴³ a gift,¹⁴⁴ an inspiration,¹⁴⁵ a promise,¹⁴⁶ a means of intercession¹⁴⁷ or anything else of the same character—all these are to be referred back to the Primal Cause, as indicating the Spirit’s source and preventing a polytheistic belief in three separate causes. It is equally irreligious to make them a combined persona, like Sabellius, as disconnected natures like the Arians.

31

For my part, though I have examined the question in private so busily and so often, searching from all points of view for an illustration of this profound matter, I have failed to find anything in this world with which I might compare the divine nature. If a faint resemblance comes my way, the more significant aspect escapes me, leaving me and my illustration here in this world. I had the idea, indeed others have had it too, of a source, a spring, and a river, and asked myself whether there were not something here corresponding with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no temporal separation here, no disruption of mutual connection, even if they

appear to be parted by three distinctions of personality. But I had two fears: first, of admitting the idea of an incessant stream of Deity; and second, that the illustration might import the suggestion of a numerical unit—source, spring, and river, though different in form, count as one thing.

3 2

Another illustration I pondered over was that of Sun, beam, and light. But here again there was the danger, first of imagining in the incomposite nature the sort of composition which belongs to the Sun and its inherent properties, and second, of making the Father a substance but the others potentialities of God inherent in him, not actual beings. Beam and light are not extra Suns, but emanations from the Sun, substantial qualities. To think thus is thereby to attribute to God, insofar as the illustration suggests the idea, both being *and* nonbeing—and that is a greater absurdity than the previous suggestions. I once heard a man describe it in terms of a sunbeam's throwing its radiance on to a wall and quivering through the movement of some water, a movement transmitted through the intervening air and caught by the beam.¹⁴⁸ Checked by the resistance of the wall, it became an oscillation, surprising in its rapidity: as much a manifold as a unity, joining and parting too quickly for the eye to catch hold of.

3 3

However, this illustration too was unacceptable to me. First, because it was quite clear what had set the sunbeam in motion, whereas nothing is prior to God to be his mover—he is cause of all and owns no prior cause. Second, because there is in this example a hint of those very things which are inconceivable in the case of God—composition, dispersion, and the lack of a fixed, natural stability. In a

word, there is nothing to satisfy my mind when I try to illustrate the mental picture I have, except gratefully taking part of the image and discarding the rest. So, in the end, I resolved that it was best to say “goodbye” to images and shadows, deceptive and utterly inadequate as they are to express the reality. I resolved to keep close to the more truly religious view and rest content with some few words, taking the Spirit as my guide and, in his company and in partnership with him, safeguarding to the end the genuine illumination I had received from him, as I strike out a path through this world. To the best of my powers I will persuade all men to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power, because to him belong all glory, honor, and might for ever and ever.¹⁴⁹ Amen.

NOTES

¹Cf. Jn 8:59; Lk 4:30.

²Origen and contemporaries like Basil.

³Ps 13:5 [LXX]; 53 (52):5(6).

⁴Cf. Mt 7:15.

⁵Jn 1:9.

⁶Jn 14:16 and 26.

⁷Ps 36(35):9(10).

⁸Cf. Jn 1:5.

⁹Cf. Is 21:2.

¹⁰Is 40:9.

¹¹Jn 1:11.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Cf. 2 Pet 1:4, Mt 28:19.

¹⁵No precise references have been found, but for the second phrase cf. Aristotle *De generatione animalium* 736b. Plotinus and the Neoplatonists knew a sort of Trinity and to this Gregory here appeals.

¹⁶No names can be attached to the views, except Origen's to the notion that the Spirit is created. See below para 7.

¹⁷Ps 141(140):5.

¹⁸1 Cor 12:11.

¹⁹Acts 13:2.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Eph 4:30.

²¹Is 63:10.
²³Jer 4:22.
²⁴The second-century heresiarch Marcion is not elsewhere recorded as teaching anything of the kind.

²⁵Jn 15:26.
²⁶Sir 1:2.

²⁷1 Cor 2:10.

²⁸Jn 1:14.

²⁹Cf. paras 28, 29, and 31. The term (*idiotetes*) used here and in a number of other passages by Gregory as a synonym of *hypostasēs*, or “subjects,” can be translated *properties* and was to cause confusion for Gregory’s later exegetes with the use of the expression “characteristic properties,” viz. the distinctive “fatherhood” and “ingeneracy” of the Father, the “generacy” or “filiality” of the Son, and the “procession” of the Holy Spirit.

³⁰Is 8:19.

³¹Gen 2:7.

³²Gen 2:21–23.

³³Gen 4:25.

³⁴Jn 4:24.

³⁵Rom 8:26.

³⁶1 Cor 14:15.

³⁷Jn 1:3.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Jer 10:16.

⁴⁰Cf. Prov 30:29–31

⁴¹Ex 25:18.

⁴²Mt 6:24.

⁴³1 Jn 5:7–8.

⁴⁴Cf. Rom 11:36.

⁴⁵A large part of Basil’s *On the Holy Spirit* is concerned with the rebuttal of this alleged distinction. Basil drew back from calling the Spirit either “God” directly or “consubstantial,” since “God” is not scriptural and “consubstantial” is not used of the Spirit in the Nicene Creed.

⁴⁶Rom 15:20.

⁴⁷E.g. Ps 44(43):23(24).

⁴⁸Jer 31(38):26.

⁴⁹Ps 79(78):5; cf. Is 5:25.

⁵⁰Gen 3:8.

⁵¹Is 37:16; Ps 80(79):1(2).

⁵²E.g. Ps 18(17):10(11).

⁵³Ps 4:6(7); 34(33):16(17).

⁵⁴Ps 145(144):16.

⁵⁵Cf. Ps 31(30):2(3).

⁵⁶Is 44:6.

⁵⁷Is 43:10.

⁵⁸Cf. Ex 3:14.

⁵⁹ Cf. Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 1 Tim 3:9.

⁶⁰ Heb 12:26–27; Hag 2:6; Mt 27:51.

⁶¹ Ex 20:3–5.

⁶² Cf. Mt 27:51; Heb 9:3–15; Gal 2:14ff.

⁶³ Heb 12:18.

⁶⁴ Acts 16:3.

⁶⁵ Acts 21:26.

⁶⁶ Gal 5:11.

⁶⁷ Cf. 1 Pet 1:20.

⁶⁸ Ps 89:6 [LXX].

⁶⁹ 2 Cor 3:18.

⁷⁰ Mt 10:4; Mk 6:7; Lk 9:1.

⁷¹ Jn 20:22.

⁷² Acts 2:3.

⁷³ Jn 14:16–17.

⁷⁴ Jn 14:26.

⁷⁵ Jn 15:26 and 16:7.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Jn 16:12.

⁷⁸ Jn 14:26 and 16:13.

⁷⁹ Gregory the Wonderworker, the distinguished pupil of Origen and hero of the faith for Basil, from whose (alleged) creedal exposition this is an inexact quotation.

⁸⁰ Job 3:9.

⁸¹ Jn 3:3–5; Mt 28:19.

⁸² Cf. Lk 1:31 and 3.

⁸³ Mt 3:13–17; Lk 3:21–22.

⁸⁴ Mt 4:1; Lk 4:2.

⁸⁵ Mt 12:22 and 28.

⁸⁶ Acts 1:9 and 2:3–4.

⁸⁷ 1 Cor 2:11.

⁸⁸ Rom 8:9.

⁸⁹ 1 Cor 2:14–16.

⁹⁰ 2 Cor 3:17.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Rom 8:15.

⁹³ Jn 14:17.

⁹⁴ 2 Cor 3:17.

⁹⁵ Is 11:2–3.

⁹⁶ Wis 1:7.

⁹⁷ Ps 143(142):10.

⁹⁸ Ps 51(50):10(12).

⁹⁹ Ps 50:14 [LXX].

¹⁰⁰ 1 Cor 6:11.

¹⁰¹ Jn 3:34.

- 102 Cf. Rom 8:15; Phil 2:1.
 103 Wis 1:7.
 104 *Ibid.*
 105 Eph 1:13–14.
 106 1 Cor 6:19–20.
 107 1 Jn 5:7–8 [variant reading]; cf. Mt 28:19.
 108 Mk 3:29.
 109 Lk 11:20.
 110 Acts 2:3–4; Deut 4:24.
 111 Ps 104(103):30.
 112 Jn 3:5; cf. 1 Cor 12:13.
 113 Ezek 37:5–14.
 114 1 Cor 2:10.
 115 Jn 14:26.
 116 Jn 3:8.
 117 Ps 143(142):10.
 118 Acts 13:2–4.
 119 Cf. Job 4:9.
 120 Acts 5:9.
 121 1 Cor 2:10; cf. Jn 16:13.
 122 Cf. Jn 14:26.
 123 Jn 6:63; Rom 8:10.
 124 Cf. 1 Cor 3:16, 6:11.
 125 Cf. Jn 16:12–13.
 126 Cf. Acts 10:47.
 127 Acts 8:14–17.
 128 1 Cor 12:4 and 11.
 129 Acts 2:3.
 130 Eph 4:11.
 131 Wis 7:27.
 132 Eph 4:4 and 11.
 133 Wis 7:21.
 134 1 Cor 12:11.
 135 Wis 7:23.
 136 Wis 8:1.
 137 Jn 14:16.
 138 Mt 12:31.
 139 Acts 5:1–11.
 140 Lk 11:13.
 141 Jn 16:7.
 142 Heb 2:4.
 143 1 Cor 12:9 and 30.
 144 Acts 2:38.
 145 Jn 20:22.
 146 Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4; Gal 3:14.

- 147 Rom 8:26.
 148 The man is not named by Gregory, though the comparison is perhaps Stoic in origin, with reference to the volatility of the mind.
 149 Rev 1:6.