Gregory of Neocaesarea: Evangelist in Pontus

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30 September 2004
(Revised August 2005)

Sydney, 2005

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Summary

In this work, the life and works of Gregory of Neocaesarea (surnamed Thaumaturgus) are studied to assess his achievements as a Christian evangelist in Pontus. The literary works attributed to him are examined in turn, and the issues surrounding their authorship, context and audience are considered and evaluated.

The events of Gregory life and the historical situation are examined from different angles. The historical background is reviewed. This is the first systematic study of the culture and religion of Pontus in the period prior to the introduction of Christianity. Gregory was reputed to have worked many miracles. This study demonstrates that Pontus was the kind of society in which stories about the extraordinary events reported from Gregory's life could have arisen quite naturally. Evidence for his life and works is considered, in particular that drawn from his own *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* and the testimony of the *Canonical Letter*. The authorship of the various works attributed to Gregory is examined using tests of context, terminology and style; it includes the first presentation of stylometric analysis of these texts. The biographical accounts of his life are examined, namely Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, and a Syriac version of a letter written from Pontus that also encapsulates a number of the oral traditions about Gregory. This brings together the two main sources for Gregory's life in a comparative study not previously attempted. After this, the biographical accounts and other sources are examined with a view to establishing the authenticity of the creed attributed to him, and the place of Gregory in the development of the theology of the Pontic (and Cappadocian) churches. Finally, the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea are examined to determine whether they can be used to cast light on Gregory's life and work: arguments are put that they should be redated to the period before 303, and the importance of the *chorespiscopi* is discussed.

Candidate's Statement

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. The source material cited in this thesis has been legally utilised and duly acknowledged. The thesis does not contain defamatory material.

Graham Lovell

1 Introduction

Gregory of Neocaesarea stands out as the missionary figure *par excellence* of the post-Apostolic and pre-Constantinian period. Eusebius presents him as an illustrious student of Origen, who impressed the bishops of his time. Socrates Scholasticus said that Gregory converted many people through his written discourses; Socrates also noted his reputation as a miracle worker. Gregory is presented in the ancient biographies as a strong Christian leader who was able to overcome the power of the gods of the traditional cults by performing incredible miracles. Based on this and other evidence, it is argued that Gregory was active and effective as a theologian, missionary and Church leader, and as a result it is claimed that he can be called an "Evangelist in Pontus".

According to my interpretation of the evidence for his life, as considered in this work, Gregory was born *c.*213 to a noble family in Neocaesarea. His first language would have been Greek, and he began to learn Latin as an adolescent. His education was according to the normal pattern for young men of families who had adopted the Greek heritage. It is likely that he also knew Cappadocian, which was probably still the language of the majority of the rural population.[1] It appears that he converted to Christianity at a young age, but did not join the apostolic church of Neocaesarea:[2] possibly he was a Marcionite Christian, or something similar. In late adolescence, he and his brother travelled together to Palestinian Caesarea in *c.*232, where they both met Origen and were converted to apostolic Christianity[3] by Origen.

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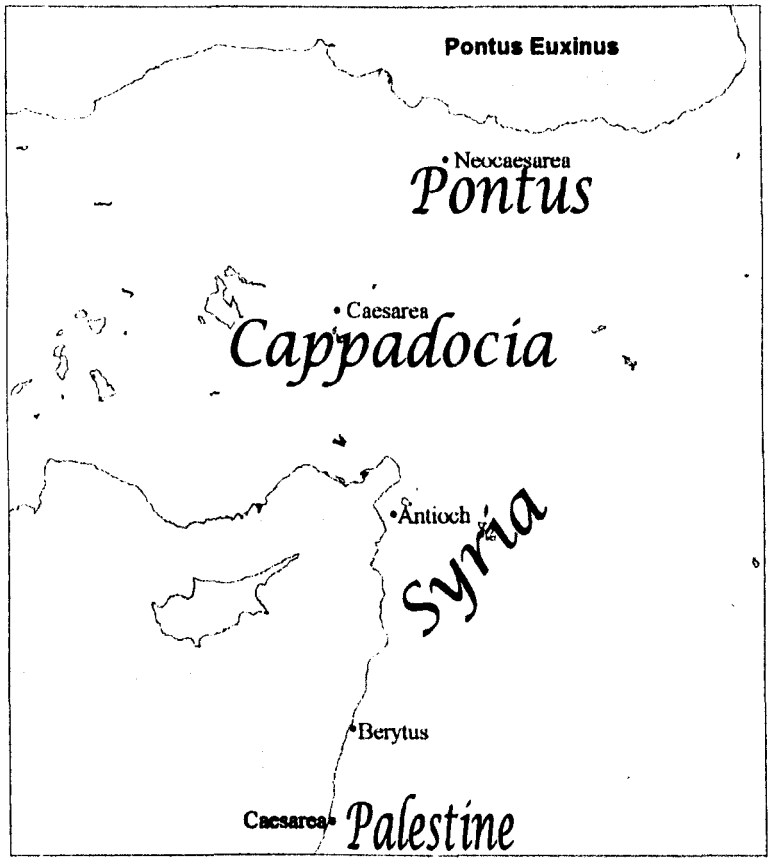
[1] There are no extant writings in Cappadocian; the language was probably a descendant of Luwian, and therefore related to Lycian (*vide* Section 3.1.2 Gods Ma & Men).

[2] The rule followed here for capitalization is that "Church" refers to the whole Church, whereas "church" refers to an individual church in a given community.

[3] The expression "apostolic Christianity" is used here to represent that form of Christianity consciously based on the teachings of all the Apostles, primarily to distingish this group from groups like the Marcionite Christians, who accepted only the apostleship of Paul.

They studied with Origen for a number of years, and in the same period Gregory spent sufficient time in Berytus to be trained as a lawyer. He may even have engaged in missionary activities in Berytus.

Returning home in *c*.240, Gregory it is likely that he worked as a legal advisor in the service of an assessor to the governor of the new province of Pontus, in the capital, Neocaesarea, his hometown. A temporary dissolution of the province of Pontus in 250 probably saw his period of service come to an end. After this he appears to have surrendered his property, possibly to his brother, thus avoiding the concomitant obligations that weighed heavily upon the curial class, and spent a short time as a Christian philosopher, training others in his Christian and philosophical ideals. It is likely that it was only after the end of the Decian persecution that Gregory became leader of the church in Neocaesarea (in *c*.251), taking over the local congregation there on the invitation of the leader of the apostolic church of the neighbouring city of Amaseia, and with the support of the relatively few members of the apostolic church of Neocaesarea. If there was a strong Marcionite Church in this community prior to this period, it appears that its members were won over to apostolic Christianity at this time. During the next fifteen years he led the church of Neocaesarea, and built up the church there in such a way that, by the time he died in *c*.266, apostolic Christianity had become the dominant cult amongst the native peoples, with also a significant following amongst the local Greeks. His literary works appear to have had a missionary orientation of some kind or another, with works directed at well-educated Greeks. He appears to have developed a clear and simple theology, which he was able to communicate and share with the ordinary people of his community.



Map 1-1 Pontus to Palestine

While the narratives of his life concentrate on the miracles that Gregory was reputed to have performed, Gregory appears to have also been remembered as a teacher. He probably saw this as his primary role.[4] The image of Gregory as a teacher emerges, albeit in passing, both in *To the Celibates*, and in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric. The same impression is created in works possibly written by him. In one of these, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, Theopompus is said to have given his opponent the title of "skilled teacher"; also in *To Gaian* (generally known as *To Tatian*) and in *To Philagrius* the writer emerges as a careful and sensitive teacher. Gregory also seems to have been naturally inclined to the role of missionary: even the *Address of Thanksgiving* should be reconsidered as possibly being

[4] *cf.* Socrates, *EH*, 4:27, who said that people of the nations were attracted to Christianity both by Gregory's discourses and miracles. This was written after the legends about Gregory were in full flight, and the reference to Gregory's miracles may represent the balancing out of these popular stories with references to his literary achievements mentioned in Pamphilius' *Apology for Origen*.

crafted to meet the needs and expectations of non-Christians, rather than being primarily addressed to an inner group of Origen's disciples. Somewhat more tentatively, it is proposed that Gregory might have been the author of two of the three treatises contained in the work known as *To Diognetus*. If this is correct, then Gregory can be seen to have been a powerful advocate of the Christian cause.

It may be true, as has been claimed, that there was no organized missionary activity in the period between the Apostles and Constantine, in the sense of missionaries being appointed and sent by the Church,[5] although lack of evidence is hardly conclusive in itself since the gaps in our knowledge are so wide. Up to *c*.251 Gregory appears to have striven to realise the ideal life that he imagined for himself when he was with Origen, devoted in part to his philosophical studies, possibly undertaken with his brother and perhaps a small group of disciples. However, once he became the leader of the church he devoted himself to a missionary venture, working within the structure and constraints of formal leadership of an apostolic Christian church. It appears that Gregory's great achievement as a missionary and a church leader was to have grown an indigenous church, uniting Greeks and Cappadocians, in a region where there must have been an even greater divide between the city people and those in the country than was the case in more Hellenised western Anatolia and Greece. In this region slave labour also appears to have been a particularly important part of the local economy. If there were heretical sects of Christianity in the town at the time, he appears to have also won most of their members over to the apostolic Church.

After Gregory was appointed leader of the church of Neocaesarea, he committed himself to the local church, and in particular to the conversion of the native people and ministering to their religious needs. It is possible that the native peoples perceived miraculous intervention by God in what were perhaps ordinary events from Gregory's life. Therefore, in order to properly understand the stories of the dramatic miracles and wonders of Gregory's life it is

[5] Curran 2000, p.1; Lane Fox 1986, p.282; MacMullen 1984, p.34.

necessary to attempt to gain an understanding of the thinking of the people of this region, beginning with a study of the native religions of the people of Pontus before Christianity was introduced. The analysis of the existing culture is perhaps not normally included in the study of Church history; therefore the justification for its inclusion offered here is that, without such a study, it will not be possible to understand the dynamics of the conversion process in this area, or to see how the miracle stories fit into such an environment. The inclusion of a study of native religion in a study of the process of conversion is perhaps not such an unusual approach. Lane Fox and Mitchell have both shown that the parallel study of traditional religions and Christianity can illuminate both fields of study.[6]

The stories of the wonders that Gregory was reputed to have worked, described so graphically by Gregory of Nyssa and in other versions of his life story, have led to excessive attention being placed on Gregory's reputation as a wonder-worker in ancient times, and to the story of his life being regarded with some ambivalence in modern times. The admiration of the ancients led them to give Gregory the surname Thaumaturgus, Wonder-worker, so that today he is called Gregory Thaumaturgus. Since I consider that using that title in this work would perpetuate the same stereotype, I have decided to use the title Gregory of Neocaesarea to identify him, following the naming convention used for bishops who worked in the more normal way of bishops. In addition, in this work, wherever the name Gregory is given without qualification, Gregory of Neocaesarea is meant: if Gregory of Nyssa or Gregory of Nazianzus are meant, their names are always given in full.

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[6] Lane Fox 1986, pp.11-13, and *passim*, contrasted pagans and Christians, albeit mainly focussing his study of "pagan" culture in western Anatolia. Mitchell 1993, Vol 1 & 2, *passim*, presented a similar study, looking at Anatolia more broadly, but still with a strong focus on the archeological evidence from western Anatolia. Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, pp.189-191, Vol.2, p.43, argued that Christianity advanced in Phrygia, at least in part, because of the common values shared between the Phrygian cults and Christianity. This kind of comparison and contrast is included here.

Mitchell observed that Gregory stood out in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric as a strong leader, one who could act as a patron, and thus protect the weak. He argued that the office of bishop taken by Gregory, a role without any equivalent in traditional society, provided the means for the ambitious to exercise power at a time when civic life was slowly declining in the Greek cities, and that leaders like Gregory would undoubtedly have attracted adherents.[7] In taking such a leadership role, Gregory was not alone. At the same time there were strong leaders of the Church in two of the other provincial capitals during this time: Firmilian was bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea and Helenus was bishop of Tarsus. In their regions the Roman government was under more stress than in Pontus. The leadership of these three men, taken together, must have contributed to the strength and growth of the churches in this region during a period of political instability in eastern Anatolia.

An initiative of their leadership appears to have been the establishment of the office of country bishop. This office appears to have been established in Pontus during Gregory's bishopric: the office also appears to have been established in neighbouring provinces as well at around the same time. The office of country bishop must have been important in establishing strong Christian leadership throughout the villages of the provinces of Pontus and Cappadocia. The office of country bishop was confirmed, rather than established, by the Council of Neocaesarea, indicating that the office pre-dated this council. The Council of Neocaesarea is conventionally dated to the fourth century, but an analysis of the canons of the council indicates that it could be dated before the Council of Ancyra, and therefore before Diocletian's persecution, rather than after the persecutions. This council can be viewed as a final legacy from Gregory's work, which set the seal on his efforts to establish the people of Pontus as Christians in name and action.

The translations cited are my own except where the name of the translator is given in the footnotes, and except the translations of *To the Celibates*, which are based on Ryssel's

[7] *vide* Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, pp.55-57.

German translation of the Syriac text.

I would to like acknowledge my appreciation of the direction, assistance, encouragement and patience of Alanna Nobbs, Ken Parry, and Samuel Lieu, who have directed this study, other academic staff of Macquarie University Ancient History Department, in particular Kevin Kaatz, Rosalinde Kearsley, Kenneth Sheady, Christopher Forbes and Edward Nixon and the input of visiting scholars to Macquarie University and others whose suggestions have assisted me, in particular the late Michel van Esbroeck, who also provided me with some of his unpublished papers.

2 Literary Sources

In this chapter the works sometimes attributed to Gregory are reviewed, the evidence for and against their attribution to him is considered, and the content, purpose and audience of these works are discussed. In reviewing these works, I have tended to the side of accepting rather than rejecting a given work where there are reasonable arguments in favour of accepting it, and where no better candidate appears as the likely author. On the basis of the works included, Gregory's writings show a single-minded intention to convince his listeners and readers about whatever was the point in question. In these, he emerges as a perceptive theologian, although this is somewhat masked by the simple way he expressed his ideas.

Gregory has been remembered primarily as a wonder-worker. This is due to the accounts of his life that were written in the fourth century. Detailed consideration of these accounts has been deferred until an assessment has been made of his literary works (in this chapter), and an account has been made of his life from other, less contentious, sources (in the next chapter). The historical notes on his life by Jerome and Socrates Scholasticus are considered at the end of this chapter, providing a tidy summary of the two aspects that we need to consider in relation to the story of this great man, his literary works and his reputed wonders, and are a fitting conclusion to the chapter.

2.1 Stylometric Analysis

2.1.1 The Texts

We do not have strong testimony from third or fourth century authors that would assist us in making a detailed analysis of Gregory's teachings. If this were available it could be used to assist in determining the authenticity of the works attributed to him. The absence of the witness of near contemporaries means that it is necessary to try to assess the authenticity of works attributed to him from the texts themselves. The texts, sometimes attributed to Gregory, considered here are:

Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes

Address of Thanksgiving

To Gaian (more usually known as *To Tatian*)

To Philagrius (from Migne's text of Gregory of Nyssa, *To Evagrius*)

Canonical Letter

On All the Saints

Glossary on Ezekiel

1st Homily (on the Annunciation)

2nd Homily (on the Annunciation) – 1st part

2nd Homily (on the Annunciation) – 2nd part

3rd Homily (on the Annunciation)

4th Homily (on Christ's Baptism)

Twelve Chapters on the Faith

Another work that should also be considered in this context is the anonymous work *To Diognetus*. There are a number of similarities between this work and other works attributed to Gregory.

Gregory trained with Origen, so it is possible to examine the works attributed to Gregory to determine their similarity to and differences from the teachings of Origen. However, this approach presumes that Gregory followed Origen's doctrine fairly exactly. In addition, Origen's ideas on the Trinity and the human and divine in Christ substantially informed the

fourth and fifth century debates on these matters. This makes it difficult to know whether a particular idea can be attributed to a third century writer or not. Most of the works sometimes attributed to Gregory could be counted as Gregory's on the basis that they are not substantially different from Origen's teachings. Ironically, this would mean the rejection of Gregory's *Address of Thanksgiving*, one of the best attested of his works, since this speech has no reference to the Incarnation or the human nature of Christ, key elements of Origen's doctrine, even though it was delivered in the company of Origen himself.

The usual approach to this problem has been to exclude certain works attributed to Gregory, even though they often reflect Origen's theology, on the basis that they seem to reflect the disputes of the fourth and fifth centuries, rather than the concerns of the third century. This approach has the opposite risk of excluding works that genuinely belong to Gregory, if indeed Gregory based his ideas on Origen's teachings. It also prejudges the question of what was relevant in the third century, given that our sources for Gregory's period are so limited. Dating a text solely on the basis of doctrine carries the risk of circular argument. Where possible, arguments based on context, terminology and style also need to be brought to bear.

Twelve Chapters on the Faith[1] is a good example of the importance of context and terminology when establishing authorship. This work is sometimes thought to post-date the Nestorian controversy, primarily on the basis of the doctrinal issues canvassed in that document. Yet hardly any of technical words used to define the faith in the fourth and fifth centuries are used in this work; it could have been written almost entirely on the basis of Origen's doctrine of the human and divine in Christ. Indeed, the only theological word used in a technical way in the *Twelve Chapters on the Faith* was *homoousios*, made famous as a result of the Council of Nicaea, but also used controversially in the dispute over Paul of

[1] Leo Allatius (d.1669) confidently attributed the *Twelve Chapters* to Gregory (PG 10:1229f), noting that John of Damascus quoted it with approval, while Cardinal Bellarminus (d.1621) had held back his opinion on the work.

Samosata,[2] and therefore, on doctrinal grounds it could be reasonably dated to the time of that dispute, and thus to Gregory's time. The current consensus of a fourth or fifth century date does not appear to be supported by arguments from terminology. However, using arguments taken from context we could say that it was not one of Gregory's works, and its provenance can be reasonably established.

This work contains a statement anathematising those who said that the flesh of Christ is *homoousios* with his divine nature. This is matched by similar statements in Athanasius' *Letter to Epictetus*, which indicates that the idea that Christ's body was *homoousion* with his divine nature was one of the significant subjects of discussion at the Council of Corinth. To Athanasius' knowledge, this was the first time that this idea had been put forward. He asked, "Who has ever heard the like?"[3] This is clear evidence that this was the first time this idea had been put forward in a Church council: it is unlikely that the suggestion would have been put forward ever again in the fourth and fifth centuries, given Athanasius' reaction.[4] It appears that the *Twelve Chapters on the Faith* was a product of the Council of Corinth, held in c.362, under the presidency of Epictetus. On this basis, its provenance can be reasonably established to that time and occasion. The consensus that it was not Gregory's work can therefore be accepted, but on more solid grounds, using arguments from context and terminology, not just theology.

Unfortunately, similar supporting evidence indicating the context in which the documents were written is not available for some of the works attributed to Gregory. In this case it is necessary to rely upon evidence from terminology and style. For example, analysis of

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[2] Athanasius, *On the Synods*, 43.

[3] Athanasius, *Letter to Epictetus*, 2

[4] It is even possible that the *Twelve Chapters* influenced the form of Cyril of Alexandria's *Twelve Chapters Against Nestorius*, the preparation of their explanations, and the writing of Cyril's *Scholia on the Incarnation* (tr. of these works in McGuckin 1994, pp.282-335).

stylometric indicators can be used to support arguments for the authorship of a given work, and to indicate the works that should be excluded from a given corpus. Care must be taken, of course, not to falsely exclude certain works because of changes in the style of a writer, which can happen over time, and on account of changes in the topic being considered, and as a result of differences in literary genre.

If the two better attested of Gregory's works (*Address of Thanksgiving* and *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes*) were actually written by Gregory, they show that he continued to use the optative mood, rather than adopting the pattern generally found in the New Testament of using the subjunctive in its place; he also appears to have consciously adopted other Attic forms in his writings (for example, using the particle τε as a conjunction; this dropped out of common usage in later Greek). The usage of these features is shown in the following table:

Document	**Total Words**	**Opt-ative**	**Subj-unctive**	**Using τε**	**Using καί**	**Using τε καί**
Group A						
Metaphrase	4919	24	24	57	295	11
Address of Thanksgiving	9081	73	40	93	749	28
To Gaian	1440	6	1	6	66	5
To Philagrius	1064	4	2	10	69	5
To Diognetus	1836	11	17	7	154	1
Group B						
Canonical Letter	802	0	13	0	52	0
On All the Saints	597	0	3	1	42	1
Glossary on Ezekiel	472	0	3	0	18	0
Homily1	1381	1	19	0	81	0
Homily2-1	1304	0	19	1	75	1
Homily2-2	1320	0	7	6	79	6
Homily3	1110	1	13	0	26	0
Homily4	2099	0	30	2	116	2

Table 2-1 Use of Optative & τε

The texts[5] in this table can be seen to be clearly divided between the two groups, Group B

[5] Jugie 1925, pp.87-90, pointed out that Homily 1 appears to cite the formula of the Council of Chalcedon, and has verbal similarities with a homily of Chrysippus of Jerusalem. He also noted (pp.90-94) that Homily 2 joins together two separate homilies. It is also found in an Armenian translation, where it appears as two separate homilies. In both parts of this homily the title *Theotokos* appears to be embedded in the text, being used as if it

representing a first cut of the works unlikely to have been written by Gregory on the basis of these stylistic measures alone. However, it is recognized that other factors need to be taken into account before drawing final conclusions.

2.1.2 Correspondence Analysis

Further stylometric analysis is a possible solution to the problem of distinguishing the genuine works of Gregory from others falsely attributed to him. This kind of analysis can be used to provide a general indication of a style, by showing which texts share stylistic features. However, analysis of metrics from stylistic analysis is unlikely to "prove" a proposition in an objective sense. Variations even within the one document are too great to permit the kind of standard statistical test that can be used to establish a proposition within a defined range of confidence.[6] Furthermore, even if individual works seem to share the same style, they are not necessarily from the same author.[7] Similarly, works from the same author can be written in a different style, sometimes because of a change in genre, and by changes in writing style over time. Despite these limitations, the statistical analysis of texts provides a means of

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were an alternate name for Mary. This indicates a long-standing usage of the term for which the fourth or fifth century is probably the earliest likely period. Some of this homily is reflected in the *6th Homily of Proclus*. Jugie thought that the version in Proclus was the original, arguing that a reference to the εὐαγγελισμός of the "greatly favoured Mary" indicated that it was written after this festival was introduced in the middle of the sixth century.

[6] For example, an examination of these elements taken across the four segments of the *Address* showed that these segments failed the χ^2 test of the hypothesis that these stylistic elements are evenly proportioned throughout the *Address*, even at the relatively low level of 90% confidence.

[7] An unpublished stylometric cluster analysis, by Norman H. Young and Cedric E. Greive, presented at the May 1996 conference of the Society for the Study of Early Christianity at Macquarie University, "The Deuteropaulines: The Syntactical Evidence", covering Paul's letters, *Hebrews*, *James*, *1* and *2 Peter* and *1 John*, demonstrated a stylistic similarity among most of the works attributed to Paul, leaving aside *1 Timothy* and *Titus*. While four clearly defined and distinct clusters were detected by this analysis, *James* was included in the same tight cluster as the majority of Paul's works.

supplementing the more conventional approach to determining authorship based on textual criticism and analysis, one text at a time.

For the purpose of this analysis, statistics were established from the texts. Three different types of statistics were obtained: counts of indicators of the links between clauses; counts of the indicators of expansion and modification of clauses;[8] and counts of indicators of oratorical style. Experiments were conducted using a wider range of variables, but these did not appear to improve the quality of the results, and indeed made the outcome more variable and unpredictable.[9]

The following indicators were included to show the relationship between clauses:[10]

δέ (including οὐδέ and μηδέ)

ἀλλά

γάρ and οὖν

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subjunctive and Optative

Demonstrative Pronouns

Relative Pronouns

Participles

The following indicators were included to show expansion and modification within clauses:[11]

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[8] These variables were based on those suggested by Llewelyn 1991, pp.78-106. He noted that previous stylistic analyses foundered on a poor choice of variables to be measured.

[9] For example, tests using counts solely based on the usage of verbs (tense, mood, case of participles) failed to group texts that are known to have come from the same author (for example, taking only the segments of the *Address*). Also counts of verbs failed to return relatively consistent results even between segments of the *Address* (almost certainly the work of one author), and therefore these have been excluded from the analysis.

[10] Llewelyn 1991, pp.78-99, based this part of his analysis on variables using the following language elements: subordinating conjunction, subjunctive mood, participle, relative pronoun, personal pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, article, καί, δέ, ἀλλά, and γάρ and οὖν. However, καί has not been included in this analysis, as it was not found to be a good indicator of style, since it is often used with inconsistent frequency within the one document. Similarly personal pronouns were also used inconsistently, and were omitted.

Adjectives

Adverbs in -ως

Genitive Nouns

Prepositions

The following were included to indicate aspects of oratorical style:

τε (including οὔτε)

γε

Nominated Particles, Adverbs and Conjunctions (ἄν, ἄρα, ἄτε, δαί, δή, δῆτα, ἐάν, ἴσως, κἄν, ὁπότε, ὅταν, οὔπω, οὔπωγε, πέρ, ποι, πότε, πω)

Reflexive Pronouns

The following were included to provide a balancing counting measure to enable proportions of the other forms to be established:

Definite Articles

Total words

The following texts were included as controls:

Partial Declaration of the Faith (traditionally attributed to Gregory, but now attributed to Apollinaris of Laodicea, or his circle)[12]

Justin Martyr, *1st Apology* (14-20)

Dionysius of Alexandria, *On Ecclesiastes* and *On Luke*

Diodorus of Tarsus, *On Genesis*

Amphilochius of Iconium, *On the Nativity of the Lord, On Lazarus*

Evagrius of Pontus, *Scholia in Ecclesiastes*

Proclus of Constantinople, *Homilies* 1, 2 and 3

Maximus the Confessor extracts from *Difficulties from the Holy Dionysius and Gregorius*[13]

These texts were chosen on the basis of a perceived similarity of style (Justin Martyr,

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[11] Llewelyn 1991, pp.99-106, based this part of his analysis on the variables using the following language elements: adjective, adverb, preposition, genitive noun. In this analysis, only adverbs in –ως were grouped as a single category, other specific adverbs being selected as indicators of oratorical style, as listed.

[12] Lequien, in PG 10:1229.

[13] PG 91:1112D-1116D, 1196C-1197D.

Dionysius of Alexandria, Diodorus of Tarsus, Apollinaris of Laodicea), or because they have been suggested as possible authors of the one or more of the texts (Justin Martyr, Maximus the Confessor), or as writers on similar themes (Dionysius of Alexandria, Amphilochius, Evagrius and Proclus). The text of the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea was also included in this analysis to test whether Gregory possibly wrote it.

The tests were carried out using *MVSP - a MultiVariate Statistical Package*,[14] using the features to calculate and graph Correspondence Analysis.[15] The results are displayed in the diagram below, in which the various texts are reduced to a single plot point in relation to the other texts.[16] This analysis enables the texts to be grouped by clusters, based on their sharing of common characteristics. The advantage of this approach, over considering one stylistic element at a time, is that many elements can be considered together. This reduces the potential for error arising from giving too much emphasis to a single variable.[17]

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[14] From Kovach Computing Software, Anglesey, Wales.

[15] The methodology used in this kind of analysis can conceptually be understood as starting with the two dimensional matrix of the distribution of the observed values for all the variables in each of the cases. Results are calculated so that the maximum possible variation is explained on the first axis, and then on the second (orientated 90° from the first), and so on, and the χ^2 value for each case is calculated (Σ(observed – expected)^2 / expected) for each axis. The result is divided by the number of observations in each case, and the results distributed along the axes. The plotted points are said to be at χ^2 distance from each other. Greenacre 1984, pp.1-53, describes the mathematical methods involved. All the calculations used here were carried out by the MVSP software cited.

[16] In this kind of analysis, Axis 1 is the most important, since majority of the variation is explained (or identified) on this axis. Axis 2 represents a second order explanation of the variation between the works analysed. In this case 43.0% of the variance is explained on Axis 1 and only 10.6% of the variance is explained on Axis 2.

[17] Llewelyn 1991, citing A.Q. Morton, *Literary Detection*, (Bath 1978), pp.34-35, 73.

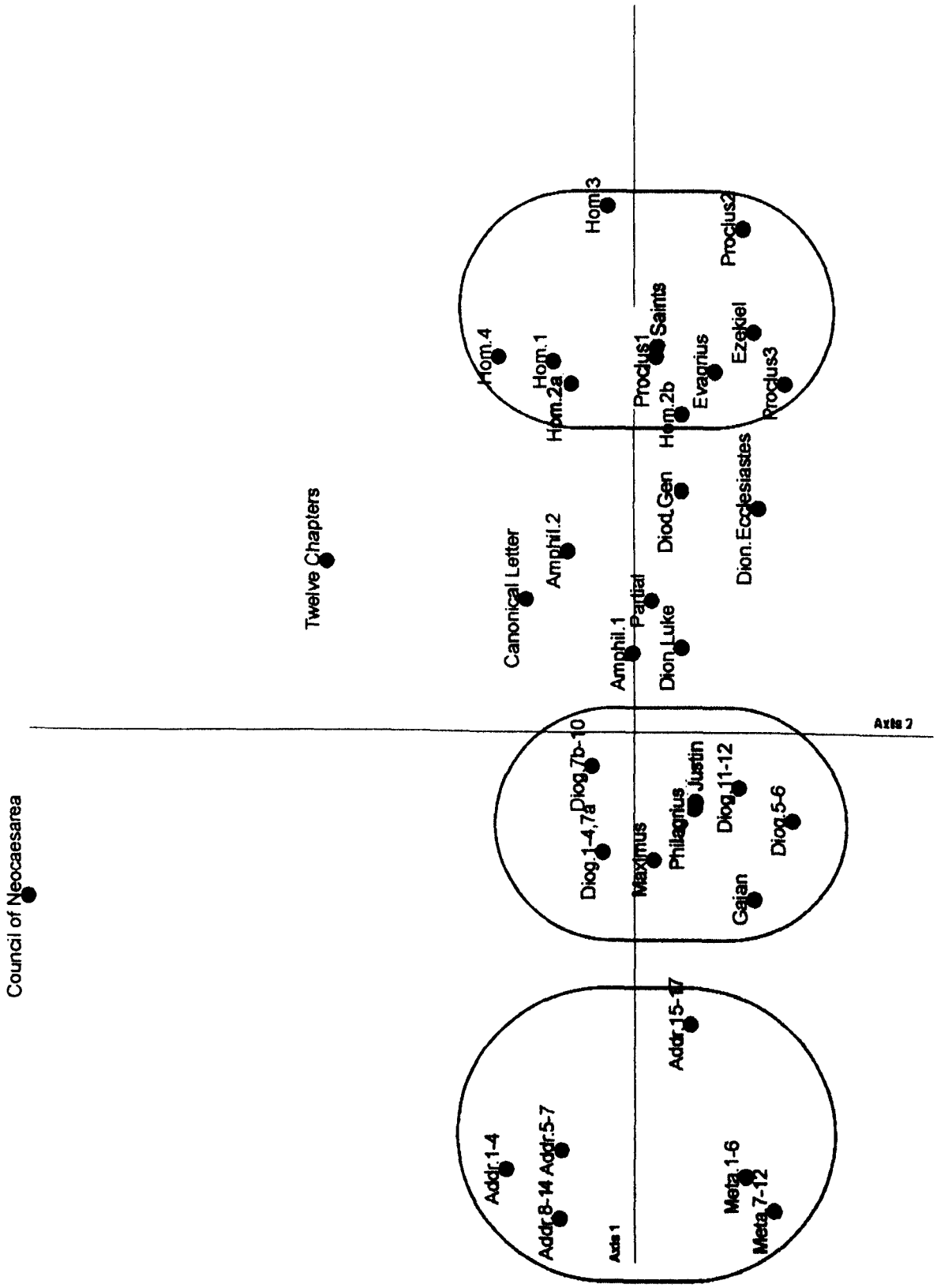

Figure 2-1 Correspondence Analysis - by Document

Table 2-2 Counts of Stylistic Elements

	Words	δέ	ἀλλά	γαρ και ὁυν	Sub-Conj	Subj. & Opt	Dem. Pro.	Relat. Pro.	τε	Adject.	Adv-ws	Gen. Nouns	Par-ticiples	Prep.	γε	Particle	Reflex. Pro.	Definite Art.	Verbs
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Metaphrase 1-6	2488	4.2	0.4	1.3	1.3	1.0	0.5	2.1	1.9	14.5	1.1	7.0	7.4	4.3	0.3	0.8	1.0	10.5	12.3
Metaphrase 7-12	2431	4.7	0.6	1.6	1.7	0.9	0.6	1.9	1.2	16.9	1.3	5.1	6.9	3.8	0.4	0.7	0.7	10.2	13.2
To Origin 1-4	2159	2.5	1.1	0.8	1.2	1.5	0.4	2.4	1.4	18.5	1.8	4.3	6.9	4.0	0.3	1.6	0.2	12.0	9.3
To Origen 5-7	2665	2.4	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.1	0.3	2.6	1.5	16.7	2.3	3.7	9.2	3.9	0.2	1.2	0.2	12.0	9.5
To Origen 8-14	2732	2.7	0.5	0.7	1.4	1.5	0.3	2.9	2.0	16.0	1.3	4.8	8.0	4.7	0.4	1.4	0.7	11.9	10.7
To Origen 15-17	1525	3.6	0.5	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.3	3.3	0.8	14.2	1.2	4.5	9.0	5.4	0.1	0.5	0.2	10.4	11.3
To Philagrius	1064	2.5	0.7	1.9	1.6	0.6	0.3	1.5	1.4	18.0	2.0	7.9	4.2	2.9	0.0	0.9	0.4	17.1	9.2
To Gaian	1440	3.7	0.6	2.1	2.2	0.5	0.3	2.1	1.2	15.0	1.2	3.1	5.9	4.6	0.0	0.9	0.6	15.4	13.4
To Diognetus 1-4,7a	1040	2.6	0.7	1.3	2.2	1.3	0.3	3.9	0.6	9.7	1.4	5.0	6.2	3.8	0.4	1.3	0.2	13.4	12.9
To Diognetus 5-6	389	2.6	1.3	0.5	2.8	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.1	9.8	0.3	2.8	6.2	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.3	10.8	18.5
To Diognetus 7b-10	773	2.5	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.7	0.6	3.9	0.3	13.3	0.9	6.0	4.9	5.2	0.1	1.0	0.5	14.9	15.8
To Diognetus 11-12	407	2.7	1.0	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	4.7	0.2	9.6	1.7	8.8	12.3	7.9	0.0	0.0	0.2	8.4	14.0
Council of Neocaesarea	415	3.6	0.5	1.0	1.7	4.1	0.2	0.7	0.2	10.8	0.7	3.9	6.5	6.7	0.0	4.6	0.0	15.2	14.7
Justin Apology	1161	3.1	1.0	1.7	1.6	0.7	0.4	2.2	0.3	13.0	1.1	5.1	7.9	5.9	0.0	0.8	0.3	12.1	14.2
Canonical Letter	789	2.5	0.6	0.9	1.6	1.6	0.3	1.6	0.4	10.9	0.5	5.3	7.6	7.2	0.0	1.0	0.8	17.6	11.7
Dionysius Luke	1245	2.7	1.6	2.3	2.0	1.0	0.5	2.4	0.4	11.3	1.4	5.5	5.2	4.5	0.2	1.0	0.3	16.4	13.3
Dionysius Ecclesiastes	1277	2.7	1.0	2.6	1.5	0.6	0.3	3.1	0.5	10.7	1.0	5.5	6.4	6.2	0.0	0.3	0.1	18.1	13.5
Evagrius Ecclesiastes	850	1.9	0.8	2.2	1.5	0.5	0.1	2.4	0.0	10.2	0.8	6.6	6.1	4.6	0.0	0.5	0.2	19.4	12.2
All Saints	597	0.5	0.5	1.3	1.3	0.3	0.5	1.7	0.2	10.9	0.2	7.5	9.5	5.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	19.3	9.4
Ezekiel	472	4.7	0.6	0.8	3.6	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.0	11.0	0.6	7.4	5.3	6.8	0.0	0.2	0.0	22.0	10.0
Homily 1	1381	0.9	0.6	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.2	1.4	0.0	13.6	1.4	6.7	5.1	7.1	0.0	0.3	0.1	19.0	9.1
Homily 2a	1304	1.1	0.8	1.3	1.5	1.4	0.2	1.3	0.1	14.0	0.8	8.7	4.7	5.6	0.0	0.4	0.0	17.9	10.8
Homily 2b	1320	1.6	0.3	1.5	0.9	0.5	0.3	1.3	0.5	12.4	1.1	8.0	6.8	6.4	0.0	0.1	0.3	18.8	9.4
Homily 3	1096	0.7	0.6	1.2	0.6	0.8	0.1	1.8	0.0	9.0	0.6	7.5	6.7	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.1	20.4	11.5
Homily 4	2099	0.5	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.3	0.3	1.3	0.2	9.7	0.8	6.1	7.6	6.1	0.0	0.6	0.5	19.8	10.9
Twelve Chapters	1197	1.4	0.7	0.6	1.5	2.6	0.1	0.3	0.3	10.9	2.7	8.0	6.3	6.6	0.0	1.0	0.3	15.0	12.3
Diodore Genesis	2576	2.3	0.9	1.9	2.1	0.6	0.3	1.9	0.5	11.4	0.9	6.2	5.1	6.0	0.1	0.9	0.1	18.4	11.6
Partial Declaration	2898	2.5	0.8	1.2	2.0	0.7	0.1	1.5	0.6	14.4	1.3	7.4	6.7	6.6	0.0	0.5	0.3	16.8	7.5
Amphilochius 1	1260	0.8	0.5	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.4	2.5	0.5	17.1	1.0	7.1	6.3	6.3	0.0	0.5	0.5	15.3	9.1
Amphilochius 2	1070	1.0	0.3	1.2	3.4	0.8	0.2	1.1	0.2	12.1	2.1	4.0	7.9	4.1	0.0	0.4	0.2	17.1	16.4
Proclus 1	1624	1.2	0.7	2.5	1.5	0.6	0.2	1.7	0.2	9.3	1.5	5.2	4.7	5.8	0.0	0.6	0.0	17.6	12.9
Proclus 2	1787	1.2	0.6	1.7	2.2	0.3	0.6	1.8	0.1	7.4	0.6	5.0	3.7	5.4	0.0	0.1	0.1	18.0	14.3
Proclus 3	570	2.1	0.9	1.6	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.2	12.5	0.7	12.5	3.2	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.2	13.7	8.4
Maximus Confessor	1427	2.9	0.4	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.4	2.4	1.0	15.8	2.1	4.1	6.9	8.3	0.0	0.6	1.1	15.8	10.1

Three primary clusters have been identified in the graph in Figure 2-1 Correspondence Analysis - by Document. Possibly the most important outcome of this analysis is the clustering of the two works *Address of Thanksgiving* and *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes*. This supports the traditional attribution of the *Address* and the *Metaphrase* to the same author, which has been disputed by Pierre Nautin.[18]

While a segment of the *Address*, namely chapters 15-17, serves to bridge the gap between the second cluster and the first cluster, lying midway between the majority of the works and segments of works in each of these clusters, the status of the second cluster remains ambiguous in relation to Gregory's authorship. Particularly notable is the fact that the second cluster includes part of Justin's *1st Apology*, *To Gaian*, and *To Diognetus*,[19] and part of a work attributed to Maximus the Confessor. It is interesting that Gregory, Justin and Maximus have each been put forward as possible authors of *To Gaian*. This analysis shows the difficulty of distinguishing the claims made for each author on stylistic grounds. Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity, the relative closeness of this cluster to that containing the *Address* and the

[18] Nautin's claim is considered in 2.3.1 Authorship of Address & Origen's Letter

[19] This text was initially split into segments by dividing it at the lacunas in the manuscript from which the "surviving" copy was written, in chapter (between 7:6 and 7:7), and between chapters 10 and 11. (This manuscript has now also been lost in a war-time fire.) Marrou 1965, pp.177-18 and 218, pointed out that the lacunas in the text, in chapter 7, between verses 6 and 7, and between chapters 10 and 11, can probably be explained on the basis of the loss of one or more sheets from the original manuscript (from which the surviving copy was drawn). Another possibility, apparently not previously canvassed, is that the lacuna in chapter 7 divides the document in the same way as the lacuna between chapters 10 and 11, thus making it possible that the whole work as it has come down to us was written by three different authors. For the purpose of this analysis it was also necessary to separate chapters 5 and 6 from the rest of the text. These were written in a distinctive style, with repeated opposed clauses, for example, ἐν σαρκὶ τυγχάνουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ σάρκα ζῶσιν. Inclusion of these chapters with the remainder of the text would have distorted the analysis: differences in the styles used by the same author need to be taken into account. Therefore this text was analysed in four parts.

Metaphrase leaves open the possibility that Gregory should be considered as an author of *To Gaian*, *To Philagrius* and *To Diognetus*.

The canons of the Council of Neocaesarea are revealed by this analysis as an outlier from these two clusters. This work is located at approximately the same place on Axis 1 as the other works in the second cluster, while it is removed from them on Axis 2. However, it should be noted also that the genre of text is quite different, and this could have contributed to an emphasis on certain stylistic elements, which might not have been generally characteristic for the author of this document.[20] The fact that this work is only distinguished on Axis 2 from the works in the second cluster is not without significance. In determining the relative position of each of these documents on the chart, the values for Axis 1 are established first, and the residual unexplained variation is used when determining the placement on Axis 2. Therefore, while Axis 2 can reveal some important information, the placement on Axis 1 must be considered to be the more important, since it is the primary reading. In addition, 43% of the variation in the counts between these documents is captured along Axis 1, and only 11% is captured along Axis 2. This can be seen in Figure 2-1 Correspondence Analysis - by Document, where the most of the variation occurs along the horizontal axis, Axis 1.

The third cluster appears to represent a particular style of writing, quite distinct from that found in the *Address* and the *Metaphrase*. This style is shared by texts attributed to Proclus of Constantinople,[21] a text attributed to Evagrius of Pontus, and the author(s) of *On All Saints*, the four homilies traditionally attributed to Gregory (but generally excluded from Gregory's corpus by modern scholars) and the *Glossary on Ezekiel*. The style of the works in this cluster is so far removed from the works in the first and second clusters on a wide range of stylistic

[20] The outlier status of the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea is primarily due to a much higher proportion in this document of verbs in Subjunctive and Optative mood and of particles, as can be seen in the associated table.

[21] For example, Leroy 1967, p.75, was confident about the attribution of "Proclus, *Homily 3*" to Proclus, and thought that the occasion and place of delivery could also be established.

measures that Gregory's authorship of these works should be excluded, unless there are compelling grounds to reconsider this *prima facie* case against them.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the stylometic analysis supports the common authorship of the *Metaphrase* and the *Address*, both of which are tentantively attributed to Gregory at this stage, this being discussed in more detail a little later. The stylometric analysis also supports the argument that the works *To Gaian*, *To Diognetus* and *To Philagrius* could have been written by a single author. The analysis does not strongly support the argument that they were written by Gregory. Nevertheless, because the first and second identified clusters are fairly close together the possibility that these works were written by the same author as that of the *Metaphrase* and the *Address* cannot be ruled out.

In regard to the third cluster, this analysis supports the scholarly concensus that *All Saints*, and the homilies attributed to Gregory in the sources, were not written by Gregory. Although the *Glossary on Ezekiel* is fairly short, making the analysis less certain, the stylometic analysis indicates that Gregory did not write this.

2.2 Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes

2.2.1 Authorship

Both Jerome and Rufinus attributed the *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes* to Gregory. It is most frequently included in the manuscripts of Gregory of Nazianzus, but he could not have written it, given the closeness in time of his era to both Jerome and Rufinus: they are unlikely to have mistakenly attributed it to Gregory instead of to Gregory of Nazianzus.[22] In both content and style this appears to be a genuine work of Gregory's: there is nothing that would require this work to be excluded from a list of Gregory's authentic works.

The text does not indicate whether it was written while Gregory was studying with Origen, or whether it was written after he returned to Neocaesarea. Jarick thought that it was written after Gregory's return, noting that Gregory used only the Septuagint version of *Ecclesiastes*,[23] which might have meant that he did not have access to Origen's *Hexapla* because he was not in Palestinian Caesarea when he wrote it. However, writing on *Ecclesiastes* seems to have been something that Origen encouraged his students to undertake, as suggested by the fact that Dionysius of Alexandria wrote a commentary on part of *Ecclesiastes*, possibly while he was a student with Origen, part of which has survived. Origen regarded *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Songs* as progressively dealing with teachings on morals, the natural order and the spiritual life.[24] On this basis of the argument of Origen's interest in this book, it seems more likely that Gregory wrote this work while he was with Origen, rather than Jarick's argument that it was written later, even though it does not show

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[22] Jarick 1990, p.6, citing Jerome, *Famous Men*, 65, and Rufinus, *EH*, 7:25 (actually 7:28); Ryssel 1880, pp.27-29. Slusser 1998, p.22, also mentioned that this text was found with Procopius of Gaza's *Catena in Ecclesiastes*, and that it was often found with Gregory of Nazianzus' works together with *To Philagrius* and the *Glossary on Ezekiel*.

[23] Jarick 1990, pp.4-6, 310-311.

[24] Trigg 1998, pp.13f, citing Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Prologue 3.

evidence of his use of the *Hexapla*.

This could be considered to be the first work that Gregory wrote that has come down to us, if it could be securely dated to the period in which Gregory studied with Origen. The fact that both Jerome and Rufinus knew of the work, but it was not mentioned by authors writing earlier than them, suggests that they both found it in the library in Palestinian Caesarea, where Origen's works were preserved by Pamphilus, Eusebius and Acacius, and then discovered by Jerome. This text has been called a "student work", but it is much more than that, and is in fact a lively presentation of the ideal Christian life, as well as being a elegant re-writing of the rather literal translation of the Hebrew original, as found in the Septuagint.[25]

2.2.2 Metaphrase vs. Paraphrase

The text is called a "metaphrase" in its title. A "metaphrase" is different from a "paraphrase", the latter being like a translation except being generally longer and with the intention of making the meaning clearer or easier to understand. While the terms "metaphrase" and "paraphrase" sometimes appear to be synonyms, this is not the case here, for this work is a long way from being a paraphrase of *Ecclesiastes*. The definition of a "metaphrase" that applies here is "an imitation of a passage, or an expression of a passage in different terms".[26]

This work was criticized by Coxe, who said:

> The wise benevolence of our author is more apparent than his critical skill. No book [is] more likely to puzzle a pagan inquirer than this: so the metaphrase gives it meaning and consistency; but, over and over again, not Solomon's meaning, I am persuaded.[27]

Lane Fox endorsed this judgement, adding the comment, "Gregory's 'Paraphrase' reflects

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[25] Jarick 1990, pp.309-311

[26] *cf.* Vinel 1987, 194f, citing H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, (Munich 1960), *s.v. metaphrase* and *paraphrase*.

[27] ANF-6, p.9.

very poorly on Origen's critical classes." However, he noted that Origen was the likely source of both Gregory's interest in this work and the tone of his redaction.[28]

Other commentators have sought to understand the text on its own terms. Approaching it in this way, Noakes believed that Gregory transformed *Ecclesiastes*:

> The ambiguities and the scepticism of the original are eliminated in Gregory's version. Solomon is portrayed as a man who has experimented with the various pleasures of the world but who has now awoken and recovered his sight because the real good which is set before men has showed itself to him – namely, the knowledge of wisdom and the possession of fortitude.

He argued that in Gregory's hands, Ecclesiastes had become "a moralising tract, an exhortation to follow wisdom and not folly."[29] Similarly, Slusser thought that the work had a specific purpose, namely as "an appeal to its readers to take up the philosophical life with all seriousness."[30]

Origen would not have agreed if Gregory had put forward his metaphrase to be used in place of the normal Greek translation of *Ecclesiastes*, even though it would have worked well in this role. In a different context, Origen criticized those who dared to transform or alter the sense of those passages that were apparently written without coherence, under the pretext of correcting the text.[31] Therefore, Gregory's metaphrase is better seen as a work of commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, rather than as an inaccurate paraphrase.

Origen does not appear to have written a complete commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, although he wrote at least scholia and a homily on this book. Perhaps Origen did not find this book particularly convenable to his allegorical method, and was prepared to allow the *Metaphrase* to stand in the place of a full commentary from himself. Alternatively, he might have by-passed this work in order to give scope for the future development of his students in writing

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[28] Lane Fox 1986, p.523.

[29] Noakes 1984, pp.196-199.

[30] Slusser 1998, pp.23f.

[31] Origen, *Philocalia*, 8:1, cited in Vinel 1987, pp.193f.

commentaries on this text for themselves.

The *Metaphrase*, being different from a literal reading of *Ecclesiastes*, can perhaps be compared with the approach taken by Marcion, who excluded the whole of the Old Testament, excluded part of what was later recognized as the New Testament, and changed the text of the remaining works of the New Testament writers.[32] Similarly, the *Metaphrase* was different from the original: the biblical text was radically re-interpreted on the basis of the concluding verse of *Ecclesiastes*, which said that every work would be brought to judgement. This was also the approach taken by Jewish and later Christian commentators,[33] and was not so different from that followed by Origen.[34] While Origen certainly did not accept the approach adopted by Marcion, who tampered with the text of the Scriptures to remove difficulties, Origen arrived at the same end by means of his exegesis. As a work of exegesis, or interpretation, Origen might have accepted the validity of Gregory's *Metaphrase*: it is unlikely that he would have disagreed with the sentiments embodied in it.

It is a standard Christian motif that the Old Testament should be interpreted as foreshadowing the advent and work of Christ. This is how the Old Testament is presented in *2 Peter*, where the writer implied that Old Testament prophecies pointed to Christ. Here the writer appears to have reflected on the events of the story of Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus, where Jesus was depicted as explaining how the Old Testament Scriptures referred to him.[35] In a somewhat analogous way, Origen argued that a "spiritual" interpretation brought out the true meaning of the Old Testament. He believed that a threefold interpretation should be applied to the Scriptures as a whole: literal, soulish (which

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[32] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 10:24.

[33] *Ecclesiastes* 12:14; Jarick 1990, pp.311-316.

[34] Slusser 1997, p.359, said that Gregory "transformed *Ecclesiastes* into a protreptic work, corresponding to Origen's own estimate of it."

[35] *2 Peter* 1:19-21; *Luke* 24:13-27.

encompassed all of man except the spiritual component) and spiritual. He believed that the *Logos* planned the Scriptures to include "impossibilities", so that the intelligent interpreter was forced to look for the spiritual meaning behind the words.[36] Gregory's *Metaphrase* should be seen as just such a "spiritual" interpretation, providing the meaning behind the actual words.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes* said, "vanity of vanities" (ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων), which Gregory interpreted as, "How empty and useless human activities and all human pursuits are!"[37] This then became the basis of Gregory's interpretation of the rest of *Ecclesiastes*. When the writer of *Ecclesiastes* appeared to attribute worth to the experience of the various experiments and trials of Solomon's life, Gregory gave the spiritual interpretation that these were just foolishness. In *Ecclesiastes* it was said that Solomon advanced in wisdom:

> So I became great, and advanced beyond all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom was established in me.

Gregory wrote instead that Solomon's greatness in the world led to a loss of wisdom:

> I outdid the men who had ruled over Jerusalem before me to such an extent that I could not keep track of it all. So it was that my wisdom diminished and wicked desires grew.[38]

While Gregory did not provide an apparatus similar to that provided by Origen for explaining how he arrived at his interpretation, it is clear that his intention was the same as Origen's, namely to show what he thought was the spiritual meaning behind the actual words. This work appears to have been based on a premise adopted by Gregory that the ideas of the Scripture can be profitably put in other words, without directly citing the words themselves, an approach found in other works attributed to him.

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[36] Origen, *On First Principles*, 4:2; Trigg 1998, pp.32-35.

[37] *Ecclesiastes* 1:2; Gregory, *Metaphrase* 1:2, tr. Jarick.

[38] *Ecclesiastes* 2:9 (LXX), tr. Brenton; Gregory, *Metaphrase* 2:9, tr. Jarick.

2.2.3 Christian Life

Origen's ideal Christian life embodied a heroic morality. This was represented by the concept of martyrdom, which was exemplified by the famous story of Origen rushing towards his own martyrdom whilst still an adolescent, only to be prevented by his mother, who hid his clothes. For Origen, the Christian participated in the drama of redemption, being involved in this drama through a disregard for possession, veneration for virginity,[39] and of course, ultimately for some, martyrdom.[40] While Gregory's *Metaphrase* primarily described what the Christian life was not, it balanced this with suggestions of the kind of life to which a Christian could aspire. Gregory depicted Solomon hating the way he had squandered his opportunities, and eventually coming to the realisation that the true good is knowledge of wisdom and the possession of manliness (ἀνδρεία).[41]

Gregory examined the famous contrasts of *Ecclesiastes*: birth and death, healing and killing, construction and destruction, weeping and laughing. Gregory concluded that these contrasting things direct us to avoid useless labours, and that the true good is cheerfulness and kindness provided we are guided by righteousness. Death is the common fate of mankind and the animals. Gregory then reproduced something of the ambivalence of *Ecclesiastes*, saying that after death there is a different place for the godly and ungodly, but also reflecting that author's view that we cannot be certain what happens after death.[42] Gregory later clarified this ambiguity.

Gregory described the life of a wise man: this is the person who is self-controlled and moderate, who avoids sin and successfully finishes the course of his life in righteousness. Gregory concluded this section by contrasting the life of the wise man with that of those who

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[39] Ammianus Marcellinus, 18:10:4, recognized the importance of virginity amongst the Christians.

[40] Trigg 1983, pp.18-20; Eusebius, *EH*, 6:2.

[41] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 2.

[42] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 3.

study difficult problems. This is initially somewhat surprising since Gregory was devoted to the pursuit of philosophy and the understanding of the most profound things:

> This is what I learned most: that human beings were made with a simple mind by God, but they busy themselves with complex reasonings and endless questionings.[43]

This statement is in accord with the other things we know about Gregory, despite the fact that his study with Origen could be characterised as "the study of difficult problems". It appears that he was not particularly interested in metaphysical speculation. His other works indicate that, while he was able to describe the nature of the human soul and the godhead in a way that seemed adequate to him, he did not willingly go beyond this into other areas of metaphysics. His preference for simple arguments and a simple approach is seen in the presentation of the *Metaphrase*. Rather than providing arguments to justify his interpretation, he merely stated baldly the result at which Origen would have arrived through a more circuitous route. The very enigmas and dark places that make *Ecclesiastes* an interesting book to study have been completely removed in the *Metaphrase*. Gregory was not interested in them: he wanted to provide a guide for life that could be used by anyone.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes* described the problem of the person who appeared to have been greatly blessed with possessions or children, yet did not live to enjoy these blessings. In a clear demonstration of Gregory's heroic view of the Christian life, Gregory said that the righteous person would not be oppressed by such a misfortune, since he transcended the events of the ordinary life; oftentimes this problem would not arise for the righteous man, since righteousness mostly leads to poverty.[44]

As a corollary to this, Gregory praised the kind of life lived in a mutually supportive community: this kind of life appears to have been important to him.[45] Drawing on the

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[43] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 7, quoting 7:29, tr. Jarick.

[44] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 6.

[45] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 4:7-12; Slusser 1997, pp.359f.

equivalent passages in *Ecclesiastes*, Gregory advocated a life of honesty and truth.[46] He said that people should be generous to one another, even if generous acts seems to be wasted on some people: it can never be known what the future will hold.[47] This was a radically different view of life from that normally held in a society where generosity was publicly displayed in order to be publicly recognized.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes* reflected on the relationship between the king and his subjects. This gave Gregory the chance to discuss the importance of attending to the words and holy commands of the only Lord and King (ὁ μόνος δυνάστης καὶ βασιλεύς) and the final judgement. Whereas the writer of *Ecclesiastes* suggested that the end of both the righteous and the evil would be the same, Gregory represented this as a foolish idea that the writer actually rejected (which indeed the writer of *Ecclesiastes* also indicated in chapter twelve by pointing to the future judgement). Treating life as a great race, Gregory said that the outside circumstances of a person do not reveal whether that person is righteous:

> But I know well that those who seem the swiftest will not win that great race, and those who are thought by human beings to be powerful and terrifying will not be victorious in the terrible battle. Prudence is not proved by a great amount of food, and intelligence is not usually accompanied by wealth. I do not congratulate the people who think that everyone will encounter the same things.[48]

Instead, Gregory said that wisdom, being stronger than iron, is preferable to what is normally regarded as strength.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes* was concerned about the problems of old age, and the loss of youthful vigour. Gregory interpreted the reference to the coming "evil days" as an allusion to dreadful day of God's judgment, in an echo of the prophecy in *Joel* and Jesus' words about

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[46] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 5:1-10.

[47] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 11:1-7.

[48] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 8-9, quoting 9:11, tr. Jarick.

the cataclysmic events of the end times.[49] This was the culmination of a re-evaluation of *Ecclesiastes* in the light of the Christian message, and demonstrates that Gregory perceived that the Old Testament should be understood in the light of the texts from the New Testament and other Christian writers,[50] even if that meant the literal meaning of the words had to be discarded in favour of the perceived spiritual meaning.

[49] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 10-12, especially 12:2; *Joel* 2:10; *Matthew* 24:29; *Mark* 13:24f.

[50] Jarick 1990, pp.311-316.

2.3 Address of Thanksgiving

2.3.1 Authorship of Address & Origen's Letter

Nautin challenged the traditional attribution of this work to Gregory, arguing that the mistake went back to Eusebius, who incorrectly attributed this work to him. His argument was based on the fact that both Eusebius and Jerome said that a certain Theodorus was also called Gregory, and that Eusebius identified this Theodorus with Gregory of Neocaesarea. Nautin's argument was that Eusebius and Jerome must both have determined this association from the manuscript of the *Address*. Nautin assumed that this manuscript must have been marked as having been written by this Theodorus, and thought that Eusebius, knowing that Gregory studied with Origen, guessed that Theodorus was called Gregory.[51] In response, Crouzel argued that Eusebius gave no indication that he was looking at the *Address* when he indicated that Theodorus was also known as Gregory.[52] In support of Crouzel's rebuttal it can also be said that in the same passage Eusebius also referred to Gregory's brother by name, a piece of information not contained in the text of the *Address*. Therefore, Eusebius must have had information beyond that provided in his manuscript copy of the *Address*. Some information probably came from Pamphilus' *Apology* for Origen, in which Gregory was probably cited as a witness to Origen's orthodoxy. The *Address* was attached to this work.[53] While Trigg considered that Crouzel had effectively defended the traditional attribution of this work to Gregory of Neocaesarea, nevertheless he felt that some aspects of this question remained open.[54]

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[51] Nautin 1977, pp.81-85.

[52] Crouzel 1979, pp.287f, citing Eusebius, *EH*, 6:18. Crouzel 1970, pp.24f, suggested that Gregory was probably his baptismal name, and that it is likely that he was baptised in Palestian Caesarea. This appears to be the first time the name Gregory occurred in Christian circles, but it became popular from the late third century onwards.

[53] Socrates, *EH*, 4:27; *vide* Section 2.9 Jerome & Socrates Scholasticus.

[54] Trigg 2001, p.28 n.7. However, he did not specify the reasons for his reserve.

The stylometric analysis carried out earlier carries weight here, since it supports the claim that both the *Metaphrase* and the *Address* were written by the same author. This supports the fourth century attribution of both these works to the same author, namely to Gregory of Neocaesarea. Nautin's argument appears to have been based on the assumption that Eusebius made a mistake, but it is without any substantive evidence in support, apart from the fact that Jerome appears to have seen a document in which Theodore's name was mentioned, and that he used terminology that was similar to that used by Eusebius. Against Nautin, it should be noted that the stylistic similarity of *Metaphrase* and the *Address* supports the rejection of his claim, since Gregory's authorship of the *Metaphrase* is generally accepted. Certainly no evidence can be cited that some unknown Theodorus wrote the *Metaphrase*, since Jerome clearly attributes it to Gregory.

The use of Scripture in this text is another identifiable stylistic element that points towards common authorship of both the *Address* and the *Metaphrase*. It would appear that Gregory liked to build Scriptural references into his text in his own words. A good example of this is his retelling of the story of the Prodigal Son, which is told succinctly, elegantly incorporated into his own narrative, yet without bringing it to the happy conclusion of Jesus' story.[55] Although this approach is not an exact parallel to the way in which Gregory handled *Ecclesiastes* in creating his *Metaphrase*, it is similar, and certainly not inconsistent with that style of writing.

The letter from Origen to a Gregory is a possible source for additional information about Gregory's life. The letter does not state to which Gregory it was addressed:[56] it was written to someone called Gregory who was about to depart from Origen for some place. The

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[55] *Luke* 15:11-32; Gregory, *Address*, 16 (190); *cf.* Trigg 2001, pp.30-33, who provides a useful discussion of this topic.

[56] Crouzel 1969, pp.79-92, and Kennedy 1980, p.141, thought it was addressed to Gregory of Neocaesarea. Nautin 1977, pp.156-161, thought it was addressed to a different Gregory.

introductory words suggest that Origen was writing to someone of relatively high social rank, and possibly of a higher rank than himself:

> Greetings in God, lord (κύριε) and my most earnest and most venerable son, Gregory, from Origen.

This was not the kind of introductory comment that one would expect in a letter from a master to a young man about to commence his tertiary education elsewhere, but rather indicates a long standing and close relationship, possibly as a result of studying together for many years.[57]

In this letter, Origen contemplated the future that lay ahead of this young man. He said that this Gregory's natural disposition (εὐφυία) was able to make him a complete Roman lawyer and a Greek philosopher of one of the esteemed systems. Origen said that he would prefer that the addressee made full use of his natural ability for Christianity.[58] This appears to imply that the recipient of the letter was already trained in both Roman laws and Greek philosophy. Origen goes on to say that he should now use this knowledge for the benefit of Christianity. Origen argued that the addressee should make the study of the Scriptures his first priority, while at the same time despoiling the Egyptians, being a metaphor for drawing lessons from Greek philosophy.[59] If the addressee were not already trained in law and philosophy what would he make of Origen's injunction to devote himself to the Scriptures?

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[57] *cf.* McGuckin 2004, p.3: Origen was probably not a Roman citizen before Caracella's edict in 212.

[58] Origen, *To Gregory*, 1.

[59] Against this interpretation, Nautin 1977, pp.80-86 and 156, argued the addressee was going to Egypt to study. Harl 1983, p.399 n.2, agreed and, in confirmation of the argument that it was not written to Gregory of Neocaesarea, said that we do not know anything about Gregory doing this. Nautin treated Origen's allegorical treatment of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt in this letter as if it were an allegory of the addressee's proposed journey to Egypt to study philosophy. Crouzel 1979, pp.300-309, rejected this line of argument, saying that it was not Origen's method to draw historical conclusions from an allegorical account, but to create an allegory from reports of supposed historical events.

Was he to abandon his study of law and philosophy, and if so, why would Origen have written his letter is this manner? If this were the case, Origen surely would have either advised him to abandon his proposed studies, or he would have advised him to balance his studies of law and philosophy with the study of the Scriptures, or to study Greek philosophy so that he could use this for the interpretation of the Scriptures. Origen did none of these: he advised his correspondent to devote himself to the Scriptures.

This letter is found in the *Philocalia* of Origen; the editors do not provide any identifying information about the addressee. The name of the addressee is only known because it is found in the text itself. It appears that the editors did not identify the Gregory to whom it was addressed, either because they did not know, or because this information was not important to them. It has been sometimes thought that Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus were the editors of this anthology of Origen's works; if Basil were involved it would have been surprising if the attribution to Gregory of Neocaesarea did not occur to him, to either include or exclude.[60] However, the involvement of Basil in assembling this anthology has been doubted: the assumption that he was involved depends upon the reading of Gregory of Nazianzus' comment, in a letter accompanying the gift of the *Philocalia* to Theodorus of Tyana, that the work would also serve as a memorial from "us" and also from Basil. This letter did not actually state that Basil worked on this anthology, nor is there corroborating evidence from Basil's works that he had such a role. Harl thought that it was not possible to identify positively the original editors; she preferred to call them "*les Philocalistes*". She thought that the editors were earlier than Gregory of Nazianzus, and that Basil was not involved.[61]

The writer of the *Address*, taking his leave of Origen, indicated that he had recently undertaken legal studies and was about to take up the administration of the laws. The evidence for the first part of this claim is contained in his introduction, in which he said that

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[60] Junod 1975, pp.186f, cited and accepted by Slusser 1998, p.37 n.157; Junod 1976, pp.11-13.

[61] Harl 1983, pp.20-24, 31-41.

"another branch of study weighs heavily on my mind",[62] which he indicated was the study of the laws of the Romans. This does not seem to be a reference to his training in Latin and Roman law when he was an adolescent, five or eight years earlier:[63] the natural reading of this statement is that it refers to a recent education program in Roman laws. Later in the *Address* the author said that he was about to deal with human affairs, "even those of wicked human beings".[64] This is a strong indication that he envisaged taking up an official legal posting, for which he must have been trained in something more than philosophy, at least in forensic oratory, but more likely in the laws themselves. The *Address* indicates that it was the latter: it definitely was not the former, since training in rhetoric was specifically excluded.

The situation of the writer of the *Address* was identical to that of the addressee of Origen's letter. Combining this information with the other evidence cited above, we are entitled to conclude that Origen's letter was written to the person who delivered the *Address*, namely Gregory of Neocaesarea.[65] In addition, there are grounds for believing that Origen's letter was written in response to the *Address*, and this argument will be considered later in this chapter.[66]

2.3.2 Gregory and Athenodorus

Gregory escorted his sister to Palestinian Caesarea. She was rejoining her husband after the latter had been summoned to the service of the governor there, and she had been left behind in Pontus. The governor had authorised Gregory's sister to be brought to Palestine under military escort, and had also provided tickets for others to travel with her. Gregory

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[62] Gregory, *Address*, 1 (7), tr. Slusser.

[63] It was proposed by Koetschau 1894, pp.xi-xii, and accepted by Crouzel 1979, p.298. Nautin 1977, p.82, rejected this solution.

[64] Gregory, *Address*, 16 (193), tr. Slusser.

[65] This was the same position as argued by Crouzel 1979, pp.300-303, but on different grounds.

[66] *vide* Section 2.3.7 Letter from Origen.

fulfilled the role of escort, perceiving that it was an opportunity for him to further his legal education in Berytus, not far from Palestinian Caesarea. In the event, he was diverted from this purpose, and spent a number of years with Origen in Palestinian Caesarea. Despite this, he appears to have somehow completed his legal education in Berytus. Having been offered a legal posting back in Neocaesarea, he was about to leave Origen finally, and in the circumstances, he offered to give this eulogy in Origen's honour.

While the evidence is not entirely conclusive, it is likely that Gregory's brother Athenodorus travelled with him to Palestine, and shared with him in all his studies. Eusebius said that the two brothers were won over by Origen to the "study of divine things", and as a result, studied with him for five years, indicating that the two brothers were together when they studied with Origen. The same impression is gained from the *Address*, since Gregory appears to have included his brother in many of his statements by using the first person plural.

This argument is complicated by the fact that Gregory also used the plural first person pronoun rhetorically, rather than literally, where he appears to extend participation to the audience, including them in his statements.[67] This applies even when extending participation to the audience was a little strained, such as Gregory's admission that he was being foolish in attempting to make such a speech, when the blame could only have been carried by him:

> For us, I do not know how we will escape the reputation of boldness and rashness, since we rushed in foolishly with little intelligence and preparation, concerning great things perhaps beyond us.[68]

Here Gregory was bringing his audience into his speech and making them share in his expression of discomfort and inadequacy in making this speech, inviting them to empathise with him, rather than indicating that the speech was jointly prepared by himself and an

[67] Crouzel 1970, p.26; Nautin 1977, pp.447f, citing examples also from Origen's writings where the same pattern of speech can be found, switching from first person singular to first person plural. *vide* also, Valantasis 1991, p.16, quoted by Slusser 1998, p.18 n.74.

[68] Gregory, *Address*, 2 (16).

unnamed other person. We know this because a little further on he assigned this "rashness" to himself alone.[69]

While Gregory's use of the plural form was sometimes rhetorical, in other passages the natural reading appears to be that his brother was a participant in the events described. His discussion of their journey to Palestine was one of these. Gregory said that the soldier who brought the orders from the governor put at their disposition more of the "state carriages" than were necessary, and provided a "greater number of tickets for us, more than for the sister alone".[70] From this point on in his travel narrative, Gregory indicated that he was travelling with another person, in addition to his sister. He kept this up through his discussion of their initial meetings with Origen. In these passages he used the singular form only once, and this seems to have been to make it clear that it was his decision, and not a joint decision, to remain with Origen and to neglect the studies that they had planned to pursue in Berytus.[71] The use of the first person plural, and plural possessives, cannot be attributed to his audience in these cases, as a "passive participant", for no-one apart from his brother could reasonably identify himself with the events described in this part of the narrative. Despite this, it is not possible to

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[69] Gregory, *Address*, 2 (20).

[70] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (69). Perhaps by virtue of a well-connected marriage, Gregory's family found itself in a very privileged position in Roman society.

[71] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (67) – 6 (84). Slusser 1998, p.18 n.73, 75 also argued that the singular appeared in places where the plural would have been expected. He thought that it was unnecessary to connect Eusebius' statement that Athenodorus also studied with Origen with the use of the first person plural in the *Address*. He cited the *Address* 4 (55), 5 (56), 5 (62), 5 (65) and 16 (185-189) as examples, in which Gregory referred to "my mother", "my parents", and "my sister's husband". However, these usages can be explained as arising from the dynamics of an oral discourse, delivered extemporarily (presumably recorded by Origen's shorthand writers) in which the first person possessive form was chosen to reflect Gregory's thought processes at the time, such as I might say "my mother" in a speech if I was wanting the audience to relate specifically to me, and I might say "our mother" if I were trying to lead the audience to think of my mother in relation to me and my brother (*cf.* Crouzel 1979, pp.296f).

use the evidence of the *Address* to categorically state that Gregory included Athenodorus as a joint actor in his narrative, even though the evidence of the *Address* is consistent with this claim.

When Eusebius' testimony, cited above, is added to that deduced from an analysis of the way Gregory actually used the first person plural, as given above, it appears that there are reasonable grounds to support the conclusion that Gregory did indeed travel to Palestine in company with Athenodorus, and on the same grounds, that Athenodorus stayed with Gregory until the end of their studies, whereupon they returned home together.[72] This will be assumed in the following narrative, having the virtue of being the more natural reading of the text, and being consistent with the external evidence.

When Gregory and Athenodorus arrived in Caesarea the two brothers appear to have immediately visited Origen: Gregory said that his "guardian angel" handed them over to Origen. Origen had recently moved to Caesarea, since his presence in Alexandria was no longer acceptable to the bishop of Alexandria, settling in Caesarea in *c*.231.[73] The apparently smooth transition from weary travellers to enthusiastic auditors of the great philosopher makes it appear that they had been intending to visit this man from the time that they set out on their journey. Origen, also, is presented as responding as if he had been expecting them to

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[72] *vide* Gregory, *Address*, 19 (204), where Gregory asked Origen to "send us off now with prayer".

[73] Nautin 1977, pp.70f, argued that Origen left Alexandria in 232, but spent some time with Firmilian in Cappadocian Caesarea, eventually settling in Palestinian Caesarea in 234. It is unlikely that Firmilian was bishop at this time, since he still considered himself fit for long distance travel in 268, 34 years later. It is more likely that Firmilian visited Origen in Palestine before he became bishop, and much later invited Origen to come to Cappadocia (reversing the order in Eusebius, *EH*, 6:27). Crouzel 1969, pp.16f, argued that Origen left Alexandria in 231 or 233, going directly to Palestinian Caesarea. Similarly, McGuckin 2004, pp.13-16, placed Origen's removal to Palestinian Caesarea in 231, arguing that his trip to Athens around that time was intended to buy books for a new school to be established there: this dating appears plausible, and has been accepted as a boundary marker for Gregory's study with Origen.

come.[74] Yet it is more likely that this meeting was an unexpected event, and that Gregory was presenting it in this way to indicate that it was part of the plan for this life mapped out for him by his guardian angel. Gregory was enthusiastic as he looked back upon this event: he thought that the hand of God, and his guardian angel, was behind his and Origen's independently activated travels to Caesarea, since he thought that it was God's intention to bring them together for his own benefit. The transformation that had occurred in his life after the loss of his father now seemed but a small foretaste of the change that was soon to take place in his life.

At first, Gregory was discomforted by Origen's persistent appeals:

> At first, when like wild animals or fish or some kind of birds caught in a trap or a net we tried to extricate ourselves and slip away, wanting to leave him for Berytus or for home, he contrived by every stratagem to bind us close; he employed every kind of argument, attached every line (as the saying goes), and exercised all his powers.[75]

However, Origen was everything that Gregory could have wished that a teacher in philosophy would be: he was a man who taught a coherent and noble doctrine, who strove to live his life in accordance with what he taught:

> [Origen] lauded philosophy and those who love philosophy with lengthy praises and many other appropriate things, saying that the only ones truly to live the life which befits rational beings are those who strive to live uprightly, who know themselves first for who they are, and next what

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[74] Crouzel 1969, p.16, thought that the brothers heard about Origen when they arrived in Caesarea. Perhaps Gregory's brother-in-law suggested a visit to the famous man, newly arrived from Alexandria, if he knew of Gregory's interest in philosophical matters, on the basis of Gregory's statement, cited below, that he did not want to be convinced to stay with Origen. On this basis, Nautin 1977, p.187, argued that Gregory was forced to study with Origen by his brother-in-law, who withheld funds from him, and thereby preventing him from either going to Berytus or returning home. Crouzel 1979, pp.292f, rejected this argument, and proposed that the constraint on Gregory came from the persuasive power of Origen himself. This idea was a continuing theme throughout the *Address*: Nautin's argument does not appear to take sufficient account of this thematic element.

[75] Gregory, *Address*, 6 (73-74), tr. Slusser.

> the genuine goods are which a person ought to pursue, and the truly bad things one must avoid.[76]

Origen fervently appealed to Gregory and his brother, and repeated this over many days. He urged them to abandon their planned studies of Latin law, and instead to pursue the study of philosophy under his tutelage. At this stage they remained committed to their desire to complete their education in the Roman law. Eusebius, perhaps drawing on the material in the *Address*, said that they were "excessively wrapt in the prosecution of the studies of the Greeks and the Romans",[77] by which he meant rhetoric and legal studies.

The two brothers vacillated and held back from making a decision. It appears that Gregory felt a certain pressure to continue with his original plan, since it is said that Origen struck directly at "the ignorant majority" who enthusiastically vied for possessions and acclaim, and strove to acquire the skills leading to these, such as military, judicial and legal expertise, whilst neglecting their governing facility, their reason. His words, manner and approach gradually won them over, and they felt under some constraint to stay, a constraint that Gregory described as coming from "some divine power". Gregory said that this decision resulted in them "being abroad" also from those in that place (τῶν τε παρόντων ἐνταῦθα καὶ οἷς ἀπεδημήσαμεν), probably meaning the lecturers in Berytus, or alternatively implying that he was no longer welcome in his brother-in-law's house.[78]

In any event, they decided to remain with Origen, and according to Eusebius, they spent five years with him, engaged in the study of philosophy and divine things. When Gregory finally look his leave of Origen, in his *Address*, he said that it had been eight years since he wrote or delivered an oration, or even heard one, except those delivered within Origen's

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[76] Gregory, *Address*, 6 (75), tr. Slusser.

[77] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:30, tr. Cruse.

[78] Gregory, *Address*, 6 (78-80, 84); Crouzel 1969, p.18, believed that this meant that Gregory and his brother-in-law were estranged, but he suggested that the relationship between the two men was later restored.

circle. One explanation of the five years in Eusebius and the eight years in the *Address* is that he spent five years with Origen and three years studying law in Berytus, returning to Caesarea for a brief time before returning home to Neocaesarea.[79] Another possible explanation is that Gregory interleaved his periods of study in Berytus with periods of study in Caesarea.[80] Perhaps the most likely explanation is that Gregory began his legal studies in Berytus when Origen was forced to go into hiding during the reign of Emperor Maximinus (235 – 238),[81] and continued with his studies there until he had concluded them satisfactorily.

2.3.3 Occasion

In delivering his *Address*, Gregory aspired to present a truly Hellenic work to his audience.[82] It is possible that the speech was delivered in the theatre of Palestinian Caesarea,

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[79] Ryssel 1880, pp.12f, thought that the difference between the five years in Eusebius and the eight years in the *Address* could be explained by possible interruptions in his studies during that period; Koetschau 1894, pp.xi-xii, thought that the five years in Caesarea was preceded by three years with his tutor in Latin and Roman law, a suggestion supported by Crouzel 1979, p.294. This interpretation appears to ignore Gregory's indication that he had nearly completed his studies in rhetoric; these studies appear to have continued up to the time he left Neocaesarea. Fouskas 1969, pp.71-78, thought he studied with Origen for five years and then returned to Neocaesarea, but this does not give adequate weight to the indication in Gregory's *Address* that he had recently been studying Latin.

[80] Mitchell 1999a, p.104.

[81] McGuckin 2004, pp.20, noted that Gregory did not make any reference to his being absent from Origen's circle for this extended period. Against this, Gregory implied that he had been recently studying Latin and Roman laws, so some time needs to be set aside for this activity.

[82] Kennedy 1980, p.140, said, "It is the first true example of Christian epideictic oratory, one of the very few surviving speeches of the third century, and the only extant example of a Greek farewell speech." He described it as "the affected Greek of a rather inept sophist, filled with elaborate sentences and amphlification." Crouzel 1983, p.783, also was not complimentary, indicating that it was not well written, attributing this to his Latin studies, as Gregory said himself. Trigg 2001, pp.29f, said that Gregory's style "might have been calculated to make Clement of Alexandria seem clear and concise by contrast." Perhaps Gregory's lack of experience was a

before an audience consisting of some of the leading citizens of the city, but with many young men and their parents also present.[83] Since he said that he was delivering the speech "with little preparation", it appears to have been delivered without detailed notes, from an outline that he had sketched out beforehand. The words of the speech were probably recorded by Origen's team of shorthand writers, and written down afterwards. Lane Fox said about this speech that, "after two of the clumsiest sentences in the history of Greek prose," Gregory proceeded to show a "fluent abundance".[84] His judgement about the mixed quality of his delivery supports the suggestion that the speech was delivered extemporarily, and was not later polished for publication. Gregory probably left for home within a few days of delivering this speech.

We can only guess who was in attendance. The audience might have included Gregory's sister and her husband, an assessor in the service of the governor of the province.[85] This idea is supported by the presence in the speech of a section devoted to his brother-in-law, who is presented as a caring husband. Soldiers or officers in the army might also have been present, since Gregory made a special mention of the great benefit given to him by the soldier officer

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significant factor, since during the early adult years when an orator would have honed his skills, Gregory spent his time in Latin and philosophical studies.

[83] Trigg 2001, p.52, thought that the speech was given in front of a mixed group of pagans and Christians.

[84] Lane Fox 1986, p.525.

[85] Nautin 1977, p.197 n.26, thought that Theodorus did not know whether his brother-in-law was still an assessor, but Crouzel 1979, p.293, rejected Nautin's translation of ἴσως (as "perhaps") in the relevant passage: [my brother-in-law] was an accessor, and perhaps he still is (νομικὸς γάρ τις ἦν, καὶ ἔστιν ἴσως ἔτι·), preferring to read this last clause as "and, in like manner, he still is". Crouzel's reading seems more likely than Nautin's, particularly considering that the speech was delivered in the city in which Gregory's brother-in-law would have been holding office.

who came with an escort, bearing tickets for their travel to Palestine.[86]

However, it seems that young men contemplating entering into the study of philosophy with a master were the primary target audience. This is suggested by the section in his speech in which Gregory compared Origen with other contemporary philosophers, disdaining to praise Origen by describing the faults of others, while mentioning that some brought philosophy into contempt by their actions.[87] The presence of a significant contingent of young men is also indicated by the speech itself, which gives every indication of being directed towards persuading them.

In this speech Gregory constructed the most extraordinary recommendation to young men to study philosophy under Origen. He began his address by expressing his own weakness and inability to adequately acquit himself of his task, then turning to offer an extended hymn of praise towards God. This latter component was a conventional element in such a speech. In particular he offered his praise to the Saviour, who is *Logos* and Demiurge. In doing so, he gave a brief outline of the high doctrine taught by Origen, expressing it in philosophical terms, yet avoiding any mention of the incarnation of Christ.[88]

Turning back to himself, he described how it had happened that he found himself learning from Origen the master, and clearly stated that it was entirely due to divine guidance and leading, but worked out through the ordinary events of life and personal interactions. He indicated to his audience that study with Origen resulted in his love for the *Logos* being inflamed, a love that both wounded and constrained him, which he thought was the greatest

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[86] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (65-69), 5 (70). Although the latter reference could have had the intention of demonstrating that even the military can be used by God to bring about his purposes (in bringing Gregory to Palestinian Caesarea).

[87] Gregory, *Address*, 10 (127-132).

[88] Gregory, *Address*, 1-2, 3-4.

gift of all.[89]

In a section on the love of Jonathan for David, with allusions to Plato's *Symposium*, Gregory appears to have answered the concerns of the sons and their fathers, implying that Origen did not practice pederasty. The *Symposium* is a discussion of the nature of the god Eros. In this dialogue Plato presents the guests at a dinner each putting forward a speech in praise of the god. Phaedrus argued that the god was particularly divine, praising the inspiration from the god that would cause a person to die for the sake of their beloved. Following this speech, Pausanias asserted that pederasty was superior to heterosexual love, arguing that this kind of love was directed towards the souls of boys rather than towards their bodies. Despite the presentation of this relationship in terms of this aesthetic ideal, an explicitly sexual relationship, including sodomy, between older men and adolescents appears to have been in view throughout his speech.[90] The same general tone was continued until Socrates argued that the true love was the love of the true and complete form of beauty, which leads a man to the study of philosophy, the love of wisdom.

In a clear allusion to the *Symposium*, Gregory compared his love for Origen with Jonathan's love for David. He argued that this was the love of the weaker for the stronger, by implication not the "divine love" described by Pausanias, in which the older man was obsessed with love for the younger man.[91] It was the loving relationship between two men,

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[89] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (48) - 6 (82).

[90] *cf.* Dover 1980, pp.3-5.

[91] Gregory, *Address*, 6 (83-92). Valantasis 1991, pp.26-31, saw the relationship as explicitly sexual, but did not attempt to deal with problem for this interpretation arising from the fact that Origen rejected sodomy (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 7:49). Rather than the relationship being sexual, it appears that Gregory attempted to show that it was appropriate for the disciple to be devoted to the master, and that this devotion was not based on sexual desire, but rather a yearning of the soul. Slusser 1998, p.104 n.33, indicated that he did not find Valantasis' argument convincing, commenting that "it is also difficult to be sure what behaviors and what metaphors for relationship would at that time have characterized a friendship which was sexual as distinct from one which was

where the younger man learnt and depended upon the older man, but where the older man did not take advantage of the younger man's affection, for he was superior to such physical desires, having transcended or brought under control his carnal urges, in accordance with a possible reading of Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*.

Gregory proceeded to describe Origen's training program, depicting it as superior to those offered by others, since it was balanced and most Socratic. Whereas other philosophers were committed to a particular school, Origen offered a tasting of all the schools, and allowed his students to discover the truth for themselves, under his expert guidance. He also said that Origen did not ignore the barbarian teachings, by which he meant the Christian Scriptures: in fact, he said that Origen gave precedence to the barbarian philosophy over the teachings of all the other philosophical sects. Furthermore, he said that he found that Origen not only talked about what he taught, but he was true to his teachings, living out in a practical way everything that he taught. A most impressive outcome was offered to aspiring students, if they undertook to be instructed by Origen.[92]

Finally, Gregory described the wonderful nature of life lived in such a community, and indicated that he was not moving on to the next stage in his life without some regrets. Yet he also demonstrated that studying under Origen was not a "cult" (to use a modern meaning) from which there was no escape, despite the all-embracing nature of its life and activities. He said that he now planned to move on and enter into the ordinary life to which any young man of education and culture might aspire, that of sharing in the honours of public life. Even so, he said that the benefits of all these years of training would follow him, even when he was far away from this "paradise of contentment".[93]

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not." Trigg 2001, p.34, considered that the claim that the relationship between Origen and Gregory was physical was "unwarranted".

[92] Gregory, *Address*, 7-15.

[93] Gregory, *Address*, 16.

2.3.4 Origen as Teacher

Even before he met Origen, Gregory was convinced that right living was absolutely indispensable.

> Even when I was a boy learning public speaking from a rhetor, I was unwilling to tolerate eulogizing and delivering an encomium about anyone which was not true.[94]

Before meeting with Origen he despaired of finding a teacher who even tried to match his actions with his words:

> At first I did not encounter very many of them, just a few vaunted as teachers, but all of them in the philosophizing stopped at words.[95]

As a result of this experience he decided not to pursue the study of philosophy, preferring instead to find his own path to moral virtue: it was only under Origen that he formally studied Greek philosophy.[96]

Gregory thought that, with the assistance of Origen as his master, he had had the opportunity to strive realistically after this ideal:

> He did not teach us how to act by standard definitions such as "prudence is knowledge about good and evil or about what to do and what not to do"; indeed [he taught us] that this kind of learning is vain and unprofitable, if the word be unsupported by works, and if prudence does not do what is to be done and avoids what is not to be done, but simply provides its possessors with knowledge of these things, like many people we see. Likewise with temperance, that it indeed is an understanding of what to choose and what not to choose, but not at all as the other philosophers teach it, especially the most recent ones.[97] They are forceful and vigorous in argument ... yet they are unable to transmit either prudence, in such a way that someone might

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[94] Gregory, *Address*, 10 (130), tr. Slusser.

[95] Gregory, *Address*, 11 (134), tr. Slusser.

[96] Gregory, *Address*, 11 (133). It is possible that Origen deliberately sought out a number of young men to become his disciples (*cf.* Blowers 2004, pp.191-193).

[97] The Stoics, *vide* Crouzel 1969, pp.62, 69.

> do the works of prudence, or temperance, so that someone might actually choose what he has learned to choose.[98]

According to Gregory, even Origen himself fell short of ultimate attainment of the perfection of the truly wise man:

> He tried to offer himself as an example of the person trying to live a good life whom he described in words, and presented a paradigm, I would like to say, of the sage. But since from the start of our discourse promised truth, not pretension, I do not yet call him a paradigm of the sage; even though I would like to say that this is true, I let it pass for now. So he was not an exact paradigm, but he very much wished to become like one, striving with all zeal and enthusiasm, even, if one may say so, with superhuman power.[99]

In this way Origen demonstrated the paradigm of the Christian wise man, who strove towards perfection with the aid of God himself, but did not claim to have achieved this goal. Nevertheless, Gregory thought of Origen as a special case of the wise man, being the only living person (of those he had met or heard about) who could truly interpret the Scriptures, and expound the "dark and enigmatic places, of which there are many in the sacred words", since the "founder" (ἀρχηγός) "honoured him by establishing him as his spokesman".[100]

Gregory honoured Origen's exegesis of the Scriptures, even thinking that in expounding the Scriptures Origen was acting as the mouthpiece of God. He believed that Origen's exposition of the many "dark and enigmatic places" in the Scriptures, through which he resolved perceived difficulties and inconsistencies, was the outworking of a special gift that Origen had received from God. Origen was freed, by using allegory, from slavishly following the literal words and meanings of individual passages, particularly where they appeared to be incongruous. Instead of following a literal interpretation, he brought to bear on each passage an overriding view of what the Scriptures as a whole were attempting to convey.

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[98] Gregory, *Address*, 9 (123-124), tr. Slusser.

[99] Gregory, *Address*, 11 (135-136), tr. Slusser.

[100] Gregory, *Address*, 15 (181-182).

Origen's method of interpretation meant that he was able to develop his exegesis by drawing from a common fund of knowledge, in large part taken from the Scriptures themselves, but also drawn from Greek philosophy, Christian traditions, practical experience, and current practices. Origen attempted to prepare his students also to acquire the skills and knowledge to carry out this type of exegesis by the study of all kinds of writings, both secular and sacred.[101] While in his own writings Gregory did not use the allegorical method of interpretation beloved of Origen, in his exposition of Christian doctrine in the *Address* he showed that he had accepted the spirit of Origen's approach, which was to draw together whatever was valuable from all the sources available to him, both sacred and secular. In developing his doctrine it appears that Gregory believed that, like Origen, he was drawing on inspiration that came directly from God.[102]

2.3.5 Gregory's Conversion

Gregory said that his meeting with Origen was the most important event in his life. Despite this, he said that the *Logos* was already active in his life, even before he met Origen, and had directed his path since he was fourteen years of age. In this speech, Gregory identified the *Logos* with the Saviour, by which he meant Jesus (although he did not use the name Jesus or the title Christ). This suggests that Gregory identified himself as a Christian before he met Origen, but it appears that he thought that Origen was able to work a remedy for some very significant defect in his Christianity.[103] Putting this emphatically, Gregory said that his life really began on the first day that he met Origen.

> He received us from the first day, being the first day to me, the most worthy of all, if it is necessary to say, of days, when the true sun began to rise on me for first time.[104]

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[101] Gregory, *Address*, 13 (151-153).

[102] Gregory, *Address*, 3 (34), 4 (40-46), 5 (48-72), 15 (179).

[103] Crouzel 1970, p.21.

[104] Gregory, *Address*, 6 (73).

This way of talking might be expected from someone who had just converted to Christianity, if he felt that this experience had a particularly dramatic effect on his life. Yet Gregory makes it very clear that the power of God had already been manifest in his life since his adolescence. While he credited Origen with bringing about a striking transformation in his life, he was not prepared to deny the reality of his former experience. While this presents us with a difficulty, it can perhaps be resolved through a close examination of the actual words that he used, for they appear to contain an allusion to the Scripture that points to his meaning.

Gregory's indicated that there was some dramatic change in his belief system after he met Origen. He said that "from the first day" the "true sun" rose upon him. This appears to be an allusion to *Malachi*, in the Old Testament, in which God is described as the "sun of righteousness", who rises with healing in his wings.[105] This is probably the only direct reference to God as the "Sun" found in the LXX or in the New Testament.[106] It appears to be significant that in this verse the role of the righteous God is combined with the role of the healer, since righteousness and healing were said to both come from the same God. In the light of this verse, one needs to consider what Gregory meant by his reference to the "true sun" rising on him for the first time. Does this mean that this was the first time that he identified the God of the Old Testament with the Saviour and *Logos* of the New Testament writers?

The reference to the "true Sun" brings to mind the Marcionite doctrine of the Good God whose nature is light, who is metaphorically called the sun.[107] The joining together of the quality of "righteousness" and the action of "bringing healing" seems to point to a rejection of Marcionism, since in this doctrine these are diametrically opposed. Marcion contrasted the

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[105] *Malachi* 4:2.

[106] The reference to God as the sun in *Psalm* 84:11 (LXX 83:11) does not appear in this form in the LXX.

[107] Drijvers 1987/88, p.159, citing Ephraem the Syrian's *Hymns against Heresies*, 35:1, 35:3, 44:9-10, and *Prose Refutations*, 1:56:15ff.

"just" God of the Old Testament with the "good" God made known by Jesus, and argued that they were opposed to each other, whereas Malachi united these characteristics in the one divine person. Since Origen taught that the God of the Old Testament is also the God of the Christian era, the reference to the "true sun" seems to point towards the acceptance of the idea of one God, who combines both righteousness and mercy. It also points towards the rejection of the doctrine of the two gods of Marcionism. Despite this, it should be noted that Gregory indicated that the *Logos* was active in his life during these earlier years, which suggests that he considered himself a Christian during this period. This does not mean that he could not have been a Marcionite at that time.[108]

Marcion probably accepted the authenticity of the Old Testament, while rejecting its authority. He certainly rejected its authority as a guide to life. He taught that there were two Gods: the Righteous (δίκαιος) God and Creator of the Old Testament[109] and the Good God of

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[108] If indeed Gregory was a Marcionite before becoming an orthodox Christian, it is possible that he considered himself to have been a "Marcionite Christian" during this period, rather than a non-Christian. It is not impossible that, if he previously lived as a Marcionite, that he considered himself to have been guided by the *Logos* even during this time, and maybe he even described it as a Christian life or lifestyle, albeit defective in doctrine. Bundy 1988, pp.25-28, noted that in the anti-Marcionite work, *Pseudo-Ephraem A*, while addressing issues concerning the fullness of Christian life, the spirituality of the Marcionites was not attacked; Bundy also noted (p.29) that even as late as the fourth century, Marcionites were considered to lead exemplary lives.

[109] Löhr 2002, p.144, argued that it was incorrect to perceive a concern in Marcion "to distinguish between the justice of the lower god and the goodness of the higher god," whereas he argued that Marcion thought of the lower god as "a severe and cruel judge, and a petty-minded and self-contradictory legislator." However, Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5:13, chose to characterise Marcion's lower god as "just" in preference to other less flattering titles that perhaps would have suited his adversarial purposes better. Paul also distinguished between righteousness through the law, and righteousness through grace, which points to the strong possibility that Marcion made a similar distinction between "righteousness" and "goodness"; *cf. Romans* 7:14, which Harnack thought was retained by Marcion, in which reference is made to the "righteous (δίκαιος) commandments of the law" (Harnack 1924, p.108).

Christianity; matter was a third eternal substance in his system. This was a neat alignment of Old Testament teaching and Plato, making God of the Old Testament the same person as Plato's Demiurge, and likewise outside of the realm of his Good God.[110] As stated in the Plato's *Timaeus* the Demiurge could only make the world as good as was possible. Although the World Soul came from the creator, its union with matter brought imperfection in its train.[111] This is because matter is irrational. Perhaps because the union with matter introduces imperfection it can be described as evil, as critics of Marcion's doctrine claimed that he believed.[112] The Good God, also known as the Stranger,[113] sent his Son to rescue the souls of

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[110] There has been a question in studies about Marcion to establish whether he was a biblical theologian or a gnostic. Harnack argued that Marcion was primarily a biblical theologian, who attempted to recover Paul's emphasis on the difference between law and the Gospel, whereas others, such as Quasten 1975, Vol.1, pp.268-272, argued that there was a Gnostic tendency in his doctrine. Gager 1972, pp.53-59 (supported by Balas 1980, p.98), argued that Marcion did have philosophic interests, showing that Marcion produced arguments from Epicurean philosophy to support his view that the Creator could not be considered to be benevolent. Drijvers 1987/88, pp.157f, considered that the influence of Greek philosophy on Marcion was probably more important than has generally been thought. May 1987/88, pp.143-148, thought that gnosticism was probably not clearly enough defined in the early second century to be a useful analytical category; he thought that it was better to try to understand his approach from the perspective of the early Christian tradition; he also thought that Marcion was more strongly influenced by Greek philosophy than Harnack allowed.

[111] Harnack 1924b, pp.68f and 103, acknowledged that it was conventional in Greek philosophy to consider unformed matter to be uncreated. However, he did not think that this idea was particularly important in forming Marcion's cosmology. Indeed, Harnack expressed his difficulty in discovering how Marcion used the idea of "evil matter".

[112] Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 1:15. Drijvers 1987/88, pp.158f, following Tertullian, and based on Ephraem's *Hymns Against Heretics*, thought that Marcion taught that matter was explicitly evil. In response, McGowan 2001, pp.295-304, thought that it was more likely that Marcion rejected the present order, including the sometime unjust rule of the Romans, as the real representation of the evil that he believed he was confronting. A third possibility is that Marcion perceived that the ideas presented in *Genesis* and Plato's *Timaeus* could be harmonised, so that the world created by God of the Old Testament, and Plato's Demiurge, was not "good", but

mankind from their bondage in this world.[114] In his doctrine, Jesus was not the messianic prophet promised in the Old Testament,[115] but instead he was the Son of the Stranger, sent to redeem mankind from the judgement of the Righteous God.

In the early Church, the Old Testament was treated with respect, probably because the sense of unity between the Old Testament account and the new dispensation under Jesus is established by stories such as the Transfiguration,[116] and also on the basis that a number of Old Testament prophecies were believed to point towards the coming of Christ. However, Christianity amongst non-Jews followed a pattern that was radically different from the model presented by the religion of Israel, with its cult of sacrifices, and the idea of God who, while concerned about other nations, was primarily concerned with the fate of the nation of Israel. In parts of the Old Testament God is presented as harsh and judgmental, but his depiction by the New Testament writers can perhaps be described as presenting God as kind and forgiving. It appears that Origen showed Gregory that it was possible to resolve this apparent conflict, and to understand the Old Testament in a way that demonstrated that God of Christianity was also God of the Old Testament.[117]

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rather imperfect, being only as good as it could be. The wickedness of the rulers of that age (one of sources of the present evil) was a necessary corollary of this imperfection.

[113] *cf. Acts* 17:22-31.

[114] Drijvers 1987/88, pp.153-172.

[115] *Deuteronomy* 18:14-22.

[116] *Luke* 9:28-36. Drijvers 1989, pp.73-85, argued that this story was pivotal for Marcion's interpretation of the meaning of the coming of the Son, considering that, in Marcion's doctrine the encounter on the mountain represented the defeat of the Creator God, whose representatives, Elijah and Moses, guarded the mountain, but who heard the Stranger God declaring that the disciples were to hear Jesus, and by implication, the disciples were no longer to hear them.

[117] Sheridan 2004, pp.159-162, commented, "Origen's evaluation of the text [of the Old Testament] on a literal level was not far from that of Marcion." However, on another level Origen's approach was radically different,

Gregory referred to Origen's ability to bring about this kind of transformation in the belief systems of individuals: he said that Origen was able to rescue those who had fallen into logical errors.[118] It is possible that just as Origen converted Ambrose[119] from Valentinian doctrine to Christianity, so he also converted Gregory from Marcionism. If Gregory was formerly a Marcionite, he was converted from this doctrine: Gregory's doctrine of the *Logos* as the agent of creation, and his use of the Old Testament for his illustrations indicates that he no longer held to a form of Christian doctrine that rejected the authority of the Old Testament. It is likely that Gregory was baptised (or re-baptised) by Origen, as a result of his conversion (from something else) to apostolic Christianity.[120]

2.3.6 Divine Hierarchy

Gregory spent at least five years studying with Origen,[121] yet despite spending such a long time with him, it has been said that he still did not fully understand Christian doctrine.[122]

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for it meant that the references by the New Testament writers to the Old Testament could be accommodated without tampering with their writings, as Marcion was forced to do.

[118] Gregory, *Address*, 14 (171).

[119] Ambrose became Origen's patron and funded both his studies and the publication of his research.

[120] Slusser 1998, p.120 n.81, thought that Gregory's statement in the *Address*, 14 (171), might have been an allusion to his baptism by Origen: he said that Origen was able to avoid the pitfalls, and also rescue others, just as one draws up those being baptized (ὥσπερ βαπτιζομένους ἀνιμώμενος).

[121] Eusebius, *EH*, 4:30, said that Gregory and Athenodorus spent five years with Origen.

[122] W. Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes* (Tübingen 1931), pp.229-235, cited in Crouzel 1969, pp.87f, argued that Gregory did not attain to the true grandeur of Origen's thought because he lacked the capacity to understand it. He argued that, as a result, Gregory's understanding of the Christian doctrine was more Stoic than Christian. Crouzel considered that this judgement was too harsh, and thought that Gregory's omissions were due in part to the fact that he was praising him as his professor, rather than as his spiritual guide. Nevertheless, Crouzel 1969, pp.90f, thought that Gregory ended his period of study with Origen without having completed in full the program of study. However, rather than accepting these negative assessments of Gregory's training with Origen, I argue that he was in fact fully trained, possibly even being of some use to his master.

This opinion arises because, in his *Address*, even though he discussed metaphysical questions in sufficient detail for us to be able to clearly see the outlines of his opinions, beliefs and doctrines, he did not mention Jesus by name, and made no mention of the Incarnation, or of his death and resurrection, essential elements of Christian doctrine in every age and core elements of belief for the majority of Christians.[123] Despite these omissions, Gregory certainly considered himself to be a Christian. He was committed to the God that Origen preached, therefore by extension to the Father and the Son Incarnate, as taught by Origen.[124] He acknowledged that Origen gave first place to the Holy Scriptures, and indicated that he himself regarded the Scriptures as of first importance.[125]

In the *Address*, Gregory revealed his idea of the divine hierarchy. He began with the God of the universe (ὁ θεὸς τῶν ὅλων), whom he described as the source of all the "first principles" of the good things (πᾶσαι αἱ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀρχαί). Gregory also called the God of the universe the Director and Cause (ἡγεμὼν καὶ αἴτιος), the king of all and guardian, and the continual fountain of all good things (ἡ διαρκὴς πηγὴ πάντων ἀγαθῶν). However, he expressed his inadequacy in bringing praises to this one, and indeed considered that no one would be able to do so, even if such a one came to the task stripped as clean and pure as a

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Trigg 2001, *passim*, argued that Gregory demonstrated a good understanding of Origen's teaching. He concluded (pp.51f) that Gregory's use of neutral terminology was a form of "economy" (οἰκονομία), intended to avoid putting before his audience concepts for which they were not ready, something that he learnt from Origen, and an example of the disciple putting the master's teaching into action "in his own subtle and distinctive way", but without slavishly following his teacher's method.

[123] *cf.* Crouzel 1989, p.27.

[124] It is unlikely that Gregory did not fully cover Origen's doctrine during his time in Caesarea. He himself said that "we pursued the ins and outs of all [doctrines divine and human] more than sufficiently and examined them closely, taking our fill of everything and enjoying the goods things of the soul" (Gregory, *Address*, 15 (182) tr. Slusser).

[125] Gregory, *Address*, 15 (173-183).

newborn baby.

Gregory said that the only being who is adequate to the task of praising the God of the universe is "the champion of our souls and saviour" (ὁ προστάτης τῶν ἡμετέρων ψυχῶν καὶ σωτήρ). He also described this second person in the divine hierarchy as the "first-begotten *Logos*,[126] the Demiurge and the pilot of all things", who is "truth, wisdom and power of the Father of the universe". This one is completely united to the Father. Indeed the Father made him one with himself, almost self-describing himself in this one, with a power equal to his own, and being the first and only to possess the *Logos* within himself.[127]

This was very close to Origen's doctrine of the relationship between the Father and the Son. When discussing the phrase "in the *arche* was the Word", from *John* 1:1, Origen examined the ways in which the Son could be called *arche*. He said that the Son is an *arche* in respect of his being Wisdom who, according to *Proverbs* 8:22, God created for his works (ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ)[128]. God entrusted to Wisdom the emergence of being and matter according to the (Platonic) forms within her. Therefore, Wisdom, who is also the Demiurge, is multiple, since she contains within herself every type upon which all things are modelled. This is a doctrine of the hierarchy of objective realities that have their ultimate source from the Father. The Father, on the other hand, remains one and simple (ἓν καὶ ἁπλοῦν).[129]

Origen taught that the Son had the titles Wisdom, *Logos*, Life and Truth from eternity. However, for our sake, and for the sake of all beings who stand in need of redemption, he

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[126] This terminology appears to have been deliberately chosen instead of "only-begotten Son" (ὁ υἱὸς ὁ μονογενής) of *John* 3:16.

[127] Gregory, *Address*, 3 (31-34), 4 (35-39).

[128] *Proverbs* 8:22, cited in Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1:111.

[129] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1:109-115.

acquired the titles Saviour, the first-born of the dead, light of men, and so on.[130] Therefore, Origen differentiated between the titles of the *Logos*: some are eternal; some are for our sake. Gregory also hinted at the same idea, referring to the *Logos* who is truth, wisdom and power of the Father; as for these, the Father has made him one with himself. On the other hand, in relation to us he is our soul's champion and Saviour, first-begotten *Logos*, the Demiurge and the pilot of all things.[131]

In the *Address*, the Holy Spirit was also mentioned in one passage. Here Gregory spoke of the "divine Spirit" (τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα) and the "prophetic Spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ προφητεῦσαν), rather than the more scriptural "Holy Spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον), although his meaning is clear. In his doctrine the Leader (ἀρχηγός), by whom he meant the *Logos*, was the one who inspired the prophets, and who prompts divine and mystical discourses, but it is the Spirit who provides the power to understand the words of the prophets. Even here, the role of the Spirit is limited, since it is the *Logos*, and not the Spirit, who enabled Origen to understand the enigmas of the Scriptures.[132]

It is significant that, in the *Address*, Gregory did not even allude to Origen's doctrine of the human and divine in Christ. While it is possible that he was avoiding mentioning this doctrine for the sake of his audience, who might have been scandalised by the idea that God became man, he was capable of including an allusion to a doctrine without explicitly stating it. For example, he was able to make an allusion to the story of the Good Samaritan, by the simple expedient of contemplating the problems that he might encounter when travelling home to Neocaesarea.[133] The omission of the doctrine of the Incarnation seems deliberate, yet

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[130] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1:118-123.

[131] Gregory, *Address*, 4.

[132] Gregory, *Address*, 15 (175-181). In contrast, Origen appears to have attributed both roles to the Holy Spirit, namely inspiring the Scriptures, and guiding their interpretation (Berthold 1992, pp.444-448).

[133] Gregory, *Address*, 16 (199).

there seems no doubt that he believed that the *Logos* lived amongst men. It is possible that the idea of a human nature in Christ was theologically unimportant in Gregory's doctrine. In Gregory's doctrine, the *Logos* is not remote and inaccessible to us; instead he "heals our weakness" and he "alone is able to make up our shortcomings". According to the outworking of his very nature, the *Logos* heals the souls of those who seek his aid.[134]

Origen taught that Christ had both a complete human nature and a complete divine nature. In regard to his human nature, it is generally thought that Origen taught that the soul of Christ adhered to the *Logos* "from the beginning of creation" (*ab initio creaturae*).[135] The suggestion that this meant that Origen taught the pre-existence of souls has been challenged by Edwards, who argued that he could have meant "from the beginning of *his* creation," (rather than "*the* creation") in the sense that while Christ's soul existed before his Incarnation, this was more immediate, rather than from the beginning of creation itself.[136] This argument is somewhat conformable to Origen's statement in book 2 of his *Commentary on John*, where he argued that souls come from God on the basis of the saying that John the Baptist "was sent", claimed that John must have been sent from somewhere. But it is difficult to sustain in terms of Origen's questioning of how to justify God's preference for Jacob over Esau, if we cannot go back to the works done before this life in order to explain it.[137]

In book 20 of this *Commentary*, Origen provided another theory for the differentiation between persons. This was on the basis of their participation in the "seed of the just". All participate in the seed of Noah, and therefore in this sense, all participate in his "just seed", and no one is entirely devoid of "just seeds". Although not all participate directly in "Abraham's seed", we can all become another Abraham by cultivating the "better seeds" that

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[134] Gregory, *Address*, 4 (35-39), tr. Slusser.

[135] Origen, *On First Principles*, 2:6:4; Trigg 1983, pp.95-103; Grillmeier 1965, p.176.

[136] Edwards 2002, pp.93-97.

[137] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 2:175-192.

were sown in ourselves. Since a farmer knows that ordinary seeds have different qualities, and he prefers the better seeds to reproduce his crops, so also each person has his or her distinctive characteristics. Significantly, Origen said that perhaps the presence of better seeds in John the Baptist was the reason that Jesus said that John was the greatest of all men, being born of the "most just" of seeds.[138]

In this way, Origen provided an alternative theory to account for the distinctive nature of persons. This was due to the inheritance of the "just seeds" and "unjust seeds" of their ancestors. In the process of inheritance there was some element of individualisation, just as there was a difference between individual seeds from a cereal crop. Furthermore, he argued that one could cultivate or destroy the good seeds within oneself, thus impacting the outworking of one's own life, and presumably on the seeds passed down to future generations.

While Gregory did not mention the Saviour's death on the cross, he referred to the second person of the Godhead as the "saving *Logos*"; he also mentioned his title as Saviour three times. The stories of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, which he included as metaphors of his own life's journey, were possibly also included as a way of indicating what God was like, with the Saviour fulfilling the role of the loving Father and the Good Samaritan in these stories.[139] Gregory certainly believed that the *Logos* saves us, but he did not indicate how he fulfilled that role.[140]

Gregory's silence on the subject of the human and divine in Christ suggests that he was not convinced about Origen's doctrine on this subject. His reservations on the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls are hinted at in the *Address*. Gregory said that Origen taught his

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[138] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 20:2-45.

[139] Heine 1993b, pp.263f, identified an allusion in Gregory, *Address*, 17 (200), to Origen, *Commentary on John*, 20:310-321, where Origen depicted the Good Samaritan as being none other than the Saviour.

[140] Gregory, *Address*, 6 (82), 4 (35), 4 (42), 17 (200), 16 (190, 199).

students all the essentials of scientific knowledge, saying that he impressed these teachings upon their souls. He said that he did not know how Origen had done this, but it was either by teaching, or by recalling these things to the memory of their souls. This latter alternative was a reference to Plato's doctrine that learning is just a matter of bringing to memory the things that the soul already knows.[141] The fact that Gregory said that he did not know how the process worked seems to suggest that he had reservations about Origen's earlier use of Plato's doctrine.

Gregory was much more enthusiastic about Origen's doctrine of inheritance of the seeds of the ancestors, saying:

> And we have seeds, those which you showed us that we already had, and those we received from you, the good thoughts. With these we depart, weeping as we go, but still carrying these seeds with us.[142]

This was taken from Origen's teaching on this subject:[143]

> You will consider whether the statement, "When they went, they went and wept, bearing their seeds," can have reference to such seeds that are actually specified as belonging to those who receive them into themselves. For, if anyone is able, let him contemplate the tearful journey of certain souls as they come to birth bearing the seeds of just men greater and fewer in number, and likewise of unjust men.[144]

So it can be seen that, while Gregory was not willing to endorse fully the doctrine of the pre-existence and fall of souls, he was comfortable with the idea that souls inherited the attributes of the ancestors of each person.

Aristotle taught that the active or controlling part of the person is transmitted through the

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[141] Gregory, *Address*, 8 (113), 15 (174); *cf.* Plato's theory in *Meno* that learning is recollection of what we already know (Scott 1995, pp.24-52).

[142] Gregory, *Address*, 17 (201), tr. Slusser.

[143] Heine 1999b, pp.261-263.

[144] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 20:18, tr. Heine. There appears to be an allusion to *Psalms* 126:6 (LXX 125:6) here.

male seed, whereas the woman provides the matter.[145] One can speculate that this, together with the idea that "seeds" are inherited from one's ancestors, might have been an important part of Gregory's idea of the Incarnation. It is possible that he believed that the Saviour was a man, being born of a woman, but his individual characteristics, embodied in his soul, were directly imparted by the Holy Spirit, being the individual characteristics of the *Logos*, and not those inherited from any human. Whether or not this is correct, it appears that Gregory did not consider that it was important to identify a human nature in the Saviour in order to explain his work as saviour.

2.3.7 Letter from Origen

This letter appears to have been written in response to Gregory's *Address*.[146] Origen thought that many opportunities were open to Gregory, although he acknowledged that there was a significant risk that a young man in his position would fall away from his Christian confession, or more likely, deviate into heresy. Origen gave the example of Hadad[147] the Edomite as an object lesson:[148] Hadad did not descend into idolatry while he was living in Israel, but when in Egypt he was corrupted by the practices of the Egyptians. By implication, he warned Gregory to be careful not to be corrupted in a similar way, since was he leaving, or had left, his safe haven. The greatest danger in Origen's eyes was the risk of descending into heresy, and in particular the danger that Gregory would mix orthodox and heretical ideas. He thought that corruption from those who were on the boundaries of Christianity, who stood between Christianity and the "nations", was the greatest danger. Leaving aside the cosmic phantasies of the Valentinian and other Gnostics, in Gregory's case Origen might have had

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[145] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 1:21.

[146] *vide* Section 2.3.1 Authorship of Address & Origen's Letter.

[147] Possibly confounded with Jeroboam (Crouzel 1970, p.23).

[148] *1 Kings* 11:14-22. The claim that Hadad resorted to idols must have been Origen's interpretation; it is not found in the text.

the Marcionites particularly in mind. Origen said that heretics were metaphorically like the Danites, who dwelt on the furthest border of Israel, remained physically part of Israel but being corrupted by the nations. This statement could apply to the Marcionites, who probably were close to apostolic Christianity on a number of issues, particularly in relation to the nature of the Christian life. Therefore, it is relevant that Origen particularly warned against those who "replaced the Holy Scriptures with their own fabrications:"[149] something that both the Valentinians and the Marcionites were accused of doing.

Origen told Gregory to knock on the closed doors of the Scriptures so that they would be opened to him; this can be seen as a response to Gregory's claim that Origen had a pre-eminent ability to understand the Scriptures: he believed that Origen's skill in this regard was well beyond his own limited skills. This provides a context for Origen's exhortation to Gregory to devote himself to the Scriptures, praying all the time that God would reveal to him the truth.[150]

These were strong words, and show something of the forcefulness of Origen's character. He concluded with an apology and final appeal:

> Whether what I have dared seems good or not, God knows and his Christ and the One who shares the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ. Would that you may share it, and always increase your participation, so that you say not only, 'We have become sharers of Christ', but also, 'We have become sharers of God'.[151]

In this closing section, Origen directly challenged Gregory's doctrinal statement that only the second person of the Godhead could adequately praise the Father of the universe. Origen went far beyond Gregory here, saying that it was even possible for a human person to participate in

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[149] Origen, *To Gregory*, 3. In one sense Hadad was returning to Egypt (looking back to the Israelite captivity in Egypt); similarly, Gregory was returning to his homeland, where Marcionism was probably relatively strong, and through which Gregory possibly first learnt about Jesus.

[150] Origen, *To Gregory*, 3-4, referring to *Revelation* 3:7.

[151] Origen, *To Gregory*, 4, tr. Slusser.

the God of the universe, not just praise him. It is also interesting that Origen defined for Gregory the place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, saying that he is "the One who shares the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ".

2.4 To Gaian (Tatian) on the Soul

2.4.1 The claims of Justin Martyr

This work has come down to us in Syriac, Greek and Arabic versions.[152] As is often the case, the manuscripts of the Syriac version are older than the Greek, the earliest being dated 7th century, much earlier than the Greek manuscripts. This text, which is sometimes called *On the Soul*, is attributed to Gregory in both the Greek and Syriac manuscripts. A fragment of the manuscript of this text, missing the introductory preface, is also included in the works of Maximus the Confessor, a 7th century Christian author.[153] However, the work is unlikely to have been written by Maximus, since the author of this document uses the optative mood, and the optative had been virtually abandoned by this time. As Whealey observed, it is unlikely that a 7th century Syriac translator would have been unaware of the true author if the original Greek version was produced by someone writing in his own time.[154]

Based on the stylometric analysis presented above, Justin Martyr should be considered as a possible author of this work, since it clustered with Justin's *1st Apology*. Whealey, suggesting that this work was written by Justin and the addressee was his disciple Tatian, presented the arguments in favour of his authorship, against Lebreton, who had attributed the work to Nemesius of Emesa, on the basis of the similarity between it and part of Nemesius' *On the Nature of Man*. Whealey pointed out that Lebreton had not considered the possibility that Nemesius was borrowing from this work, instead of the other way around. Furthermore, he was able to show that Nemesius is likely to have borrowed from *On the Soul*.[155]

Whealey pointed out the similar use of certain phrases and expressions in *On the Soul* and

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[152] CPG #1773. Also cited as CPG #7717: Brock 1981, pp.176-178, noted that there are Syriac and Arabic versions, and provided corrected references.

[153] Einarson 1933, pp.129-130.

[154] Whealey 1996, p.137.

[155] Whealey 1996, pp.137-140.

Justin's works. Interestingly, of the words from *On the Soul* that do not appear in Justin's works, Whealey cited a number of technical words that appear in Tatian's *To the Greeks*. He thought that these were probably used in philosophical discussion between them. Therefore, on both stylometric grounds and on terminology, Justin's claim is reasonably strong.

However, despite these arguments, and the similarity of stylometric indicators, this work is unlikely to have been from Justin because the arguments in this work do not appear to reflect Justin's thinking on this subject. In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin was particularly concerned to argue that the soul is not unbegotten: he wanted to contradict the argument that the soul is not created, but eternal, since there is only one unbegotten and that is God.[156] Yet, the writer of this work shows no sign of being aware of Justin's concern to demonstrate that the potentiality of "eternal life" for the soul (a fundamental Christian idea) did not mean that the soul was unbegotten. Instead the writer argued merely that the soul preceded the body.[157] This does not mean that the writer of *On the Soul* believed that the soul is unbegotten, but rather that it preceded the body in some undefined way.[158] The major focus of the work is that the soul is immortal (ἀθάνατος), and while the meaning of this term is not specially defined, it can be understood as meaning "without death", rather than "unbegotten". Nevertheless, the fact that this distinction is not clearly drawn suggests that Justin was not the author.

Whealey was aware of this difference between the underlying thinking in the *Dialogue with Trypho* and *On the Soul*, but he did not consider that it was fatal to the idea of a common authorship. He proposed instead that Justin wrote *On the Soul* before he wrote the *Dialogue with Trypho*. However, based on the *Dialogue with Trypho* itself, this argument is not cogent, since Justin is unlikely to have written *On the Soul* before the events depicted in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, as he did not respect the Scriptures before this time (yet the superiority of the

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[156] Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 5.

[157] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 3.

[158] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 5-6.

Scriptures was noted in *On the Soul*), neither could he have written it after those events: there was no point at which he could have written this treatise using the arguments that were presented in *On the Soul*, unless it is also argued that the story of his conversion as depicted in the *Dialogue with Trypho* was invented.[159]

Furthermore, Eusebius records that Justin wrote scholia on the soul, outlining the opinions of the Greek philosophers, which he proposed to refute.[160] This was not the approach taken in this treatise, since the writer appears to have followed the Aristotelian view that the soul is the essence of the living being, and the author did not attempt to refute the idea that the soul is by nature immortal.

At the very least, Whealey's evidence suggests that the writer of *On the Soul* was influenced by Justin.[161] Although the stylometric analysis cited above gives Justin a good claim to be considered as the author, it is unlikely that he was the author of *On the Soul* if he was also the author of *Dialogue with Trypho* and scholia cited by Eusebius. If Justin was not the author, then the writer might have been aware of Justin's work, and used it to write his own treatise.

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[159] Justin said that he was converted through evidence of the prophecies about Christ, found in the Old Testament, and it was then that he acquired the idea that the soul is not unbegotten. Therefore he first learnt to respect the Scriptures at the same time he came to believe that the soul is not unbegotten. However, in *On the Soul*, the writer indicates that he had respect for the Scriptures. Therefore, if Justin was truthfully recounting these aspects of the story of his conversion in *Dialogue with Trypho*, 3-8, *On the Soul* is unlikely to have been written either before or after his conversion.

[160] Eusebius, *EH*, 4:18.

[161] Whealey also put forward a list of 20 words or sets of two words that were found in this work and also in Justin's works, mainly in the *Dialogue with Trypho*. Of the 5 of these words or word-pairs that appear more than once in *On the Soul*, 4 are also found in *Metaphrase* or *Address*. Most of the words and word-pairs (15 out of 20) only appear once. Of these, 6 also appear in *Metaphrase* or *Address in Praise of Origen*.

2.4.2 Gregory to Gaian

In the Greek manuscripts the addressee is Tatianos, but in this early Syriac manuscript the addressee is Gaianos. While Ryssel thought Gaianos stemmed from a corruption of the Greek Tatianos, Dräseke argued that the error could have been the other way around. He suggested that the error could have been in a misreading of the vocative ΓAIANE as TATIANE, or perhaps the Greek copyist correcting what he thought was a previous scribal error.[162] Since the earlier reading supports *To Gaian*, this name will be used for this text henceforth.

Dräseke identified the sophist Gaian as a possible recipient of the letter. Gaian taught in the Roman province of Arabia under Emperor Maximinus (235-238) and Emperor Gordian (238-244), which was the period in which Gregory was studying with Origen at Caesarea, and studying law at Berytus. It is worth noting that the writer called him "wonderful (θαυμάσιος) Gaian", using the same term Gregory used in the *Address of Thanksgiving*, where it was used to describe those studying the beautiful philosophy (καλὴ φιλοσοφία), which is to say, Christianity. On this basis, we can at least assume that the addressee was a man of learning.[163] The recipient of this letter was not a philosopher, since he needed an explanation for one of the basic problems of philosophy of those days. The historical Gaian of these times fits such a description very well, since he was a rhetor, and not a philosopher.

There was a dispute in Arabia around this time, arising from the opinions of Beryllus, the bishop of the capital Bostra. Origen travelled to Arabia and corrected what was considered to be the error of Beryllus; as a result, unity was restored amongst the Christian leaders in the province. It is not beyond possibility that Origen met Gaian at that time, and that Gaian later wrote to Origen, requesting a *logos* about the nature of the soul. Perhaps Origen requested Gregory to prepare a response, which Gregory did with Origen's assistance. Even the

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[162] Dräseke 1901, pp.92f. This manuscript is also found in the works of Maximus the Confessor (Einarson 1933, pp.129f).

[163] Dräseke 1901, p.93, citing a reference to Gaianos in Suidas' *Lexicon*.

introductory wording of the letter is agreeable with this reconstruction, since the writer indicates that he was responding to a request to "us".

> You, O wonderful Gaian, urged us (ἡμῖν) to send to you a speech about the soul, dividing it into effective demonstrations.[164]

It is not beyond possibility that Gregory travelled to Arabia with Origen, and met Gaian there himself.

Perhaps the Gaian of the manuscript can be positively identified with Gaian the sophist from Arabia, given the happy coincidences identified already, yet even this remains somewhat speculative (since there were no doubt many people named Gaian in the centuries in which the text might have been written). The text indicates that a request from a certain Gaian was sent to a group of people, and someone prepared the reply: Origen's "school" seems to a possible source of this reply, and Gregory a possible author.[165]

The question of the immortality of the soul became a lively issue in Arabia, considering whether the soul actually survives death, or whether it will be revivified in the resurrection. Origen was again called to participate in a meeting of the leaders of the churches in Arabia. This time he subdued those who did not share his view that the soul is both incorporeal and immortal. However, Origen's two interventions did not permanently resolve either of the questions in dispute, since they arose again, leading to a third debate in Arabia. We know this through the document *Dialogue with Heraclides.*

In the *Dialogue with Heraclides*, after the main part of the discussion concluded satisfactorily, someone asked whether the soul is the blood.[166] Origen rejected this view, and

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[164] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 1, taking the name of the addressee from the Syriac, as suggested by Dräseke.

[165] This reconstruction is suggested in the text, since the writer appears to have carefully distinguished between first person singular and plural: the writer said that the request came to "us", Gaian holding a high opinion of "us"; yet when explaining his argument he used the first person singular, saying, "I shall lay out ...". This reflects the various uses of first person singular and plural found in the *Address.*

[166] *cf. Leviticus* 17:11.

explained the issue at length, but apparently failed to convince his audience. After speaking for some time one of the participants took the opportunity to restate Origen's opinion, in which it was said that Origen was teaching that the soul is immortal. Origen appears to have thought that this was a challenge to his doctrines and teachings, and that it was being suggested that he was putting forward Greek ideas, and not ones based on Scripture. He responded by trying to show what he considered to be the true meaning, not by appealing to the Greeks, but from the Scriptures.

The text *To Gaian* was exactly the opposite. It was an explicit attempt to prove, without recourse to the Scriptures, that the soul is immortal, using arguments taken from natural science and logic. The fact that this approach was recognized as one option in this debate, but considered to be invalid in the circumstances of this third dispute and debate in Arabia, raises the possibility that those present at this meeting were aware of this or a similar text. If the arguments of *To Gaian* were in their minds, the text must have been written before this meeting, and if Gregory wrote it, it was possibly written around the time of Origen's first debate, being the dispute with Beryllus.[167]

While the stylometric analysis presented earlier indicates that there are stylistic differences between this work and the works *Address* and *Metaphrase*, these differences are not so great as to definitely exclude this as one of Gregory's works. The work demonstrates similarities with other works that might have been written by Gregory in his more mature years, such those found in *To Diognetus* (to be considered later). The stylistic differences between these works and the *Address* and *Metaphrase* might have arisen through an increased maturity in the style of his writing, due to these works being written at a later point in his life. This does suggest that, if Gregory wrote *To Gaian*, he might have written it after he left Origen's circle, although the circumstantial evidence cited above makes the earlier date more

[167] Dräseke 1901, *passim*, and especially p.98, argued that Gregory was the likely author. He thought that Gaian wrote to Gregory in Pontus, seeking his help.

likely.

Of all the authors considered, Gregory appears as the most likely to have written this work; the claims made for his authorship seem relatively strong, on the grounds of content, context and style. Therefore, it can be attributed to him with a moderate degree of confidence. In this case, this work presents him in the role of a Christian philosopher who was willing to engage the non-Christian world on its terms. This was a role he appears to have continued to play throughout his life.

2.4.3 Purpose & Argument

Gaian had said, when requesting this discourse, that he did not intend that this treatise should substitute for the teachings of the divine writings and traditions, upon which he been taught to depend, but should refute the opinion of the "heterodox":

> You said that this was not in the way of seeking full conviction for yourself, having been instructed already to rely upon the divine writings and traditions, and not to agitate the mind by turnings of human words, but towards overturning the judgement of the heterodox (ἑτεροδόξων), who refuse to be persuaded by the writings, and with a certain cleverness attempt to convert those unaccustomed to words of such a kind.[168]

While the word "heterodox" had already begun to acquire a special Christian meaning for those excluded from the apostolic Church because of their doctrines,[169] it also had the simple meaning of "holding opinions other than the right", which could have included all non-Christians.

Origen believed that the Church believed in the immortality of the soul, in regard to a final judgement and eternal life for those being saved. He entertained the idea that the soul had an active life before it entered man, but he knew that this was not widely accepted. When indirectly challenged about the doctrine of the soul, in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*, he

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[168] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 1.

[169] *cf.* Norris 2004, pp.121-123, for Origen's attitude to "heresy".

avoided the issue. He defined three kinds of death: the death to sin, the death from sin, and the ordinary death of the human. He argued that the soul does not die as a result of the latter kind of death, since that would mean that there was no judgement. On the question of the death of the soul, (being death from sin, which happens after judgement), Origen was somewhat ambivalent, arguing that the mortal element in the soul can attain immortality though being one with God and his Son, Jesus Christ. On the pre-existent immortality of the soul, Origen only alluded to Ezekiel's prophecy, in which the Lord said that he knew Ezekiel before he formed him in the womb.[170] Origen demonstrated a certain reserve here, which was probably appropriate in the circumstances. Despite its limitation, his reply appears to be adequate for the purposes, and also probably represented the kind of teachings from the Scriptures to which Gaian referred.

The teachings of Tatian the Syrian are the most likely source of this challenge to the idea of the immortality of the soul, following the ideas of his master Justin. Tatian denied the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as taught by the Greeks, saying that it was natural for the soul to die.

> The soul, men of Greece, is not in itself immortal but mortal; yet it also has the power to escape death. For if it is ignorant of the truth it dies and is dissolved with the body, but rises later at the end of the world along with the body, to suffer death by immortal punishment; on the other hand it does not die, even if it is dissolved for a time, if it has obtained knowledge of God.[171]

The idea that the soul dies and rises again was the subject of the first dispute in Arabia, mentioned above. Although this idea was not directly addressed in this treatise, this proposition would have been refuted if the arguments presented in this work were accepted.

The basic proposition of the treatise is the assumption that the soul encapsulates the person: it is what gives life to the person, where the moral choices of the person are made,

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[170] Origen, *Dialogue with Heraclides*, 167-174, citing *Romans* 6:2 & 6:10, *Ezekiel* 18:4, *Genesis* 5:5, *1 Timothy* 6:16, *Hebrews* 2:9, and *Jeremiah* 1:5.

[171] Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 13, tr. Whittaker.

where reason develops, the mind being the "reasonable" (τὸ λογικόν) part of the soul. In giving life the soul must exist before the life it creates:

> Otherwise what does not exist could also be said to be the cause of what does; or again, one would have to be mad enough to say that that which has its origin in something and cannot exist without it causes the being of that in which it exists.[172]

It is further argued that the soul is self-moved, being simple, indissoluble, incorruptible and therefore immortal.[173]

It is not immediately apparent how convincing this line of argument would have been in its own day. It certainly sounds intellectual and learned. It served the purpose of demonstrating that Christians could respond to the type of arguments that were presented by their opponents, and argue on the terms that their opponents respected. Having done this, as the *Dialogue with Heraclides* shows, in the end the matter had to be resolved for Christians by arguments that were taken from the Scriptures.

Whealey thought that this work was a "modest endeavour", however, a comparison of this work with similar discussions in Justin (in *Dialogue with Trypho*) and in Athanasius (in *Against the Nations*) shows that it is of a similar length, and the arguments are presented in a similar way and carry similar weight.

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[172] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 3, tr. Slusser.

[173] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 6:2.

2.5 To Philagrius (Evagrius) on the Divinity

2.5.1 Authorship

Most of the Greek manuscripts of *To Philagrius* are found in the sets of manuscripts for Gregory of Nazianzus, entitled *To Evagrius*. Some Greek manuscripts for this work are found in sets of manuscripts for Gregory of Nyssa, entitled the same way. There are also two Syriac manuscripts of this work, both entitled *To Philagrius, On Consubstantiality*, attributed to Gregory Thaumaturgus. In the Greek manuscripts the title reads as ΠΡΟΣ ΕΥΑΓΡΙΟΝ, which is not very far in letter strokes from ΠΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΑΓΡΙΟΝ. The difference in the names used in the Greek and Syriac manuscripts is possibly due to a scribal error, or a mistaken correction of the name, made in a Greek manuscript. Either version of the name could be correct, but Slusser, a recent translator of the text, preferred *To Philagrius* on the grounds that Evagrius, the name of Gregory of Nazianzus' famous deacon, was more likely to have been introduced. Accepting this argument, the title *To Philagrius* will be used here.[174]

The ideas presented in this letter are similar to those found in the fragments of the *Dialogue with Aelian*, found in Basil's *Letter* 210.[175] In this letter, Basil attempted to refute the arguments put forward by Atarbius, supported by extracts from the *Dialogue with Aelian*, that the Godhead should be understand as united in one *hypostasis*, not manifested in three *hypostaseis*, as argued by Basil. While the argument between them can be partly explained by the absence of a precise definition of the terms being used, there was a theological difference

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[174] Slusser 1989, pp.233f; Dräseke 1901, p.92; Slusser 1998, p.32. The name Philagrius, while not as famous as Evagrius, was mentioned by Gregory of Nazianzus, who praised a certain Philagrius for his philosophic attitude (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letters*, 34).

[175] This letter referred to a letter sent by Atarbius, probably to those who disapproved of Basil and his policy of reconciliation. While some manuscripts have *Dialogue with Ailianos*, (cited in English as Aelian), the majority of the manuscripts have *Dialogue with Gelianos* (Abramowski 1976, p.159; Courtonne 1973, p.158). However, this latter name is not well attested, so the traditional name of Aelian is used here.

between them. It appears that Atarbius thought of *hypostasis* and *ousia* as synonyms, both meaning the underlying nature or essence, but in Basil's circle the idea was emerging that *ousia* should be used to represent the genus and *hypostasis* to represent the particular.[176] Atarbius can be represented as defining the nature of the Godhead primarily in terms of its inherent unity, whereas Basil tried to assert both the unity of the Godhead whilst maintaining the doctrine of the individual characteristics of the persons. The remnant of the Marcellians, like Atarbius, also emphasised the unity of the Godhead.

The main emphasis of *To Philagrius* is the defence of the doctrine of the unity of God, arguing that the naming of the persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, did not undermine that doctrine. Because this issue was the subject of arguments that stretched over the third and fourth centuries it is difficult to use the theological content to establish an appropriate date for the composition of this work. This is exemplified in the analysis made by van Esbroeck, who canvassed the arguments that have been used for attributing this text to various third and fourth century figures. He said that Dräseke attributed it to Gregory of Nazianzus, but it is now agreed that this is not likely. Simonetti attributed it to Gregory on the grounds that the elaboration of the Trinity in this text was more primitive than that used in the fourth century. Refoulé rejected this, and argued that the doctrine presented was similar to that put forward by Marcellus of Ancyra in the fourth century. He thought that it was put forward by those seeking acceptance in the wider Nicene community through an association with Gregory of Nyssa.[177] Weijenborg proposed instead that the author was Basil's opponent Atarbius. Hübner revived the arguments of Refoulé that it was from a Marcellian source. While not stating a

[176] Basil, Letters, 38, attributed to Gregory of Nyssa (*vide* Section 5 Three Testimonies to Gregory's Doctrine, n.22).

[177] Refoulé 1961, pp.520-548.

definite position, van Esbroeck was inclined to agree with Hübner.[178]

Refoulé, Weijenborg, Hübner and van Esbroeck were therefore inclined to date the document to the second half of the fourth century, and to attribute it to either a Marcellian source or Atarbius. These arguments find their strongest support in the fact that the ideas put forward in this work are similar to those put supported by Atarbius and the remnant who remain loyal to Marcellus' memory. However, it is equally possible that the similarity between the arguments in this treatise and the ideas of the Atarbius and the Marcellians could have arisen because their thinking was in turn influenced by the arguments put forward in this treatise and in similar works. This is even more likely if the author of this work was Gregory, who must have been just as important a figure for Atarbius as he was for Basil, since they both had a Neocaesarean heritage. Therefore, it is unlikely that arguments based solely on the theological ideas in this work will resolve this matter. However, the claims for Gregory's authorship can also be addressed on the grounds of provenance, context, terminology and style, and it is argued that these point towards Gregory as a likely author.

This text is grouped with *Glossary on Ezekiel* and *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes* in the majority of the catalogues of Gregory of Nazianzus in which it is found.[179] Since these two works are of the type likely to have been produced by students of Origen in Palestinian Caesarea, it could be suggested that *To Philagrius* also was written while its author was a student of Origen, and initially preserved together with these other works in Palestinian

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[178] van Esbroeck 1990, pp.6-8, citing Johannes Dräseke (in *Jahrbücher für Protestantische Theologie*, 8 (1882), pp.343-384, 553-368), Manlio Simonetti, "Gregorio Nazianzeno o Gregorio Taumaturgo?" (in *Rendiconti*, 86 (1953), pp.101-117), "Ancora sulla lettera ad Evagrio" in (*Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale*, 4 (1962), pp.317-374), François Refoulé, "La date de la lettre à Évagre", in (RSR 49 (1961), pp.520-548), Reinoldus Weijenborg, in (*Antonianum* 34 (1959), p.291), Reinhard M. Hübner, "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ancyra", in (*Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22-26 Septembre 1969)*, (Leiden 1971), pp.199-229). See also Slusser 1998, pp.29-32.

[179] Slusser 1998, pp.31f.

Caesarea. However, it seems unlikely that Gregory would have written *To Philagrius* while he was a student of Origen, since the clear doctrine of the Holy Spirit shown here is not expressed in the *Address*. Indeed, this work explains the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a way that Origen is not thought to have done. In this treatise, the Holy Spirit is treated as both divine and equal in status in every way to the Son. If it is one of Gregory's genuine works, then this treatise represents a development of his doctrine after he departed from Origen.

It was written by someone who had been formally trained in philosophy, and this certainly was the case with Gregory. The writer was confident that Christian doctrines could be explained in a sophisticated and intellectually consistent manner, saying:

> The word of truth will exactly demonstrate the proofs about these things, since the demonstration does not unaccountably put forward with perplexity an appearance of faith that cannot be demonstrated, nor does it boldly attempt to cover its unsoundness with ancient myths, but will put forward exact and correct reasonings until the matter is clear.[180]

There is a clear parallel here with the ideas expressed *To Gaian*, considered earlier. In both texts the soul was described as an indivisible substance that can take on multiplicity without being itself divided.[181]

The text demonstrates the preference of the writer for the title Saviour, over the title Son. The writer indicated that his correspondent referred to the persons of the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but in the middle of this work the writer changed to using Saviour instead of Son. In this section he referred to the Trinity as "Holy Spirit, Saviour and Father", and then the second person of the Trinity is described as "the Saviour, our Saviour", and the Father is described as "the Father of the Saviour". The writer only used Son again in writing his conclusion. The same attachment to the title "Saviour" can be seen in the *Address*, in which, while he most frequently used the name *Logos*, he also used the title Saviour three

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[180] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 2

[181] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 3, 5; Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 6-7.

times; he did not use the title Son at all.

The use of the expression "the Mightier One" (τὸ κρεῖττον) in this work is striking. It is used as a synonym for God. The form κρείττονες is also used, saying, "the nature of the Mightier Ones is indivisible".[182] The use of this terminology seems to have been deliberate, particularly the choice of a comparative rather than a superlative: one might have expected *hypsistos* here, "the Highest", rather than "the Mightier One".[183] The expression "the Mightier One" is found occasionally in the writings of Christian authors, including Methodius, and in a letter attributed to Emperor Constantine, addressed to "all who entertain correct and moderate beliefs about the Mightier One".[184]

As the *Metaphrase* clearly demonstrates, Gregory was comfortable with recasting the meaning of Scripture in words of his own construction. A similar approach appears to have been adopted here, in that concepts taken from Scripture have been worked into phrases of the writer's own invention. This can be found in the statement that the Saviour and Holy Spirit are the light of truth to us,[185] and in the statement that the Father is the cause of life, the tree of immortality and the spring of unending life, the latter phrases being allusions to the depiction of the establishment of the Garden of Eden by God.[186] A similar approach is found in Gregory's *Address*, in which, while he sometimes directly cited Scripture,[187] he also made

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[182] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 1, 4, 6, 8.

[183] In the *Address*, God is never directly described as "the Mightier One", but there are places where this expression is used that might have a secondary meaning as an allusion to God (*cf.* Slusser 1998, pp.105, 124).

[184] Methodius, *On Free Will*, 2, 15; Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 2:24, and also in 1:16 in a reported speech by Constantine's father, Constantius; *vide* Lampe, *s.v.* κρείσσων.

[185] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 8; *John* 1:14, 14:17.

[186] *Genesis* 2:4-4, 3:22.

[187] Gregory directly cited *Mark* 12:41-44 in *Address*, 3 (28), *1 Samuel* 18:1 in 6 (85), *Romans* 1:14 in 7 (108), *Revelation* 3:7 in 15 (180). It is noteworthy that Gregory referred to the story from *Mark* 12:41-44 as a story "in the holy Bible" (ἐν ἱεραῖς βίβλοις).

extended allusions to stories taken from Scripture without directly quoting the words, or indicating the provenance of the stories.[188] Gregory appears to have done this more than most other Christian writers of the period, who seem to have anchored their works more directly on the direct quotation of the words of Scripture (or in quoting an only slightly modified form of these words),[189] rather than in the deliberate recasting the ideas of the Scriptures in new words, as is found in both the *Address* and *To Philagrius*.

Slusser attributed this work to Gregory. He thought that a review of particular language traits might be useful in resolving the on-going dispute over authorship, noting that he was aware that some of these traits were found in Gregory's works.[190] Following through on his suggestion, the following table compares the usages of certain language traits between this text and the *Address*, a much longer work, attributed to Gregory:

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[188] Allusions to Scriptures are found in *Address*, 16 (184-189), where Gregory contrasted his life in Origen's circle with living in the Garden of Eden, and then with Adam's expulsion from the garden, and the subsequent life of toil and trouble. He followed this in 16 (190-194), by contrasting his departure with the departure and subsequent troubles of the Prodigal Son; in 16 (195-198), he portrayed his position as being analagous to that expressed in the sad song of the exiled Jews in Babylon (*Psalm* 137, LXX 136); finally, in 16 (199), he alluded to the story of the Good Samaritan, implying that in his journey home he was faced with the same risk of being attacked by robbers as that faced by the unfortunate traveller in that story.

[189] A few examples out of many: Clement, *1st Letter*, 10:3, quoted *Genesis* 12:1-3; Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 18:1, quoted *1 Corinthians* 1:20; the whole of Polycarp, *Letter*, is famous as a catena of quotations from New Testament writers; Justin, 1st *Apology*, 15, included a number of statements taken directly from the Synoptic Gospels; similarly, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 10:2, quoted *Romans* 11:33 and several other passages. However, in works directed specifically towards non-Christians some authors avoided using specific Christian terminology. Trigg 2001, p.33, mentioned Athenagoras' *Plea*, Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation*, and Theophilus of Antioch's *To Autolycus*. On this basis, it appears likely that Gregory's works belonged to the genre of works intended to meet the needs and questions of non-Christians about Christianity, and should be judged on this basis.

[190] Slusser 1989, pp.234f; Slusser 1998, pp.29-32.

Greek Text	Accusative of manner with τρόπον	Exactitude (ἀκριβής and ἐναργής)	Using scorn word σαθρός
To Philagrius	7	6	2
Address	7	10	2

Table 2-3 Traits of Language in To Philagrius

While this table only demonstrates a couple of terminological similarities between this text and the *Address*,[191] it reinforces the evidence of the other parallels with works attributed to Gregory cited above. Furthermore, in the stylometric analysis presented earlier, *To Philagrius* is in the second cluster, which includes *To Gaian*, another work possibly written by Gregory.

It can be concluded that the stylometic analysis, this analysis of language traits, arguments based on terminology, the theology of this work and its use of Scripture, all support the attribution of this work to Gregory, or to someone whose ways of thinking and writing were similar to those of Gregory.

2.5.2 Doctrine of God

The purpose of *To Philagrius* was to demonstrate that God is not divided, but remains united, even though the persons of the Godhead are designated by different names. In this work it is said that there is a certain double flowing (δίῤῥυτόν τινα) of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father to us, without causing any harm to the Father, for his nature did not suffer any diminution by that, nor did the Son and Holy Spirit become lesser than the Father because of their approach to us. According to this text, the Spirit had his "being" from the Father, just as did the Son. Equal roles are depicted for both the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Origen quoted his Hebrew master as saying that the two seraphim in *Isaiah* 6:3

[191] Gregory of Nyssa also said that, when considering the creed, Gregory was particularly concerned about achieving exactitude (ἀκρίβεια): Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 4 (28); Heil 1990, p.16; PG 46:909C. While Abramowski 1976, p.148, considered that this term pointed towards the doctrinal interests of Gregory of Nyssa, it seems more likely that these two texts indicate that Gregory of Neocaesarea was also interested in exactitude.

represented the Son and the Holy Spirit, as did the two living beings in *Habakkuk* 3:2.[192] This teaching might have been the source of Gregory's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as expressed in *To Philagrius*. However, this work more strongly expresses the equality of the two persons when compared with Origen's other statements on this subject. Origen said that Church tradition did not make it clear whether the Spirit is generated or ungenerated, or is a Son or not a Son.[193] After investigation, Origen concluded that the Holy Spirit was made through the *Logos*: the Holy Spirit needs the Son, not only to exist, but also to be wise, reasonable and just.[194] This is in accordance with the statement about the Holy Spirit that Origen made in his letter to Gregory, cited above, describing him as the "One who shares the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ". This idea is also in agreement with the lesser role that Gregory attributed to the Holy Spirit in the *Address*, in which Gregory indicated that the "divine Spirit" was the interpreter, but not the initiator of the prophetic word.[195]

If Gregory wrote *To Philagrius*, it appears that Gregory's doctrine of the Holy Spirit changed after he left Origen. It appears that he was now more comfortable with the use of the title Son, since he used that title in *To Philagrius*, even though he had not used it in the *Address*. In this work he did not use the title *Logos* at all, even though it was the most frequently used title for the second person of the Godhead in the *Address*. The work shows that he continued to be attached to the title Saviour, for which he had demonstrated a fondness in the *Address*.

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[192] Origen, *On First Principles*, 1:3:4.

[193] Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface, 4.

[194] Origen, *Commentary on John* 2:73, 76; (2:6). Origen taught that the Holy Spirit is conferred only on the saints, that is, on Christians, who receive holiness from him (Origen, *First Principles* 1:3:7-8). Although he repeated the opinions of some, based on an interpretation of the Scriptures, that in some way all reasonable beings partake of the Holy Spirit, he believed the activity of the Spirit is restricted to the "more divine" functions, that is, the sanctifying of the saints (Origen, *First Principles* 1:3:4 and 7, Dehnhard 1964, p.25).

[195] Gregory, *Address*, 15 (175-181).

2.5.3 Gregory of Nazianzus

In *Oration* 31, Gregory of Nazianzus dealt with the same question found in Gregory of Neocaesarea's *To Philagrius*: the unity of the Godhead.[196] Gregory of Nazianzus said that he had looked at the question of the nature of the Godhead in every way possible, but he had been unable to discover anything on earth with which to compare it. He found that every example that he called upon was inadequate for the purpose.[197]

It contrast, it is said in *To Philagrius* that we could think of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as a spring from which water gushed forth, from the eye of the well, which divided into two streams, while both streams remained united to its source: these streams were like a double flow of the Son and the Holy Spirit to us.[198] Gregory of Nazianzus seems to have had this treatise in mind when he said that he looked at the example of an eye, a spring, and a river, as had others before him, to see whether the first might describe the Father, the second the Son and the third the Spirit. He rejected this analogy because it suggested a flow in the Godhead, and the inability of it to stand still. He also rejected it because the three elements remained numerically one, though in different forms.

Similarly, Gregory of Nazianzus rejected the analogy of a sun, a ray and a light to represent the three persons of the Trinity. He thought that people might get the idea of composition in the uncompounded nature of the Godhead. It also seemed to him to deny the separate personalities of the Son and the Spirit, and instead to depict them as powers of God only. A further difficulty was that neither the ray nor the light was another sun. Therefore, they were merely an outpouring from the sun, and a quality of the sun, rather than really existent entities. Therefore, this analogy was dangerous because it might lead us to think of

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[196] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31:31-32.

[197] See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31:5.

[198] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 8.

the Son and the Spirit as only existing in the Father, rather than as distinct persons.[199] This, of course, was the point being made by *To Philagrius*, in which the example of a sun and its rays was used as an analogy of the Father sending forth the resplendent Jesus and the Holy Spirit. According to this work, the sun is like an eye,[200] sending a river of rays upon the universe. The rays of light are related to each other without division, and transmit light to us: thus they are twofold rays of the Father, the Saviour and the Holy Spirit, who minister to us.

The writer of *To Philagrius* did not attempt to distinguish between roles of the person of the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, this old-fashioned theology did not suit at the end of the fourth century. Gregory of Nazianzus used the ray to represent the Son, and the light to represent the Holy Spirit; similarly, he used the spring to represent the Son, and the river to represent the Holy Spirit. If Gregory of Nazianzus had used them in the same way as in *To Philagrius*, it would have implied that he taught the existence of two Sons, who were brothers.[201]

Of course, Gregory of Nazianzus could have found these analogies elsewhere. The images of the rays of the sun and the river and its spring could have been commonplaces in Christian circles. *Hebrews* 1:3 described Christ as the radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of God's glory. Origen took up this idea in *On First Principles*, describing the Son as the glory of the light of the Father, illuminating the whole of creation.[202] Similarly, Dionysius of Alexandria used an analogy of the spring and river to describe the relationship of Father and Son: he claimed it was an appropriate metaphor since it was a symbol of the separate existence of Father and

[199] There are hints of the distinct identities of the Son and the Holy Spirit: each is named, and the role of the Son as saviour, and of both as servants of the truth to us, indicates some idea of each operating as a person towards us.

[200] Slusser 1998, explained that "in some ancient theories of vision, the eye reached out to objects of vision with a stream of light".

[201] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31:7-8.

[202] Origen, *On First Principles*, 1:2:7.

Son; the common substance, water, was a representation of their common nature.[203] Nevertheless Gregory of Nazianzus did not have Dionysius in mind when he prepared the *Oration*, since he appeared unaware of (or silently rejected) Dionysius' assumption that the metaphor of the spring and river implied the separate identity of the Father and the Son. However, he appeared to have had *To Philagrius* before him, since he specifically refuted the thesis of that work, which was the necessary union of the persons of the Godhead. Whereas Gregory of Nazianzus rejected the analogy of the spring and the river specifically because it introduced the idea of numerical unity, this analogy was used in *To Philagrius* to explain this very idea, the unity in one (ἕνωσις) of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If Gregory wrote this work, it was appropriate that it was Gregory of Nazianzus and not Basil or Gregory of Nyssa who undercut the arguments in this work, since Gregory of Nazianzus did not have the same interest in protecting Gregory's reputation and traditions as the two brothers from the Pontic region: he himself was from the southern reaches of Cappadocia. In addition, he was more inclined to go back to the teachings of Origen, whose speculative theology would have had more appeal for him than Gregory's more simply expressed theology.[204]

2.5.4 Audience

To Philagrius concludes with the statement that much more could be said to demonstrate the union of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but the writer said that he would not say more but leave the rest to his correspondent and his companions to deduce further arguments from what he had already written. From this, it seems that Gregory was not writing only to a single person, but also to a group of people who were concerned about this issue, and appear to have been concerned that Gregory's teaching of the three persons undermined the doctrine of the

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[203] Athanasius, *On the Nicene Creed* 6 (25-26); *On Dionysius* 15-23.

[204] McGuckin 2001, p.106.

unity of God.

This leader or representative does not appear to have been the leader of an apostolic Christian congregation, since there is no mention of one of the characteristic Christian titles, such as "presbyter", or any of the other options. Yet it does seem to be directed at a community, perhaps a community of celibates. This does not rule out the possibility that it was sent to a group of Marcionite celibates. There is one identifiable expression in this work that suggests the audience included Marcionite Christians, namely the description of Jesus as "the resplendent Jesus" (ὁ φεγγώδης Ἰησοῦς).[205] In Marcionite doctrine, the Stranger God was described as splendrous (or bright), an idea that was possibly later borrowed by the Manichaeans,[206] who referred to "Jesus of Splendour", which brings us back to the terminology used here.[207]

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[205] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 7.

[206] Mani's ideas were probably greatly influenced by those put forward by Marcion (Lieu 1985, pp.38-41; Drijvers 1987/88, p.170).

[207] Drijvers 1987/88, p.170, citing Ephraem the Syrian, *Hymn against Heresies*, 35:1: Ephraem used the Syriac *zywn* to describe the nature of God the Stranger; similarly, Mani referred to Jesus Zīwānā (citing Rose, *Manichäische Christologie*, pp.66ff).

2.6 Dialogue with Theopompus

2.6.1 Authorship

The *Dialogue with Theopompus* survived only in Syriac, although Abramowski demonstrated that it was originally written in Greek. The Syriac manuscript attributed it to "Gregory the Great", by which was meant Gregory of Neocaesarea. Crouzel thought that the original text was written in the third century, and was probably written by Gregory. Abramowski also thought that it was written in the third century, but considered that, since it did not reflect Origen's doctrine of the Godhead, and in particular, it did not show any traces of *Logos* theology, it was "non-Origenist", and not even pro- or anti-Origenist. Therefore, she rejected the attribution to Gregory, a position also supported by Hallman.[208]

Abramowski thought that this treatise presented a "modalistic" doctrine of God.[209] In the modalistic view of God, it is believed that God is one, who appears in different modes to us (as Father in the Old Testament, as Son in the time of Jesus, and as Holy Spirit in this age). However, Gregory did not see the divine persons in quite this way: in his doctrine the Saviour is God and the divine person immanent to humans in both the Old and New Testament periods. This is not inconsistent with the way God is presented in this work.

The idea of the Trinity does not appear in *Dialogue with Theopompus*, yet it remains possible that the presentation of God in *Dialogue with Theopompus* might at base be consistent with that in *To Philagrius*, despite the apparent differences between the two texts in their descriptions of God. The writer of *Dialogue with Theopompus* clearly believed that the "blessed Jesus" is God.[210] This is consistent with the doctrine in *To Philagrius*, which teaches that the Father sent the Saviour and the Holy Spirit to mankind as a double flowing of

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[208] Crouzel 1964, pp.269-279; Abramowski 1978, pp.273, 275f; Hallman 1989, pp.94f.

[209] Abramowski 1978, pp.274-276.

[210] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 17.

himself.[211] Similarly, the role given to Jesus at the end of the *Dialogue with Theopompus*, being the "king over all things" parallels the role given to the *Logos* in the *Address*, being "the Demiurge and Pilot of all things".[212]

Scripture is used in the same way in this work as in the *Address*, and to a lesser extent in *To Philagrius*, in that the Scriptures are used in the discussion without directly citing them: Allusions to Scripture are worked into the content. In drawing an analogy between the work of a physician and that of God as saviour, the writer said that the physician temporarily puts aside his authority, "being found in the form of a servant";[213] this is a clear allusion to *Philippians* 2:6-7, yet it is used to develop his analogy rather than as a citation to prove the point he was making. This method appears to have been characteristic of Gregory.[214]

In this dialogue, the author was challenged by Theopompus to respond to the argument that God cannot suffer. It is noteworthy that he did not try to divert the questioner to the proposition that "God suffered in Christ", but argued instead that God can suffer, yet without any change (and therefore he "suffered impassibly").[215] This argument is demonstrated using the analogy of a sword cutting through a fire: the sword does not sever the fire, since the intensity of the fire keeps it bound together. Even more so, God cannot be severed, since God is supreme and higher than all bodies. This is similar to the argument for the unity of God found in *To Philagrius*.

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[211] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, *passim*. It is further noted that both *To Philagrius*, 7, and *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 10, use the analogy of the rays of light from the sun in similar ways.

[212] Slusser 1997, p.362, citing *To Theopompus*, 17, and *Address*, 4 (35), both tr. Slusser.

[213] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 6; Slusser 1998, p.157 n.7, citing Abramowski 1978, p.286 n.52, who also saw a connection with Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:14, here.

[214] Trigg 2001, pp.29-33, noted from the *Address* that Gregory not only often alluded to a biblical text without indicating that he was citing Scripture, but that he also avoided specifically Christian terminology. He considered that this arose from adapting his speech to the needs of his audience.

[215] According to this argument, God endures suffering yet remains unchanged.

On balance, it appears that this work can be tentatively attributed to Gregory of Neocaesarea, rather than to an otherwise unknown Gregory.[216] This attribution is consistent with what we know about Gregory from elsewhere.[217]

2.6.2 Suffering Impassibly

This work is about God's ability to "suffer impassibly", which is to say, to suffer without suffering.[218] The writer attempted to break the bonds that prevented him from expressing the idea that God undertook suffering for us, by arguing that God does not suffer when he exercises his will and voluntarily suffers. The writer was forced, by the existence of conflicting ideas on the nature and role of God in this world, to justify the logically absurd statement that God "suffers impassibly".[219] On one hand there was the almost universally accepted idea that God cannot suffer, an idea conceived of by philosophers and then accepted

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[216] Abramowski 1978, p.290, asked whether any of the known *Logos*-theologians were able to speak as impressively of the saving power of Jesus' death. However, the fact that the writer does not mention the *Logos* does not excluded Gregory as the author, as he appears to have been able to adapt his approach to his audience. If Gregory wrote *To Philagrius*, as suggested above, it is worth noting that the *Logos* is not mentioned in that work, only the Son and the Saviour.

[217] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 3; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 6 (44); *To the Celibates*, 3. After reviewing the previous arguments on the authorship, Slusser 1998, pp.27f, gave particular weight to the fact that Gregory was described as "the Teacher" in both the panegyric and in *Dialogue with Theopompus*, and saw no reason why Gregory could not be author of this work.

[218] This work was probably preserved as a defence against a charge of *theopaschism* brought against the leaders of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Abramowski 1978, pp.279-282).

[219] Hallman 1989, p.92, thought that Origen contradicted himself (in *Selecta in Ezekiel* 16:8) by saying that "God is impassible" and then by saying, "God feels compassion". This is exactly the dilemma presented by Theopompus to Gregory, to which Gregory replied that these ideas were not contradictory at all. The same idea was expressed by Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 17:12, in which he referred to the emptying of Christ on our behalf, the sufferings of the impassible one (τὰ τοῦ ἀπαθοῦς πάθη), the cross, and the nails by which we are freed.

by Christians. On the other hand, there was the Christian doctrine that Christ suffered on the cross. We have already observed that the doctrine of the human nature of Christ was probably not theologically important to Gregory. This appears to have meant that Gregory did not have any difficulties in assigning Christ's sufferings to his divine nature. This treatise appears to be a reasoned explanation of the doctrine that God suffered on our behalf without this resulting in a change in his person.

It is likely that the doctrine that God is impassible was not primarily based on teachings taken from the Scriptures, but rather taken from the noble assumptions of Greek philosophy, and from Aristotle in particular. He taught the doctrine of God as the "unmoved-mover" of this world. According to Aristotle, God is occupied with only the very best of things, and since there is nothing better than himself, thinks about himself: he is unaware of the wider cosmos.[220] Most Christian philosophers and theologians (of any age) would find it difficult to fully accept such an idea of God, since it is clear that such a god could not have sent a Saviour into this world; in addition, both the Old Testament and the New Testament writers provide many examples of God being concerned about this world. Nevertheless, this idea provided an underpinning for philosophical ideas about God in the Greco-Roman world, and thus it was bound to influence the thinking of both ordinary and sophisticated Christians. Certainly, the idea that we should think of God in the highest way possible to us has strongly influenced Christianity, and this idea has also governed most interpretations of Scripture.[221]

The idea of God, presented as a being far beyond the ordinary concepts of the people of this world, was attractive to Christian philosophers and apologists: on the basis of this proposition it could be argued that the Christian God is not governed by the fluctuations of the emotions and he is therefore superior to the gods of the nations, who were depicted in the myths as both imperfect and passible. Naturally, this meant that the stories in the Old

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[220] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 12:7.

[221] *cf.* Hallman 1989, pp.86-88.

Testament became legitimate targets for criticism, particularly those that depicted God as subject to change, such as becoming angry, changing his mind, and expressing regret. Origen's approach was one of the more extreme of those who accepted the Old Testament, explaining such passages allegorically, seeing a deeper spiritual meaning in those accounts where God was depicted behaving in a manner that he considered to be unworthy of the supreme deity.

A doctrine similar to that presented in this work also emerges in a unique passage in Origen's commentary on *Ezekiel*.[222] Origen's commentaries on *Ezekiel* were written after the commentaries on *Isaiah*, so one should allow a number of years before he started on *Ezekiel*. Origen finished the commentaries on *Ezekiel* around 245, a number of years after Gregory returned to Neocaesarea. Intriguingly, this means that it is possible that Gregory was studying with Origen when Origen began to write these commentaries. Since the doctrine that God suffered only emerged briefly, it remains possible that Gregory's ideas influenced Origen, an idea never before contemplated, as far as I am aware. In this commentary Origen did not attribute Christ's sufferings to his human nature alone, but he stated that he suffered even before the Incarnation.[223] The argument that both Father and Son share in the suffering then accords with the same idea in the *Dialogue with Theopompus*.

2.6.3 Audience

The audience depicted in the *Dialogue with Theopompus* represented two different points of view: that of Theopompus himself and that held by the writer's other auditors. It is possible to deduce the position taken by Theopompus, since the writer criticized him for being overly devoted to the ideas of Isocrates, and also called him "our Theopompus",[224] suggesting that he

[222] Hallman 1989, pp.89-94, noted the connection between this idea in Origen and the work *Dialogue with Theopompus*.

[223] Origen, *Homily on Ezekiel*, 6:6: PG 8:384-385.

[224] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 6, 9.

had an earlier Theopompus in mind, probably the Greek historian and rhetorician who was a pupil of the same Isocrates. Isocrates considered that abstract knowledge was either impossible or useless,[225] and held the view that one could develop morally by learning how to speak well. Against Plato's criticism of him, he argued that preparing speeches would inevitably lead the good man who became an orator to support those things that work towards the common good. Isocrates was an admirer of Socrates, and deeply mourned his death, but Isocrates' ideas were strongly opposed by Plato. Isocrates was also an advocate of the superiority of Greek over the barbarian ways and learning,[226] an attitude that Gregory specifically rejected in the *Address*.[227]

It is possible that the writer's other auditors were formerly adherents of Marcionite Christianity, who had been converted to apostolic Christianity. In support of this comment it should be noted that, while there are no obvious references to the Old Testament in the whole dialogue (although there are some allusions), there are a number of deliberate references to Paul's letters.[228] In this regard is should be noted that Marcion appears to have considered Paul as the only true apostle.

Theopompus tried to defeat his opponent in argument by presenting to him the dilemma of proving that an impassible God could have suffered on the cross for mankind. In response, the writer appears to have made a concession to Greek philosophical ideas by agreeing with Theopompus that God is indeed impassible. A lively discussion ensued amongst his other auditors who appear to have been scandalised by his response. The writer attempted to satisfy

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[225] *cf.* Gregory, *Address*, 7 (102), said that his studies with Origen were not limited to that which is visible.

[226] Kennedy 1963, pp.174-203; Kennedy 1980, pp.31-35.

[227] Gregory, *Address*, 13 (153).

[228] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 6 (*Romans* 1:23ff and *Philippians* 2:6-7), 7 (*1 Corinthians* 9:24-260, 8 (*Romans* 7:10 and *1 Corinthians* 1:23), 10 (*Ephesians* 2;4), 14 (*1 Thessalonians* 4:13), as noted by Slusser 1998, pp.152-173.

the concerns of this second group by arguing that God could suffer without bringing about change in himself because he undertook to suffer willingly.[229]

His approach was to show that the result of the argument depended upon the premises established at the beginning of the discussion. Whereas Theopompus believed that he had established his case by merely stating the proposition in the form a syllogism, the writer indicated that he did not accept Theopompus' premises, and substituted his own in their place.[230] While it is not clear whether these arguments would have convinced Theopompus,[231] it is likely that the disciples or students of the writer would have been satisfied by his arguments.

Reference was made in this dialogue to Jesus coming into this "wicked world", an expression that is likely to have resonated with the Marcionites. Reference was also made to Jesus coming "in the visible appearance of mortal human beings", rather than Jesus' coming being expressed in the terminology of the Incarnation, such as "made man" or "took flesh", or even "came as a man to mankind".[232]

> For how can that most blessed one be harmed by coming into this wicked world who, insofar as it would be helpful to souls, shared in the visible appearance of mortal human beings, while nothing of the powerfulness of his divinity was left behind, but from eternity he is as he is.[233]

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[229] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 2.

[230] Gregory, *Address*, 9 (119), argued that a person could remain ἀπαθής by allowing the rational to always maintain control; by implication this means that a person can remain free from suffering (ἀπαθής) despite the vissitudes of fortune, or even by voluntarily "suffering", since such things do not affect the man truly in control of his own person. This argument was the basis of Gregory's response to Theopompus; *cf.* Somos 1999, pp.365f.

[231] Hallman 1989, p.97, thought that "Gregory" had not successfully demonstrated that it was "possible for an impassible divine being to suffer." It could be argued that such a proposition cannot be demonstrated without a redefinition of the terms, in which the natural meaning of one of these terms is virtually eliminated. This is exactly what Gregory did.

[232] Justin, *1st Apology*, 23, has "he became man amongst men".

[233] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 9, tr. Slusser.

Despite these apparent concessions in terminology to the Marcionite view of the Jesus' coming to earth, the author did not leave the Marcionite view unchallenged. He appears to have alluded to a deeper and truer understanding of this matter, since he concluded the dialogue with the claim that Jesus came to heal the passions of human beings. This could have been meant as an allusion to *Psalm* 70 (LXX 69), which was a plea for God to come and help,[234] thus bring the Old Testament into the dialogue, and at the same time associating Jesus with God of the Old Testament.[235]

2.6.4 Similarities to Other Minor Works

The doctrine embedded in *Dialogue with Theopompus* is also found in the speech *On All the Saints*, traditionally attributed to Gregory, but now generally excluded from his works. Evidence linking these two texts derives from the statement in this speech that Christ underwent "sufferings without passion in them" (ἀπαθῆ παθήματα), a statement similar to one found in Gregory of Nazianzus.[236] For the writer of *On All the Saints*, the *Logos* became man but "in experiencing this he did not change his nature" (οὐ μεταβάσει χρησάμενος φύσεως). When the Devil "cast his hook at the divinity (θεότης)" he touched God.[237] Christ "became man" (ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος), and is the friend of man, crushing the enemy of man with the foot of his divinity (θεότης). The role of Christ in destroying death by coming to earth and defeating it, which was also outlined in the *Dialogue with Theopompus*, was also

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[234] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 17; Slusser 1998, p.173 n.43, citing Abramowski 1978, p.289, who believed that the statement in the *Dialogue*, "He came therefore, he came in haste," was from a σπεῦσον found in the Cod. Alex. of *Psalm* 40:14 (LXX 39:14) and Cod. Sin. of *Psalm* 70:2 (LXX 69:2).

[235] This allusion appears to point to the same lesson as the apparent allusion to *Malachi* 4:2 in the *Address* (*vide* Section 2.3.5 Gregory's Conversion), namely that God as depicted by the New Testament writers is also God of the Old Testament.

[236] vide n.219.

[237] Gregory of Nyssa has been credited with inventing this idea (Bettenson 1970, p.15).

taken on by the martyrs, who "seized death, by way of reprisal, as the patron of deathlessness" (θάνατον ἀθανασίας πρόξενον ἁνθαρπάζοντες).

There is no suggestion in *On All the Saints* of a separate human soul in Christ, with an identity different from that of the *Logos*. This is in accordance with Gregory's doctrine, although this work does go further than in the other writings attributed here to Gregory, by saying that the *Logos* became man, for the sake of mankind, according to the "grace and love of mankind from our Lord Jesus Christ" (χάριτι καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). This is found in the doxology of this work.[238]

The doxology found in *On All the Saints* links this work to *Homily 3*, a work traditionally assigned to Gregory, but rejected in Migne and by all commentators. While the other homilies assigned to Gregory appear to be of fourth or fifth century origin, this particular homily does not include any of the touchstone theological terms, including *homoousios*, *hypostasis*, *prosopon* or *theotokos*. *Physis* is used, but in a non-technical sense. In this document Christ is variously called King, Sun of Righteousness, Demiurge, Truth, Physician, Judge, Redeemer and Bridegroom, all of which, except Demiurge, were drawn from Scripture, but are also reminiscent of Gregory's description of the *Logos* in the *Address*. Similarly, the writer of *On All the Saints* identified Christ with the "Angel of Great Counsel", which is an identification also found in the *Address*.[239]

On stylistic grounds, both *On all the Saints*, and *Homily 3* are unlikely to have been written by Gregory, but it is possible that they were written in Gregory's circle,[240] particularly if Gregory wrote *To Theompompus*, as tentatively suggested here.

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[238] The use of *philanthropia* is this doxology is not exceptional, since it is found in *Titus* 3:4.

[239] Gregory, *Address*, 4 (42).

[240] A fourth century date is also possible, particularly if the author had access to the corpus of Gregory's written works, most of which now appear to have been lost.

2.7 To Diognetus

2.7.1 Authorship

As far as I am aware, Gregory has not previously been suggested as the author of *To Diognetus*, but that is proposed here as a possibility.[241] The text itself does not indicate the author. Ehrman, who recently published a critical edition and English translation of this work, concluded that the author was simply not known.[242] While this work names the person in whose honour it was written as "most excellent (κράτιστος) Diognetus", it is not known who this person was, whether he was an actual person, or merely a literary fiction. If he was a real person, then he could have been a person who held an office as high as governor of a province, provided it was in a province ruled by a person of equestrian rank (rather than senatorial rank).[243]

This work appears to be a compilation of parts of three treatises. It is generally thought that this work should be divided at the lacuna between chapters 10 and 11,[244] but there is also another lacuna in chapter 7, between verses 6 and 7, and this appears to be another natural division in this text. This is confirmed by the content of the text, since in chapter 7 (verse 2) of *To Diognetus* the Son of God is called Demiurge, whereas in chapter 8 God is called Demiurge.[245] Even if this difference can be explained, it is not likely that such an ambiguity

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[241] Twenty names have previously been suggested over the centuries (*cf.* Marrou 1965, pp.242f).

[242] Ehrman 2003, p.126.

[243] Marrou 1965, pp.267f, suggested Claudius Diognetus, an equestrian procurator in Egypt. Marrou also noted (p.255) that while the honorific "most excellent" could be given to a person in this position, it could also be given to a person in the relatively lowly rank of centurian.

[244] Ehrman 2003, p.124, Fairweather 1953, p.207, and Nielsen 1970, pp.77, all supported the argument that chapters 11 and 12 belong to a different treatise. Connolly 1936, pp.2-15, and Marrou 1965, pp.218-227, argued that a single author wrote the whole work.

[245] *To Diognetus*, 7:2, 8:7.

would have been introduced in a single work.[246]

While the second treatise (chapter 7 verse 7, to chapter 10) is far from complete, it follows similar lines of argument to those found in the first treatise. Both present the example of Christians, their way of life, and their disdain for death, as proof of the truth of Christianity. Whereas in the first treatise the traditional cults are criticised, in the second treatise the teachings of the philosophers are rejected, and a more subtle account of the relationship between the Father and the Son is provided. Both claim that Christianity is a revealed religion, not something invented by man, and the means by which God can be known. Both conclude with a reference to eternal life as the ultimate blessing arising from knowing God truly, and to the coming judgement of God.

Based on the stylometric analysis done earlier, it is necessary to consider whether Justin Martyr was the author of any part of the compilation. Against the attribution to Justin it is necessary to note that neither the name Jesus nor the title Christ appear anywhere in this work, although they appear repeatedly in Justin's *1st Apology*. Furthermore, in the first two treatises the Old Testament is treated as irrelevant, whereas it is known that Justin was impressed with arguments for the truth of Christianity being demonstrated by the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.[247] Whereas Justin devoted considerable time to discussing the ways the *Logos* appeared to Moses, in the second treatise the author asked whether anyone had any idea of what God is like before God came.[248] Therefore, the proposal that Justin

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[246] Lienhard 1970, p.284, pointed out that the title Demiurge was applied to God in *To Diognetus* 7:2 and to the Son in 8:7. He argued that this seems to imply that the writer failed to distinguish between the Father and the Son, but could be explained by the argument that the Father created through the instrumentality of the Son. This argument would carry more weight if these apparently conflicting statements came from different treatises, the apparent contradiction being explained on the basis that the writer was addressing different audiences, and therefore explaining himself in different ways, according to their needs and presuppostions.

[247] Justin, *1st Apology*, 30-53.

[248] Justin, *1st Apology*, 54-60.

wrote this work is difficult to accept.[249]

Similar objections to those raised for Justin's authorship can also be raised against the claims that the work was written by Hippolytus. Connolly argued that part of chapter 7 of *To Diognetus* was modelled on Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies*; he also thought that it was similar to parts of Irenaeus works, since it reflected the idea found in both Irenaeus and Hippolytus that God calls mankind to respond to him by free choice.[250] Nevertheless, Hippolytus is not thought to have been the author of this work, since it is unlikely that Hippolytus would have treated the Old Testament with the disregard found in the first treatise.[251]

Marrou viewed Connolly's suggestion of the attribution to Hippolytus sympathetically, but he also saw a similarity between the ideas in this work, which he called a *logos*, rather than a letter, and those found in the works of both Aristides and Clement of Alexandria. He also considered that the ethos of this work was closer to that of Clement than to Hippolytus, primarily on the basis of the similarity between this work and Clement's *Exhortation to the Greeks*. Marrou did not attribute it to Clement, but thought it came from Clement's circle, possibly from Clement's teacher, Panteanus.[252] Nevertheless, it is hard to reconcile the high

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[249] Meecham 1949, pp.61-62.

[250] Connolly 1935, pp.346-353.

[251] Hippolytus argued that the *Logos* had previously spoken through the prophets, but now speaks directly to us through one whom we could see directly for ourselves (*Refutation of All Heresies*, 10:29); *cf.* also *To Diognetus*, 8:1.

[252] Marrou 1965, pp.251-266. However, Marrou thought that the idea of the soul in the body as a metaphor for Christians in the world was superseded by Clement's argument in *Who is the Rich Man that Shall Be Saved?*, 36. For Clement there was not an organic relationship between Christians and this world, but rather that God sent his elect here as if on a sojourn, with a specific mission, from which they would return, after which this world would be dissolved. It is not immediately clear why Marrou through that Clement's idea was superior to that in *To*

value given to Greek philosophy in Clement's *Exhortation* with the comment in *To Diognetus* that Christians believe "no earthly discovery that has been handed over to them."[253]

Even though it is unlikely that Justin wrote this work, it is likely that chapters 1 to 7 (verse 6) of *To Diognetus* were modelled on Justin's *1st Apology*.[254] After some introductory words in both works, the reader is encouraged to put aside old ways of thinking and to think about the teachings of Christianity in a new way. Both works then criticize the devotees of the old cults for worshipping gods made by hand. *To Diognetus* then adds a section, not in the *Apology*, explaining why Christians do not worship like Jews, explaining that God does not need sacrifices of blood and burnt offerings. Both works then provide an explanation of Christian life and belief. After that they diverge. The *Apology* provides proofs for Christianity from the Old Testament prophecies, and attempts to show that these prophecies are also mimicked in the Greek myths and the best ideas in Plato were also borrowed from Moses; it concludes by giving an explanation of Christian worship. *To Diognetus* explains that the soul in the body is a metaphor for Christians in the world, and explains the coming of the Son of God into this world: there is no mention of the Old Testament or of testimonies from Greek philosophy.

Gregory would have had the chance to read Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Clement, through his access to Origen's library, which probably had copies of the works of all of these philosophers and theologians.[255] There are also similarities between this document and Aristides' *Apology*. It is possible that Origen's library also had a copy of this work. Therefore,

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Diognetus, except perhaps that it seems to transcend Stoic ideas of the physical nature of this world (*vide* pp.159-166).

[253] Clement, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 5-7; *To Diognetus*, 7:1, tr. Ehrman.

[254] Meecham 1949, p.58, noted that early Christian apologies shared some common features.

[255] Origen was aware of Clement's work as a teacher in Alexandria and adopted and adapted many of Clement's ideas in his later theological works; Origen also personally visited Hippolytus in Rome, and probably acquired copies of his works then (*vide* McGuckin 2004, pp.2-5, 8, 13f).

the different claims for the authorship of this work may be due to this work having been written by someone who had read widely, having read these authors in particular.[256] This seems to strengthen the claims made of behalf of Gregory's authorship, since he probably had access to a better Christian library than most students. This is not to say that *To Diognetus* is a catena of other people's ideas, since the writer has recast them in his own terms, and produced his own work. It worth noting that the first treatise, even though there is a lacuna at this point, ends with an observation that the Son of God is coming in judgement, as does Aristides' *Apology*.[257] This observation appears to be an allusion to *Malachi* 3:2, a work that might have been important to Gregory in bringing to the forefront an Old Testament depiction of God with the twofold characteristics of judge and saviour.[258]

If indeed Gregory wrote both *To Gaian* and *To Philagrius*, it would appear that the subject of the soul was of particular interest to him. In *To Philagrius* the indivisible union between the soul and the mind is used as an analogy of the indivisible union between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A similar analogy is found in *To Diognetus*, where the relationship of the soul and the body is used as a metaphor of the relationship between the Christians and this world. Also, the idea that God sent the Son is strongly presented in *To Philagrius*,[259] and in both the first and second treatises in *To Diognetus*.[260] Furthermore, nowhere in the entire work is there any mention of the Incarnation, even though in one place

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[256] The similarities between chapters 11 and 12 to Hippolytus' *Refutation* were noted by Connolly 1936, pp.2-15.

[257] Aristides, *Apology*, 17. Fairweather 1953, p.208, rejected the argument for common authorship of the two texts, and did not think that a dependency could be established between them.

[258] *vide* Section 2.3.5 Gregory's Conversion.

[259] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 7-8.

[260] Lienhard 1970, p.281, citing *To Diognetus* 7:2, 7:4-5 and 7:6 (from the first part), and 9:2, 9:6 and 10;2 (from the second part).

this could easily have been included by a simple emendation of the text.[261] While reference is made, in *To Diognetus*, 9:2, to the Son taking upon himself the burden of our sins, this is said without explicitly saying he became man, or that he was born of a woman, or any other way of expressing this idea. The omission of an explicit statement about the Incarnation, while teaching the doctrine of the Son as the saviour of mankind, is characteristic of writings attributed here to Gregory.[262]

There are similarities in presentation between the first treatise, *To Gaian* and *To Philagrius*. In each of these works the writer repeated the question that had been asked of him, and then made an introductory statement about what response he wanted from his reader, and only then provided his answer. In addition, the elegant brevity found in each of *To Gaian*, *To Philagrius* and *To Diognetus* contrasts starkly with the more elaborate and wordy arguments of Justin's *1st Apology* and Hippolytus' *Refutation*, and the prolixity of Clement's *Exhortation*. Furthermore, the writer of the first treatise in *To Diognetus* does not directly quote Scripture, yet the work as a whole abounds in indirect allusions to Scriptures, particularly allusions to New Testament writers,[263] but also to fragments of the Old

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[261] *To Diognetus*, 7:4, which the editor Lachmann emended to read ὡς ἄνθρωπον πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔπεμψεν, adding ἄνθρωπον not found in the manuscript. Lienhard 1970, pp.288f, considered that, while the argument in favour of this emendation was strong, in that this emendation follows the pattern of the other ὡς clauses in this sentence, it seems too convenient to amend this clause to recognize the Incarnation; also in 7:2 and 10:2 it is stated that the Son is sent to men, but in neither of those places is it stated that he was sent as a man.

[262] *cf.* Gregory, *Address*, 17 (200).

[263] Meecham 1949, pp.54-58; Marrou 1965, pp.102f; Nielsen 1970, p.88. Allusions to New Testament writers abound in *To Diognetus* 5: for example *cf. To Diognetus* 5:5 and *1 Peter* 1:1; *To Diognetus* 5:11 and *Luke* 6:27; *To Diognetus* 5:12 and *Romans* 6:11 and *1 Corinthians* 15:2; *cf.* also *To Diognetus* 7:6 and *John* 3:17; *To Diognetus* 6:3 and *John* 17:16; *To Diognetus* 7:2 and *John* 1:1-3.

Testament.[264] This method of using the Scriptures without directly citing them is found in other works attributed to Gregory, and has already been noted.[265]

In the first treatise, the writer referred to the Son as Demiurge, as is also found in the *Address*,[266] but in the second treatise God is called Demiurge. If these two treatises had the same author, as seems likely, this difference in approach could be explained on the basis that the writer was able to call the Father Demiurge because he creates through the Son. Interestingly, this "communication of characteristics" is shown more clearly in this text:

> But then, when the time arrived that God had planned to reveal at last his goodness and power (Oh, the supreme beneficence and love of God!), he did not hate us, destroy us, or hold a grudge against us. But he was patient, he bore with us, and out of pity for us he took our sins upon himself. He gave up his own Son as a ransom for us, the holy one for the lawless, the innocent one for the wicked, the righteous one for the unrighteous, the imperishable one for the perishable, the immortal one for the mortal.[267]

Here the author moves from saying that God took our sins upon himself to the statement that the Son was the active agent, implying that God did this through the actions of the Son.

While the idea that the Son was offered as a ransom, mentioned above, is not without

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[264] Allusions to the Old Testament can be found in *To Diognetus* 7: for example *cf.* 7:2 and *Genesis* 1:14-18, *Psalm* 146:6 (LXX 145:6) and *Psalm* 148:7; and 7:6 and *Nahum* 1:6. In *To Diognetus* 5:17, the writer states that the Jews treat Christians as foreigners, which implies that he thought that Jews should treat Christians as fellow Israelites, or even members of the true Israel (*cf. Romans* 9:6-9), indicating that he recognized Paul's teaching of the relationship between Israel and the Church outlined in *Romans* 9. Similarly, the reference in *To Diognetus* 4:4 to the Jewish claim to have been chosen (ἐκλογή) by God on account of circumcision, indicates that the writer had *Romans* 11:28 in mind, and Paul's argument that the Jews will one day be saved through Christ (not through obedience to the law) – *cf. Galatians* 3 and *Romans* 11:25-32.

[265] While other writers used this approach to a lesser or greater extent, it seems particularly characteristic of Gregory (*vide* Section 2.5.1 To Philagrius (Evagrius) on the Divinity, Authorship).

[266] Gregory, *Address*, 4 (35).

[267] *To Diognetus*, 9:2b, tr. Ehrman.

Scriptural warrant, it was a central idea in Marcionism.[268] The idea that Christ died to atone for the sins of mankind is not specifically addressed in Gregory's acknowledged works, although there is a strong theme of the *Logos* (who is also the Son) as the saviour of Christians in his works. In the second treatise, the writer goes on to say that the righteous One takes upon himself the deeds of the unrighteous, so that in him our sins are covered, and we can attain to life, meaning eternal life. This can be understood as a work of atonement. A reference to the means by which Christ saves mankind is found in *On All the Saints*, a work that was possibly influenced by Gregory's teachings;[269] here it is said that the "devil cast his hook at the Godhead", but instead of being the captor, he became the captive. Similarly, a prayer found in *To the Celibates*, an account of Gregory's life, refers to the "Lord" rescuing the Church and purchasing it through his dear blood.[270]

In chapter 8 it is said that before the coming of the "servant (or child) of God"[271] no one knew what God was like. This does not require the conclusion that the writer rejected the Old Testament. Instead, this statement could simply have been based on *Colossians* 1:26, which says that God's plan for the redemption of mankind through Christ was kept a secret through all the past ages. This can be interpreted to mean that God's plan, and his true nature, were not revealed through the Old Testament, or to Israel, or discovered by the great Greek philosophers. On this basis it could be said that, before Christ, no one knew what God was like. Origen taught something similar, proposing that the divine nature of the Scriptures only

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[268] *Mark* 10:45; Drijvers 1987/88, p.165; Aland 1985, pp.96f, considered that Marcion believed that Christ purchased the people from the creator, for the price of his blood or life, rather than interpreting Christ sufferings and death as the act of atonement for the sins of mankind.

[269] *vide* Section 2.6.4 Dialogue with Theopompus, Similarities to Other Minor Works.

[270] vide Section 5.2.1 Other Sources for Gregory's Creed, Prayers to God.

.[271] The reference to the Son as God's servant (or child, παῖς) is unusual. It draws attention to itself; it appears to have been meant as a reference to *Isaiah* 42:1-4, interpreted as a prophecy of Christ in *Matthew* 12:18, and in this way indirectly putting forward the idea that the Old Testament points towards the Son.

became apparent after the advent of Christ:

> We must say, also, that the divinity of the prophetic declarations, and the spiritual nature of the law of Moses, shone forth after the advent of Christ. For before the advent of Christ it was not altogether possible to exhibit manifest proofs of the divine inspiration of the ancient Scripture; whereas His coming led those who might suspect the law and the prophets not to be divine, to the clear conviction that they were.[272]

This shows that, even though Origen probably would not have expressed himself in the same way as is found in *To Diognetus*, his approach was not diametrically opposed to that found in this work.

2.7.2 Audiences

The first treatise in this compilation appears to be an appeal to those more strongly attached to the traditional forms of worship, possibly Romanised Greeks, or those involved with the Roman government. It included disparaging comments on circumcision, saying that the claim by the Jews that circumcision was a sign of their acceptance by God was an invitation to ridicule.[273] The second treatise in this compilation appears to be directed to those who knew something of Greek philosophy, who might have been prepared to consider the competing claims of Christian philosophy, perhaps those who also knew something of Marcionism. In this treatise, the writer says that God, the Master and Demiurge of all, was benevolent and patient: he always was good and kind, and without anger. This was a clear negation of the idea that the creator of this world is not good or patient, or is inclined to anger.

In chapter 9 there are ten words from the root ΔIK and nine words from the root ΔΥN, used to explain that before the Son came, man was both unrighteous and lacked the power to be righteous, whereas, after the advent, righteousness and power came from God through the

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[272] Origen, *On First Principles*, 4:1:6, tr. Frederick Crombie.

[273] *To Diognetus*, 4:4. It is worth noting in this context that Origen claimed that Marcion repeatedly derided circumcision (Harnack 1924b, p.76).

Son to mankind.[274] Chapter 10 moves on to say that those who wish to become Christians must first learn about the Father, who loved mankind, and made the world for them. This can be seen as a direct rebuttal of Marcionism.

Nielsen argued that chapters 1 to 10 of *To Diognetus* must have been written before Marcion's theology became a point of contention, since the writer seems to be oblivious to Marcion's challenge to apostolic Christianity. It is also noted that this work even includes a condemnation of the errors of Judaism with which Marcion would have agreed.[275] However, if Gregory was the author of this work, there is nothing in it that he could not have written. If indeed Marcionism was alive in his community, it would appear that it was his intention that the "Sun of Righteousness" shine on the Marcionites, as it had on him. This did not mean that he felt the need to strongly oppose those that others had called heretics, following the approach taken by Justin and Tertullian, but rather he appears to have felt confident that could win them over without denigrating their beliefs and doctrines, and without asserting that their former Christian experience was worthless.

The author of the first two treatises did not appear to fear to use terminology that might have brought to mind terminology used by the Marcionites. The second treatise includes the exclamation: "Oh, the supreme beneficence and love of God".[276] Nielsen noted the similarity of this statement to introductory words of Marcion's *Antitheses*:[277]

> Oh wealth of riches! Folly, power, and ecstasy [of the Gospel]! – there can be nothing [worthy] to say about it, or imagine about it, or to compare with it![278]

If the writer did indeed have these words in mind, it is an indication that he was prepared to use the best of that found outside of the usual resources of apostolic Christianity for the

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[274] Lienhard 1970, pp.285f.

[275] Nielsen 1970, pp.77-91.

[276] *To Diognetus*, 9:2, tr. Ehrman.

[277] Nielsen 1970, p.87.

[278] Based on the translation of Burkitt 1929, pp.279f, and adapted.

purpose of preaching the Gospel. This appears to have been characteristic of Gregory, and therefore, on balance, Gregory can be seriously considered as the author of these two treatises.

Chapters 11 and 12 constitute part of a third treatise.[279] This treatise appears to have been an attempt to convince those who continued to hold onto ideas that were possibly drawn from Marcionism to adopt the full doctrine of apostolic Christianity.[280] Here the Old Testament is acknowledged along with the writings that formed the New Testament, particularly mentioning the Gospels:

> Then the fear of the law is sung, the grace of the prophets is made known, the faith of the Gospels is established, the tradition of the apostles is guarded, and the grace of the church leaps for joy.[281]

In this treatise, the writer puts forward his claim to be the interpreter of the gospel, possibly offering himself in the position that Marcion had claimed for himself. Whereas the latter claimed to be Paul's disciple and to have taught the nations the gospel of the Good God, the writer claimed to be a disciple of all the apostles, and to teach the nations the full gospel.

Whether or not Marcion was in mind here, the writer challenged those who wanted to know the truth to listen to everything that the *Logos* revealed to the disciples: for this, the people need to be taught in the proper way, suggesting that the people previously had not been taught correctly. He said that it was not easy for him to write these things, but he felt constrained to do so under the command of the *Logos*. He said that as a result of these endeavours he was becoming a partner with his readers out of love for the things made known to him. This suggests that his message was not always welcomed, but it appears that he planned to persist in these endeavours.

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[279] Meecham 1949, pp.64-68, discussed the arguments that this part of the work was written by Hippolytus (following Connolly 1936, pp.2-15) or Melito. While he thought that it was possible that the work came from the milieu of one of these two authors, he considered that the evidence was inconclusive.

[280] There are no words from the ΔΙΚ root in these two chapters.

[281] *To Diognetus*, 11:6, tr. Ehrman.

While this third treatise clustered together with other segments in the stylometric analysis presented earlier, the different approach to the Old Testament taken by the writer of this treatise raises the possibility that it might have been the work of someone else. The fact that the work was collected together with the other two treatises suggests the possibility that it might have been from a Pontic milieu, perhaps written by a successor of Gregory. In this case, the writer's objective appears to have been to present a concrete doctrine on the subject of the authority of the Old Testament, and the use of the Gospels (presumably meaning the fourfold Gospel, rather than Marcion's truncated single Gospel). If he was criticising his famous predecessor, this would explain his discomfort in saying that his readers needed to be taught correctly. It also provides an alternative explanation for the writer's decision to assert his claim to be a disciple of all the apostles.

If Gregory did not write this third treatise, the fact that this fragment of it clusters with works by Justin Martyr and others possibly by Gregory suggests that this writer could also have been philosophically trained. If it was from a Pontic milieu, Meletius comes to mind, for whom Eusebius had a high regard, and whom he as described as the "bishop of Pontus",[282] indicating that Meletius provided ecclesiastical oversight to Pontus in the same way that Gregory had done.

[282] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:32. This was probably the same person mentioned Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74).

2.8 Biographical Accounts of Gregory

Turning now from the works possibly written by Gregory to those written about him, we encounter a considerable gap in time. Gregory died in *c.*266, and the accounts of Gregory's life that have come down to us were written during the next one hundred years or so. During the intervening period, the stories about his life were preserved as oral traditions within the church of Neocaesarea and in Gregory of Nyssa's family.[283] We are fortunate in that we have written accounts that represent three different versions of these oral traditions: the version found in the letter *To the Celibates*, the accounts written by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, and Rufinus' synopsis. Although there is some overlap, these different accounts enable us to see how these stories were modified and adapted to meet the needs of their individual audiences. More importantly, they offer the possibility of discerning the events that were likely to have lain behind the stories as handed down to us, even though they are replete with what appears to be legendary material.

This apparently legendary material in these biographical accounts appears to have been derived, in part, from the non-sophisticated ordinary people, even that found in the account provided by the very sophisticated Gregory of Nyssa. The inclusion of this material provides us with a precious opportunity to see behind the veneer of civilized society through which we have to look when handling most accounts of ancient times, as people from the upper class are the main source of our information. Therefore, in order to understand the material in the biographical accounts of Gregory's life it is necessary to understand, as best we can, the society in which he worked and lived. This will be attempted by first examining the background of traditional religion, political changes, and Christianity in Pontus before Gregory. After that, the effect of Gregory's leadership will be studied, using the material available, but generally speaking leaving to one side the material provided in the biographical

[283] Lane Fox 1986, p.528.

sources. The consideration of these biographical accounts will be deferred until the outline picture of Christianity in Pontus has been established, using the material from other sources.

2.9 Jerome & Socrates Scholasticus

Jerome included a brief mention of Gregory, in his *Lives of Illustrious Men* (written c.392). He noted that Gregory wrote a paraphrase, *On Ecclesiastes*, and some other epistles that he had not seen personally. By this time Gregory's reputation as a miracle worker appears to have overshadowed his identification as a evangelist, philosopher and church leader: Jerome said that the signs and wonders that he performed as a bishop, to the glory of the Church, were even more important that his writings,[284] an idea that has been difficult to shake off.

While the account of Gregory's life, written by Socrates Scholasticus in the first half of the fifth century, is somewhat confused, it contains some valuable information. He appears to have preserved at least one precious memory of Gregory's life, saying:

> Pamphilus Martyr mentions this person in the books which he wrote in defence of Origen; to which there is added a commendatory oration of Gregory's, composed in praise of Origen, when he was under the necessity of leaving him.[285]

In addition, it is possible that Socrates obtained at least one element of his information about Gregory's life from Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen*, namely that Gregory's discourses were believed to have been a factor in converting many people to Christianity. Socrates expressed it in this way:

> While [Gregory was] still a layman, he performed many miracles, healing the sick, and casting out devils even by his letters, insomuch that the pagans were no less attracted to the faith by his acts, than by his discourses.[286]

It is likely that Pamphilus cited Gregory as a famous disciple of Origen, whose effectiveness as a Christian missionary was given as a ground for defending Origen's reputation. The

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[284] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men, s.v. Theodorus (Gregory).*

[285] Socrates, *EH*, 4:27, tr. Zenos.

[286] *Ibid.*

importance of this testimony has been masked somewhat by the imperfect way in which Socrates appears to have passed this information down, combining the testimony which he found in the *Apology* with the reputation Gregory had acquired by Socrates' time for extraordinary miracles. While is not known whether the account of Gregory's reputed miracles was included in the *Apology*, it is likely that an account of the effectiveness of Gregory's discourses was mentioned in that account.

This vignette from Socrates encapsulates the dilemma involved in giving a proper account of Gregory's life: later generations were impressed with Gregory's reputation for working miracles by the power of God, but contemporaries and near contemporaries seem to have been only interested in his importance as a Christian thinker. This latter emphasis is found in Eusebius, who said that Gregory was "so celebrated among the bishops of our day,"[287] but did not mention any of Gregory's reputed miracles. If Gregory did some things that were later known as "wonders", as is indicated in our sources, they were possibly of only local significance, since they appear to have taken some time to be known more widely, whereas his writings were possibly of wider significance in his own times. One can see grounds for Gregory's reputation as a Christian missionary in the works considered above. Therefore, it is appropriate that we give first place to these discourses in our consideration of Gregory's life.

[287] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:30, tr. Cruse.

3 Christianity in Pontus

The majority of the people of Gregory's world were not native Greeks, but native Cappadocians, or as they came to call themselves, Pontians. The more elite members of these communities aspired to be Greeks, particularly in terms of education and through the honours of civic leadership in a Greek *polis*.[1] Yet at a basic cultural and religious level, Hellenism was an intruding culture; the way in which the old cults and beliefs were handled in this new situation was important if the old cults were to survive. In fact, the old cults of Cappadocia were not dealt kindly by Hellenism. Whereas the people aspired to associate their divinities with gods like Athena and Apollo, at the level of myth in Greece itself, in the plays of Aeschylus, the national gods were denied their lofty place in the control of the universe and everything in it, and assigned a much lower role, as chthonic gods, under Athena's protection. When Christianity was introduced into this region, amongst the native peoples, the old cults were already being submerged by the new myths, and in a certain sense the old cults were being invalidated by the new myths, despite the attempts of native peoples and Greeks to assimilate the old and new myths. The role of Hellenism in these communities appears to have made the advance of Christianity easier amongst these people, even at the level of cult and myth, particularly if it was perceived that the Christian god was stronger than the native gods.

Lane Fox observed that the "long history of a pagan temple society is the unacknowledged background to Gregory's mission."[2] The traditional cults in Pontus were resilient; they had a living heritage that stretched back more than a thousand years in Anatolia. Over the preceding centuries, the power of these cults had been weakened by the progressive introduction of other cults and ideas, since these new cults and ideas competed

[1] Jones 1940, pp.170-191; Mitchell 1984, pp.120-133.

[2] Lane Fox 1986, p.536.

with the traditional cults for the allegiance of the people. Christianity also was introduced into this region during apostolic times, yet according to Basil's testimony, apostolic Christianity had not gained a significant hold in Neocaesarea and its *chora* until Gregory's time. The failure of apostolic Christianity to gain a stronghold here appears to have been primarily due to the strength of the traditional cults, although it is likely that non-apostolic sects of Christianity were also active during this time, which would have restricted the effectiveness of apostolic Christianity. However, during Gregory's lifetime there was a significant change, and apostolic Christianity appears to have gained a large number of adherents, resulting in it becoming well established.

Gregory's main sphere of activity was the province of Pontus. The Romans created the province of Pontus in the first half of the 3rd century by excising part of the territory of the province of Cappadocia to form this new political unit. There was no province of Pontus prior to the 3rd century, so it would be anachronistic to use the name of the province to describe the region before the province was formed. Our initial area of interest actually stretches a little further than the province of Pontus in Gregory's time, therefore, to avoid confusion when discussing conditions prior to Gregory's time, the name of Eastern Pontus will be used to describe a general region, located east of the mouth of the Halys River, north of Sebasteia and south of the *Pontus Euxinus* (Black Sea).

3.1 Pontus

3.1.1 A Distinctive Region

In the 2nd century most of Eastern Pontus remained a rather backward part of the world, at least when looked at from a Greek or Roman perspective. Arrian, the Roman governor of Cappadocia in the 2nd century, when the province of Cappadocia included Eastern Pontus, described the people on its eastern borders as being most warlike and hostile to the people of Trapezus,[3] although he does not give specific details about inland peoples. We know that the native culture was still relatively strong, although the pressure to conform to Greek ways must have been growing all the time. Most of the people of Eastern Pontus were Cappadocians.

The non-Christian culture of this region was not a monolith, but multi-faceted. Within that society there were two main streams: traditional culture and Greek culture; we cannot properly understand the conversion of the people to Christianity if we do not distinguish between them, looking at each separately.[4] For example, Greek language and culture does not appear to have penetrated this region as completely as it had in western and southern Anatolia. While Greek culture in Anatolia had many unifying characteristics, so that its impact can be studied in one place and the results used to inform studies done elsewhere, it is not desirable to use this approach when studying the native cults in different parts of Anatolia. Eastern Pontus should be studied in its own right.

In the more easterly provinces of Anatolia and in Syria and Mesopotamia, even though the upper classes tended to be immersed in Greek culture, the underlying native culture still

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[3] Arrian, *Voyage Around the Black Sea*, 11:1-2; Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.57.

[4] Raditsa 1983, pp.111f, observed that in Cappadocia and Eastern Pontus the kings had to deal with two worlds, which he called the Iranian and Greek worlds. This approach is similar to that which I have taken, except that I prefer the descriptions of these two cultural environments as traditional and Greek, since it recognises the influence of the traditional (pre-Iranian) culture, which appears to have been much stronger in these regions than the intruding Iranian culture.

survived and was supported by the aristocratic leaders of the people.[5] Despite the fact that native divinities were being superficially subsumed under the identity of the equivalent Greek gods and goddesses, the old cults continued to thrive beneath this veneer. In some parts of Anatolia, particularly in the west and the south, Greek had totally replaced the native languages, but in other places the native languages continued to be used. In Neocaesarea, for example, the common people probably still spoke the Cappadocian language.[6] Here, certainly, the native cults had a strong following, and had not been supplanted by "equivalent" Greek cults. Similarly, while the Persians ruled Eastern Pontus for about two hundred years, they did not supplant the native religion, but their occupation of the region added Persian cults into the mixture.

While there were forces at work that served to unite the thinking and practices of the people of the Greco-Roman world, each community had its own unique characteristics. Romans did not think like Greeks, even though the Romans accepted much of Greek culture. Greeks were not Romans, even though they came to be governed by their laws. Naturally we have a better understanding of the underlying Greek culture than of the native culture of Eastern Pontus. Therefore, we have to be particularly careful to ensure that we do not assume that the native people had already adopted Greek ideas and ways of thinking. There were relatively few Greek cities. This was a different world, in which Greek ideas had not taken as strong a hold as they had in the province of Asia.

3.1.2 Gods Ma & Men

Since inland Eastern Pontus was linguistically and culturally part of Cappadocia, the native gods of Eastern Pontus were also the native gods of Cappadocia. The facts of geography and history meant that the native cultural orientation of inland Eastern Pontus was

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[5] Lane Fox 1986, p.30.

[6] Basil was aware of the language and at least some of the syntax (Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74)).

not western but eastern.[7] The cults and gods of the people of Cappadocia[8] can be traced back to the period of the Hittites and possibly even earlier, when the Syrian and Mesopotamian cults and gods were introduced into these regions. The principal divinity of the region in Hellenistic times was a goddess who cult derived from that of the Mesopotamian goddess Ištar.[9] The Hittite kings built a temple for an Ištar avatar in Šamuha. In particular the Hittite king, Hattušili III (1267 BC – 1237 BC) and his successors enthusiastically adopted the cult. They provided for her worship, made the priesthood of the cult a family legacy, and granted the cult a number of endowments of landed property for its support.[10] The cult was probably carried down to later generations by the Luwians, a people group related the Hittites, who

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[7] Against Hartmann (RE *s.v. Ma*, p.87), it is not necessary to resort to the expedient of declaring that this cult derived from a generalised mother-goddess figure of ancient Anatolia.

[8] In 547 BC Cyrus' armies passed through the Cilician Gates, and seized the territory of Kaptatuka previously held by the Medes; the new satrapy of Kaptatuka stretched from the Halys right across to the Euphrates (Olmstead 1948, p.39; Herzfeld 1968, pp.100f). The Persians appear to have established firm control of this region. Prior to 513 BC, Ariaramnes, the satrap of Katpatuka, crossed the Pontus Euxinus, carrying out reconnaissance for a further attack on the European Scythians (*Ibid.*, p.147). Strabo, 12.1.4, said that the Persians divided Cappadocian into two satrapies, calling one Cappadocia Pontica and the other Cappadocia near Taurus. This equates with Herodotus' nineteenth and third provinces, respectively (Herodotus, 3:90-92).

[9] Šamuha has now be localised to the site of Sebasteia on the upper Halys (Forlanini 1979, pp. 178-194; Alp 1979, pp.29-36); the other main cult centre was at Lazawantiya in Kizzuwatna (Lebrun 1979, pp.197-206), which can be localized to the general region in which Cappadocian Comana was later situated. Isager 1990, p.83, thought that the evidence might be taken to suggest some continuity of the old political and religious structure in Comana, down from the Kizzuwatna of Hittite times. Herzfeld 1968, p.89, suggested that the name Cappadocia was ultimately derived from Kizzuwatna, being passed down from the Hittites, through the Medes, and then the Persians, who called it Katpatuka. It is likely that the people of Kizzuwatna came to control most of the region east of the Halys River after the collapse of Hittite power in the central lands.

[10] Wegner 1981, p.19; Götze 1925, pp.38-41 (Hattušili III, *Apology*, 4:66-88 (§6)).

appear to have formed the basic stock of the people later known as Cappadocians.[11] While the cult was not prominent under the Luwians, it appears to have been carried forward by them,[12] and again rose to prominence among the Cappadocians under the name of Ma.[13] The Luwians also carried forward the cult of the (male) moon-god, which is also likely to have been of Mespotamian origin. These two cults were counted amongst the most important cults under the Cappadocians.

The first century AD geographer, Strabo, a native son of Neocaesarea's neighbouring town, Amaseia, remains our best source for the cultural and religious geography of Eastern Pontus. When he wrote, Queen Pythodoris ruled Eastern Pontus. Cabeira was her residential city. It is generally accepted that Cabeira either became the Roman city of Neocaesarea, or that Neocaesarea was established on a site close to that of Cabeira.[14] Neocaesarea was well placed to command the fertile Lycus valley, as Strabo indicated for Cabeira. According to Strabo, Cabeira had a temple for the moon god Men.[15] This god was also worshipped in Antioch near Pisidia, a town that figured in Paul's first missionary journey.

The Greek moon goddess and the male moon-god Men[16] were different.[17] The god of the

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[11] *cf.* Bryce 2003, pp.93-100, 124-127; Hutter 2003, pp.211-215. Luwian is likely to have been the foundation for Cappadocian, which was spoken in Cappadocia and Pontus.

[12] The goddess was probably carried forward under the name of Maliya, a goddess of Lazawantiya in Hittite times, and later a goddess in the Luwian region of Lycia (*cf.* Hutter 2003, pp.230-232; Barnett 1974, pp.900f).

[13] Wegner 1981, pp.218f.

[14] The general situation of the later Neocaesarea, in the Lycus valley, corresponds with Strabo's description of Caberia (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, p.116). Price and Trell 1977, p.95, commented that the pre-Roman name of Neocaesarea was not known with certainty. Lane Fox 1986, p.536 thought that Cabeira was nearby, but on a different site. When I visited the region, the locals directed me to a village in the foothills opposite Niksar (formerly Neocaesarea), across the Kelkit Çay (formerly river Lycus), which they called the "old city".

[15] Strabo, 12:3:31, tr. Jones 1924 (altered).

[16] Lane 1971, 1975, 1976, 1978, *passim*, RE *s.v. Men*; LIMC *s.v. Men*; Roscher ML, *s.v. Men.*

moon in European culture was female, whereas the moon-god Men in Syria and Mesopotamia was male.[18] Even though the dominant people groups in Anatolia from the preceding millennium came from Europe, the religion of many of these peoples was largely derived from Syria and Mesopotamia. This Syrian heritage was recognized in Strabo and earlier writers, who said that the Cappadocians were called "White Syrians". They were called "white" because their skin was lighter than those east of the Taurus Mountains, yet they were also considered to be "Syrians" on the basis of culture and religion.[19]

Whereas the cult of Men is well attested by steles in southwestern Anatolia, the cult is very poorly attested east of the Halys. Only one stele dedicated to Men has been found in this region and that was in Cappadocian Comana.

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[17] The deity Men was derived from the Sumerian male moon god, via the Hurrians and Luwians (see note 18). (Lane 1976, pp.113f, supported by Van Haeperen-Pourbaix 1983, argued that the moon god Men was derived from the Zoroastrian *yazata* Mah. Neither considered the possibility of a connection to the Men cult through the Luwians.) The symbol of the god Men was the crescent moon. Laroche 1955, p.24, in the conclusion of an article on the lunar divinities of Anatolia in Hittite and post-Hittite times, suggested that this cult, under the symbol of the crescent moon, survived through to later generations, saying, "... les populations de ces provinces conservatrices [Lycia et Lycaonia], débris disloqués du grand Empire, aient encore pu léguer le culte du 'croissant' à l'Anatolie byzantine et médiévale."

[18] Tarn and Griffith 1952, pp.344f. The moon-god was known as Nanna in Sumer and as Sin in Akkad. As Sin, he continued to be worshipped in Harran in classical times (Green 1992, pp.44ff). The male moon god found its way into the Hittite pantheon from the Hurrians, but he was not an important deity for the Hittites. Under Hurrian influence the worship of the god was carried forward by the Luwians: he was worshipped by them under the name Arma, which was the name for the moon and the representation of the number 30, the approximate number of days in a lunar month (Laroche 1955, pp.1-24, Houwink ten Cate 1961, pp.131-134 and *passim*). When the Luwians and Lycians who worshipped the moon god began to speak Greek, they did not adopt the Greek word for moon, Selene, as the name for the god, but called him Men, a name that was probably derived from the stem for Greek word for month, ὁ μείς, μήνος.

[19] Strabo, 12:3:5, 9; Herodotus, 1:6.

> To Lord Men Heliodoros the temple warden, son of Demetrios (dedicated this altar) for the preservation of Diodoros the priest, son of Gordios.[20]

This lack of steles in honour of Men in eastern Anatolia may be an accident of preservation, as well as reflecting the lack of archaeological activity in eastern Anatolia, but it may also indicate that the followers of this cult were not as Hellenised as those associated with the cult in western Anatolia.

The main god worshipped in Eastern Pontus, at least in the inland region, was the goddess Ma.[21] The region's main cult centre for Ma was the temple city of Comana, situated about 40 km south of Cabeira.[22] Ma also had another cult centre in Cappadocian Comana. Strabo emphasised her role as a goddess of sex when describing her cult in Pontic Comana, and he emphasised her role as goddess of war when describing her cult in Cappadocian Comana. Nevertheless, he said that both of these cities were dedicated to worship of the same goddess and followed exactly the same rituals. He particularly mentioned in regard to the cult in Pontic Comana that the city was the centre of cultic prostitution, to which people were drawn from the surrounding regions:

> And the inhabitants live in luxury, and all their property is planted with vines; and there is a multitude of women who make gain from their persons, most of whom are dedicated to the goddess, for in a way the city is a lesser Corinth, for there too, on account of the multitude of courtesans, who were sacred to Aphrodite, outsiders resorted in great numbers and kept holiday. And the merchants and soldiers who went there squandered all their money so that the following proverb arose in reference to them: "Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth".[23]

The ritual prostitution of the cult of Ma was probably related to the annual cycle of planting and harvesting annual food crops, and the cycle of pruning the vines and picking the grapes of

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[20] Harper 1972, p.225, tr. Harper.

[21] RE, *s.v. Ma*; LIMC, *s.v. Ma*.

[22] Anderson 1903, pp.60-67, reported that almost nothing remained of Pontic Comana except two inscriptions bearing the name of the city, found in an arch of a bridge near the ancient site.

[23] Strabo, 12:3:36, tr. Jones 1924 (altered).

the region.

Like the cult of Men, the cult of Ma was ancient. The cult of this goddess, identifiable under the Mesopotamian name of Ištar, and the Hurrian name of Šauška, was present in Anatolia in the Hittite period. Like Ištar and Šauška, Ma was a goddess of both love and war. As goddess of war, Ištar was believed to push kings forward in war, and make them braver than they would otherwise have been.[24] As goddess of love, the home and prosperity, it was believed that Ištar could bring good or bad fortune to a household according to her will: households that Ištar loved were in harmony, those she hated were in conflict; she was responsible for both successful marital love and seduction; she could cause a woman to be hated by her husband and vice versa; she was the one who attracted and destroyed men. She could cause a man to become impotent and she could heal his impotence.[25]

Strabo identified Ma with Enyo,[26] the wild war-goddess of Anatolia, whose notoriety was passed down to later generations through the *Iliad*.[27] The presence of the goddess Enyo in the *Iliad* supports the argument that the cults of the local avatars of Ištar did not disappear with the end of Hittite power, but instead continued to be strong in Anatolia.[28] Cults for the goddess continued throughout the Persian period. This is shown through the discovery of a double-headed silver vase found in Lycia, dated to the fourth century BC, which has a picture of the Greek war-goddess Athena, and a Lycian inscription next to her figure with the name

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[24] Wegner 1981, p.5; *vide* "Sumero-Akkadian Hymns and Prayers", ANET, pp.383-385.

[25] Wegner 1981, pp.41-52; Güterbock 1977, pp.65-74, (reprinted from *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 103 (1983), pp.155-164).

[26] Strabo, 12:2:3.

[27] *Iliad*, 5:590-595.

[28] The Hittite Empire collapsed around 1200 BC at the hands of invaders (Barnett 1975, p.417).

Maliya.[29] A Greek inscription from Lycia, in which Athena was represented as the "sacker of cities", a reference from the *Iliad*,[30] directly connects Enyo with this Ištar-like goddess, and testifies that, for the Lycians, the names Enyo and Maliya represented the same goddess.[31] Strabo's attribution of the character of Enyo to Ma also was sufficient to bring to mind the whole imagery of a bloodthirsty war-goddess.[32]

The temple of Ma in Cappadocian Comana was not strictly a temple of Ma alone. Hartmann observed that there are variants in our text of Strabo at the point where Strabo was discussing the name of the temple of the goddess he called "Enyo". He said that none of the variant readings actually have the name of the goddess Ma, but instead the best copies have ὃ ἐκεῖνα μάων ὀνομάζουσιν and ὃ ἐκεῖνα κόμανα ὀνομάζουσιν.[33] We cannot easily make sense out of the use of μάων here if we understand Ma to be the name of a goddess, since the word is plural. We need to consider the meaning of this (Cappadocian) word. The meaning of μάων would be understandable if "ma" meant god (or goddess) or divine, so that the plural form of the Cappadocian word (forced to comply to the rules of Greek inflection) meant gods. In this case we could read the clause as saying that they named the temple as "that belonging

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[29] Barnett 1974, pp.900f. Zahle 1990, p.125, thought that a Lycian coin from 400 BC – 395 BC, which displayed an image of Athena on the reverse, stood for the goddess Maliya. The Lycian language was a sister language to Luwian (Melchert 2003, pp.175-177; cf. Melchert 1993, *passim*).

[30] Bryce 1986, pp.178, 97-98; Homer, *Iliad* 5:329-333.

[31] The goddess Maliya-Athena was probably the goddess Mulliyara from Lawazantiya, who is likely to have been the Ištar-like goddess worshipped in that city. An Ištar goddess was probably the leading divinity of the city, and the prayer of Muwatalli mentioned only two divine names for that city, one of which was Mulliyara. Barnett 1974, pp.900f; Bryce 1986, pp.177f; Garstang and Gurney 1959, pp.116-118, citing KUB VI, 45-46.

[32] *vide* photograph in Poeva 1983, Fig. 1b.

[33] RE *s.v. Ma*, p.81; Strabo, 12:2:3.

to the gods".[34]

We have some indication of the rites that took place in these temples of "the gods" through Lucian's satire on the cult practices in Byblos in Phoenicia, where it appears that a similar group of gods were worshipped. Mocking Herodotus' predilection for forcing foreign gods and goddess into a superficial Greek image, Lucian called the Ištar-like goddess of Byblos by the name of the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, rather than by her usual transliterated Greek name of Aštarte. Lucian described a ritual in which the women who would not suffer to submit to the rites of prostitution had their hair cut off.[35] Strabo also alluded to this ritual being following in Comana, making reference to the "hair of mourning" that was deposited (τὴν πένθιμον κόμην ἀποθέσθαι) in the temple in Cappadocian Comana.[36]

The values maintained by the cult of Ma stand in striking contrast to those generally accepted in Western society today, a society largely shaped by Roman laws and Judeo-Christian morality. On the other hand, if we accept the evidence of the inscriptions from western Anatolia as indicative of the cult in eastern Anatolia, the Men cult appears to have operated on a level different from that of Ma. It appears that the cult of Men in western Anatolia gave greatest emphasis to dealings on a personal level, and in these dealings it supported the maintenance of justice and fair dealing between individuals, and between

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[34] This is not improbable since the Cappadocian word "ma" might have been derived from ***mahan***, which was the Luwian word for god (*vide* Hutter 2003, p.218). The name "Ma" has no root meaning in Greek: the 5th century lexicographer Hesychius associated the word with prostitution, probably on the basis of the cult formerly in those cities.

[35] Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 6.

[36] Strabo, 12:2:3, attempted an etymological explanation of the name Comana, suggesting it came from κόμη. This false etymology indicates that the true meaning of the name, which derived from Hittite times, had been lost.

individuals and the god.[37] Unfortunately, we have no way of gauging the success of the Men cult in Eastern Pontus, except to say that it received at least moral, and probably actual, support during the period of the Mithridatic dynasty, and it remained well endowed in Strabo's time. It might have operated as a counter-weight to the cult of Ma, with a value system that was closer to the Judeo-Christian, perhaps providing an alternative cultic environment for those people groups who found the value system of Ma to be unacceptable or uncomfortable.

3.1.3 Persian divinities

The imposition of Persian rule in 547 BC saw the introduction of the worship of their divinities, primarily in the form of a triad of Zoroastrian deities: the supreme good god Ahura Mazda together with two of his *yazatas*, Mithra[38] and Anahita.[39] Each of these acquired a cult in Eastern Pontus. The Iranian cult of Mithra was established in the Greek colony town of

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[37] Lane 1971, #58; Lane 1976, pp.20-29, citing Lane 1971, #43, 44, 47, 51, 62, 69, 67, 71; see also #80, in which the petitioner was punished by the god, in an undefined manner, for not having paid his vow after having received the wife that he had previously sought from the god.

[38] Mithra was the god of contract, and presided over social and political relationships at all levels. He rode across the sky in his chariot, following the sun, punishing deceit and injustice. He was sometimes depicted mounted on a horse, for example, on the coins of Trapezus: see *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, Pl. XV, 19, 20, 22, 27, 28. When Men was depicted mounted on a horse, it is possible that this imagery was borrowed from that of Mithra. However, Men always appeared with the horns of the crescent moon on his shoulders. While there appears to have been some similarity in the roles that each was believed to fulfil, and it is possible that the Men cult was influenced by the cult of Mithra, it is unlikely that the Men cult was derived from that of Mithra.

[39] Boyce and Grenet 1991, pp.219, 234f, 264, 456-460; Schwartz 1985, pp.670f, citing Clement of Alexandria, argued that Atarxerxes II introduced statues of the goddess throughout the empire. Boyce (pp.227f) thought that Anahita might have been assimilated to Ištar on a Persian seal from Asia Minor.

Trapezus in Eastern Pontus, probably during the period of Persian rule.[40] The image of Mithra, riding on a horse, came to influence the iconography of the god Men throughout Anatolia: both were gods of contract.[41] The cult of Anahita (Greek Anaïtis)[42] was established in the Pontic town of Zela,[43] absorbing either the local cult of the Luwian goddess Hebat or Ma. A cult for Ahura Mazda was probably established in Amaseia in Persian times, probably overlaid on the cult of the old Luwian storm-god. This was later known as the cult of Zeus

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[40] BMC Pontus, Pl VII, 8. Wroth (*Ibid*, p.40) mistakenly identified this as Men (*cf.* Roscher ML, *s.v. Men*, p.2691f).

[41] Boyce and Grenet 1991, p.276, cited the example of two high officials in Cappadocia, father and son: the father was Maidates (which name they thought was derived from Mah), the son was Menophilos (from Men). They thought that many names in Cappadocia were compounded with Mah. However, it is possible that Maidates was formed from the name Ma (an avatar of Ištar), rather than from Mah (the Persian moon god).

[42] Boyce 1982, pp.201-204, argued that the cult of Ištar was assimulated into the cult of Anahita; this might mean that the cult in Zela was representation of an old Ištar cult, in a Persian guise; *vide* also Boyce 1982, pp.196-197 and pp.219f. Anahita was the great Persian goddess, the goddess of rivers and waters, who presided over fertility, and also was a war goddess. Raditsa 1983, pp.100f, argued that the cultic worship of Anahita was probably introduced during the reign of Artaxerxes II (404 BC – 238 BC), as an innovation, rather than as the spread of traditional Iranian practice. If so, this probably arose through contact with Syrian and Mesopotamian religion (not with the Greeks as suggested by Raditsa), of which the marriages of Artaxerxes I (465 BC – 424 BC) were a indication, and the consequential tendency to syncretization with those cults, seen through that monarch erecting a stele to Ištar in Babylon (*vide* Boyce 1982, pp.196f).

[43] For Zela, *vide* Strabo, 11:8:4; Anderson 1903, pp.41-43. This was not a new cult place, but the cult of the Persian goddess was probably created by adapting the existing cult of an indigenous goddess. Zela was probably a cult centre in Hittite times, with the goddess of the same name as the town, but whose character we do not know (Alp 1979, pp.32f). Both Ma and Anahita were martial figures and both were goddesses of fertility. While ritual prostitution was not part of the cult of Anahita (Schwartz 1985, pp.670f; Boyce 1975, pp.72-75), it became part of her cult in Armenia (Strabo, 11:18:16).

Stratios.[44] While the Zoroastrian religion would have been spread into the countryside through the agency of Persian immigrant families, it is unlikely that the Zoroastrian cults supplanted the existing cults amongst the majority of the people. It is more likely that the native cults absorbed features from the introduced religion.

After the Persians were defeated in the battle of Issus in 333 BC, a remnant of the Persian forces retreated north, where a former satrap, Ariarathes, seized power, setting up his capital in Gaziura in Eastern Pontus.[45] On his coins Ariarathes I depicted an image of Baal of Gaziura, which was possibly a representation of the old Luwian storm-god under the Aramaic divine name meaning "Lord". The reign of Ariarathes did not last very long (332 BC – 322 BC): he was put to death by the Macedonian successors of Alexander. About twenty years later, Mithridates, another former Persian noble, attempted to gain power in the same region: he was successful in creating a kingdom for himself and his successors in Paphlagonia and Eastern Pontus.[46] At about the same time it is likely that Ariarathes II, the son of Ariarathes I, seized power in Cappadocia and ruled as a dynast under Seleucid suzerainty.[47] His son, Ariaramnes, certainly was dynast in Cappadocia, and might have minted coins in his own

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[44] Magie 1950, Vol.2, p.1072. Zeus Stratios was worshipped throughout the large territory that was part of the country lands of the Amaseia, which extended down as far as the Halys (Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.92; Strabo, 12:3:39). This cult was probably derived from the Luwian storm-god, who probably also continued to be worshipped in Cappadocia under the name of Venasian Zeus, with a temple, lands and slaves in Morimene (Strabo, 12:2:5-6).

[45] Olmstead 1948, p.508. Ariarathes might have been the satrap of the Pontic satrapy (Jones 1971, p.429 n.1).

[46] Jones 1971, p.149; Bosworth and Wheatley 1998, *passim*.

[47] Ariarathes II might have been encouraged to seize power by Seleucus as an ally against Antigonus (Bouché-Leclercq 1913, p.55). Diodorus Siculus, 31:19, said that Ariarathes II took power during the war between Seleucis and Antigonus but Jones 1971, p.429 n.1, thought the existence of Cappadocia Seleucis made it unlikely that Ariarathes II conquered the region. However, the peaceful relations between the Seleucids and the dynasty of Ariarathes indicates that the latter accepted a subordinate position in the relationship, and therefore the existence of a kingdom of Cappadocia and a region Cappadocia Seleucis are not mutually exclusive.

name.[48]

3.1.4 Hellenistic Religion & Local Cults

A measure of Hellenism was introduced into the Cappadocian dynasty and territories through marriage into the family of the Hellenistic Seleucids, if not otherwise.[49] The Seleucid ruler, Antiochus II (261 BC – 246 BC) arranged for the marriage of his daughter Stratonica to the son of Ariaramnes, who later became Ariarathes III of Cappadocia (*c*.240 BC – 220 BC).[50] During the reign of Antiochus' successor, Seleucus II (246 BC – 226 BC), Ariarathes III became the first of his line to take the title of king of Cappadocia. He also annexed the territory of Cataonia,[51] in which the main cult centre of the goddess Ma was found, being the temple town of Comana.[52] The cult of Ma became the dominant cult of the Cappadocian kingdom after the annexation of Cataonia. The cult was important to the dynasty, as demonstrated in the coins of the Cappadocian kings, which consistently displayed the image of Athena, standing as the Greek identity of Ma.[53]

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[48] BMC Galatia, pp.xxiv-xxv, 29, PL VI.

[49] Raditsa 1983, pp.111-113, observed that Hellenization in the Cappadocian and Eastern Pontic kingdoms did not primarily arise through the introduction of Greek and Macedonian settlers into these regions, but rather through the actions of the native peoples, who established Greek forms of city life for themselves, transforming existing towns into Greek *poleis*.

[50] Bouché-Leclercq 1913, p.82.

[51] Strabo, 12:1:2, referred to an Ariarathes who was the first to be called king of the Cappadocians; Ariarathes III was the first dynast with βασιλεύς on his coins (BMC Galatia, pp.xxv-xxvi).

[52] The cult remained important under the Romans, being from time to time recognized on the coins of the town, under the emperors Caligula, Nerva, Trajan, Severus, Julia Domna and Caracalla (Rémy 1991, pp.106f).

[53] BMC Galatia, pp.xxiv-xxxiv, 29-43.

Anatolia

Map 3-1 Anatolian kingdoms *c.* 200 BC

The kings of the Mithridatic dynasty continued to emphasise their descent from the Persian kings,[54] and they continued to promote the Persian cults, in particular the cult of Anahita at Zela, before whom, according to Strabo, the people of Pontus swore their oaths on the most important matters. The cult of Zeus Stratios, whose rites were based on those followed by the Persian kings, was also very important to the Mithridatic kings. For example, Mithridates Eupator demonstrated his attachment to the ancestral religion by celebrating his victory over the Roman general Murena in 82 BC with a generous feast and an enormous fire, carried out in the traditional Persian manner.[55] The presence of tombs of four early Mithridatic kings[56] which were cut into the rock face of the mountainside of the town of Amaseia support the idea that the Mithridatic kings were still attached to their Persian roots

[54] Raditsa 1983, pp.106-114, argued that the existence of the kingdoms of Cappadocia and Eastern Pontus indicated the depth of Iranization of these regions under the Persians. This was probably overstating the case, it being more likely that the rise of these kingdoms indicates that these monarchs were able to ensure a continuation of the kind of the rule previously known under Persian governors, rather than this demonstrating what was happening at the level of popular culture.

[55] Magie 1950 Vol.2, p.1072; Mitchell 2002, pp.56-58; Strabo, 12:3:37; Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, 67.

[56] Mitchell 2002, p.55.

and to the Zoroastrian religion.[57]

Figure 3-1 Mithridatic Rock Cut Tombs in Amaseia

Despite their personal links to Persia and its ancient culture, the Mithridatic kings soon recognized the importance of retaining the support of the worshippers of the native religion, who must have represented the majority of their subjects. It would have been in the interests of the territorially ambitious Mithridatic dynasty to maintain the importance of the established cult of the warlike goddess Ma[58] and the cult of the oath god Men. They would have given

[57] Rock tombs were relatively common in western Phrygia, with a notable rock tomb, surmounted with two large facing reliefs of lions being dated to seventh-sixth century BC (Roller 1999, pp.102f). The king's tombs in Amaseia are somewhat different from this one. Boyce and Grenet 1991, p.303, were not convinced that the tombs in Amaseia demonstrated that the kings were following Zoroastrian principles, yet these tombs are similar to the tombs of the Persian kings, which are found in Naqsh-i-Rustam, 5 km outside of Persepolis. While the Mithridatic tombs do not have the grandeur of the carved images of the tombs of the great Persian kings, they aspire to some memorialising, reminiscent of those tombs. See images of the tombs published by the University of Chicago: http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/IRAN/PAAI/PAAI_Tombs.html, and Boyce 1979, pp.57-60.

[58] The chief priests in the two Comanas were identified in Strabo, 12:2:3 and 12:3:32, as "second in honour after the king", which Raditsa 1983, p.109, noted was the translation of an Iranian title for the heir or second in authority, but also observed that a similar title was used in Hittite times (Telipinuš, son of the Hittite king Suppiluliuma, cited in Herzfeld 1968, p.110).

local validity to their regime.

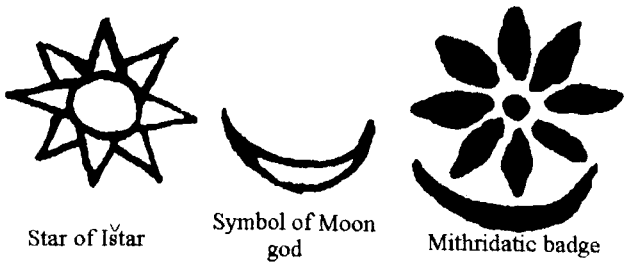

Figure 3-2 Mesopotamian symbols & Mithridatic dynastic badge

This may explain why, from the time of Mithridates IV (*c*.266 BC – *c*.220 BC), the coins of the dynasty contained the device of an eight-pointed star above a crescent.[59] This became the badge of the Mithridatic dynasty.[60] The eight-pointed star was an ancient symbol of Ištar,[61] and thus appropriate as a symbol of the goddess Ma, and the crescent moon was a symbol of the god Men.[62] When Christianity was about to enter Eastern Pontus in the first century AD, the allegiance of the people remained primarily with the native cults, principally Ma and Men, and also with the cults arising out of the melding of the native cults with Zoroastrianism under the names of Zeus Stratios and Anahita. Hellenism would also have had its appeal and its devotees, who were attracted to its culture, literature, religion and myths, but

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[59] *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, pp.1-162, Pl. 1-XVI, F-M; BMC Pontus, pp.6-47, Pl. II-XI.

[60] Clearly seen in Price and Trell 1977, Fig 177, p.98. McGing 1986, p.97, thought that it was a dynastic badge, citing the suggestion of N. Davis and C.M. Kraay, *The Hellenistic Kingdoms. Portrait Coins and History* (1973), pp.200-209, and G. Kleiner, *JDAI* 68 (1953), p.82. McGing cited M.J. Price 1968, *NC* 8 (1968), p.3, who saw a connection to the goddess Ma. Other suggestions considered by McGing were that it was a symbol of Men-Mithra-Oikonomides (*Mithraic Art* (1975) p.71), a symbol of the family's Persian ancestry and religious leanings (P. Pollak, *ANSMusN* 16 (1970), p.47), and an emblem of Ahura-Mazda (A.B. Brett, *Catalogue of Greek Coins, Museum of Fine Arts Boston* (1955), p.180.)

[61] Wegner 1981, p.92; Green 1995, p.1838.

[62] Lane 1976, pp.61f: the crescent moon was a characteristic symbol of the Men cult in southwestern Anatolia. Sometimes this was shown with a lug or nodule, which was the Luwian hieroglyphic symbol for the moon (Laroche 1969, pp.72f, which shows the symbol for god above symbol of moon), albeit facing down, rather than facing up, as in the iconography of Men.

Hellenic culture and ideas were probably limited to an educated elite. While Hellenism was introduced in inland Eastern Pontus during the Mithridatic period, it does not appear to have been firmly established during that time, the situation being somewhat different from that which prevailed in the Roman province of Asia, where there were about eighty cities established on the Greek model throughout the province,[63] compared with less than ten cities in Eastern Pontus. Therefore, when establishing a mental image of the background to the introduction of Christianity in this region, one should give first place to the evidence of the native culture and religion of Eastern Pontus itself. Christianity's apparent lack of success in Neocaesarea itself might have arisen because Christianity was actively resisted.

3.1.5 Native Cults under the Romans

While we do not have sufficient information to be able to know for certain whether the temple estates survived through to the third century,[64] it would appear that the temple estates had been added to the imperial property well before this time. By the third century the temple estates no longer existed to any significant extent:[65] it does not appear that the temples lost their landed estates at the time of Constantine's despoiling of the temples. This suggests that the temples were no longer substantial landowners by Constantine's time, and probably did

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[63] Price 1984, pp.xviii –xxiv.

[64] An edict under Valentian and Valens ordered that the lands transferred by Julian from the imperial patrimony to the temples be returned to them, (*Theodosian Code*, 5:13:3, cited in Debord 1982, p.143). This edict indicates either that Julian tried to undo a possible seizure of lands made under Constantine, or that Julian provided landed estates out of land that had been imperial property for generations.

[65] Debord 1982, pp.128-162, concluded that the seizure of the temple lands by the Roman Emperors was gradual, culminating in their definitive seizure by the Christian emperors. However, it seems more likely that the temple estates in Pontus became crown-lands at the time of the annexation of the temple-estates by the Romans in the first century.

not have significant political or economic power during Gregory's lifetime.[66]

If the temple lands had become imperial property, this does not mean that the majority of the slave workers on these estates had cast off their servile status. Even as much as a century after Gregory, the presence of vast imperial estates around Cappadocian Caesarea demonstrates that slave labour probably predominated up till then. Basil suggested that slavery was a normal part of society during his time:

> For it is more profitable that the man who, through lack of intelligence, has no natural principle of rule within himself, should become the chattel of another, to the end that, being guided by the reason of his master, he may be like a chariot with a charioteer, or a boat with a steersman seated at the tiller ... In this world, then, it is thus that men are made slaves, but they who have escaped poverty or war, or do not require the tutelage of others, are free.[67]

His comments were drawn from his life experience. They reflect his position as the member of a rich aristocratic family who considered his privileged position his natural right.[68] Yet if the "masters" to whom he referred had also been high priests of the cults with thousands of slaves, as at the time of Strabo, they would have opposed the conversion of their slaves, since that would have led to the ruination of the cult from which they gained their prestige. If there had been such opposition to the conversion of the slaves, then Basil would

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[66] Debord 1982, p.143 (citing Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3:54-57 and Libanius, *Or. pro templis*, 30:6:37, which refer to the loss of the temple property, but make no reference to the loss of lands). Although it is risky to argue from the testimony of silence, Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, also does not refer to temple lands, except for the sacred lake, which belonged to the temple.

[67] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 20 (51), tr. Jackson.

[68] Basil's repeated references to slaves shows that slavery was an important part of ordinary life in Cappadocia. *vide* Basil, *Letters*, 199, Canon 18, which states that a slave girl who gives herself away in secret wedlock fills the house with impurity and wrongs her owner; Canon 42 holds that marriage can only be valid if conducted with the permission of those in authority, the father or the master. *Letters,* 217, Canon 53, refers to a widowed slave who takes on a second marriage after having been raped is considered to be guilty of bigamy, whereas, *Letters,* 199, Canon 49, declares that a slave girl forced by her master is free from blame.

have heard of it, and under this circumstance surely Basil would not have been so unconcerned about the absolute power of the "masters" over their slaves. Since Basil thought that the conversion of slaves to Christianity was a result of their masters being the first to convert, and then bringing their slaves and dependents to follow Christ afterwards, we must conclude that the chief priests of the cults no longer controlled the slaves that worked these great estates, but that the slaves had become the direct property of the landed class. Therefore we can conclude that the native cults did not have the strong economic base of significant landed property, which might have sustained them in the face of increasing competition from the rival religions and cults.

The traditional cults had to deal with the increasing importance of a specifically Roman intrusion on their realm of influence, namely the emperor cult and the associated gladiatorial games. While the emperor cult was not a Roman creation (it arose out the divine honours paid to the Hellenistic kings),[69] the emperors "owned" the cult, and decided which cities were permitted to have a temple and cult for the emperor. In addition, within each province or *eparcheia* an *archon* was elected, who had the responsibility for the emperor cult, and who was also responsible for the gladiatorial games.[70] It was an onerous task to undertake this office, but it was considered to be an act of great civic service to accept its burdens.

[69] The observation of Tarn and Griffith 1952, pp.47-57, remains valid, that "the kings were worshipped for what they did". Price 1984, pp.23-47, argued that, as divinities, the Hellenistic rulers were ascribed a place in the city administration over and above the citizen body, which they could not have attained as mere mortals, or even as heroes.

[70] An inscription from Amisus, dated 209/210, was erected in honour of the Pontarch, M. Julius Julianus, by the *familia gladiatoria*. The Pontarch was obliged by law to offer gladiatorial contests (Cumont, Anderson and Gregoire 1910, p.7 #2).

During the reign of Hadrian,[71] Rufus, a citizen of Sebastopolis served for a time in Neocaesarea as both leader of the civic league of Pontus and as Pontarch.[72] In recognition of his service, the city of Sebastopolis honoured him after his death, and this honour was remembered in an inscription erected by his daughter, who rejoiced in her father's deeds and honours.[73] Rufus was a very rich man, and one of the first men of the city, a leader in Eastern Pontus, and a Roman citizen.[74] From the context of the inscription, it appears that he established a gymnasium for the training of gladiators.[75] Roman gladiatorial contests possibly coincided with Hadrian's presence in Sebastopolis *c.*129, when Rufus was high priest of the city.[76] This inscription is a vivid testimony to the advance of Roman culture and rituals into

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[71] In 129 Hadian began a journey to visit the eastern provinces. After passing through Cappadocia, he arrived at Trapezus, where he ordered the construction of a harbour, and also founded a temple to Hermes. On his return route he probably visited Neocaesarea and Amaseia. (Magie 1950, Vol.1, pp.621f).

[72] Greek cities of the Roman Empire competed with each other to introduce gladiatorial games, testifying to their enthusiastic adoption of Roman culture (Wiedemann 1992, pp.128ff).

[73] IGR 3:115. Anderson 1900, pp.153-156 argued that there was a κοινόν of the same name in the province of Bithynia-Pontus, but Deininger 1965, pp.64-66, argued (solely on the basis that the existence of two *koina* of the same name was hardly conceivable) that Neocaesarea was the metropolis of a league that stretched as far east as Heracleia. However, Neocaesarea was an inland city, only partially Hellenised, which could not have competed in status with the former Greek colonies of the coastal region. The name Pontus had many incarnations, being incorporated into the names of a number of provinces and *eparcheiai* (Mitchell 2002, pp.48-50), so the existence of more than one Pontarch or Pontic κοινόν does not appear to be improbable. *vide* Marek 1993, pp.47-82, against Deininger; see also Loriot 1976, p.48, Lane Fox 1986, p.534 n.17, Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.116, Mitchell 2002, p.50.

[74] Anderson 1903, pp.34-36.

[75] Wiedemann 1992, p.2.

[76] An inscription and a relief from Amisus, depicting a gladiator ready to kill his defeated opponent, was dated to the first century AD (Cumont, Anderson and Gregoire 1910, pp.11-13 #7). Inscriptions from Amaseia memorialised gladiators, one of whom was designated *retiarius* (who fought with nets): his inscription included

Eastern Pontus.

The life of most of the peoples of eastern Anatolia did not revolve around the cities, of which there were relatively few, but around the villages, where the impact of the Romans and the imperial cult must have been much less keenly felt. In addition, according to Price's analysis, only two cities of Eastern Pontus show evidence of the existence of imperial temples, being the metropolis of Neocaesarea and the metropolis of Amaseia.[77] This compares with imperial temples in approximately thirty-seven cities in the province of Asia, and in other provinces, twelve in Lycia-Pamphylia, eight in each of Galatia and Cilicia, four in Bithynia-Pontus and two in Cappadocia.[78] Nevertheless, the new cult must have diminished the importance of the traditional cults.

Despite this, the traditional cults probably had begun to lose their appeal amongst the educated elite. This is exemplified in an inscription on a large tablet found in Neocaesarea. The inscription called down a curse on those who interfered with the tablet and its associated tomb, and threatened dire punishment from the gods upon anyone who desecrated either object. In preparing the inscription the author followed an Attic Greek model, basing the text upon the imprecatory inscriptions that had been erected by the rich Greek sophist and benefactor, Herodes Atticus, on the death of his most favoured disciples. The similarity between this inscription and those of Herodes Atticus allows us to date this particular inscription to a period sometime after the middle of the second century AD.[79]

In this inscription the author referred to both the Erinyes and to Ara, the goddess of

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the figure of a palm branch, which celebrated his victories. Another fought with bears (Cumont, Anderson and Gregoire 1910, pp.133-5 #110, #109).

[77] Reinach 1895, p.86, cited a damaged inscription (destroyed in August 1892), in which the *deme* of Comana honoured a man distinguished in Pontus, associated with the deme of Comana and that of Neocaesarea, the son of Scre[ibo]nos Pios, archpriest of Pontus.

[78] Price 1984, p.xxiii.

[79] Moraux 1959, pp.13-15, 47.

destruction or curse. This appears to have been intended to invoke the symbolism of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.[80] The Arai were the main actors in this play, also known in the play as the Erinyes, the Furies.[81] They were the "older gods" who were pitted in a bitter contest against the "younger gods", represented in the play by Apollo and Athena. When the Erinyes lost the contest with the "younger gods" they said that they would blight the land with disease. To placate them, Athena offered them a place under the ground where they could receive the worship that was their natural right. They accepted their new role, under Athena's care, no longer standing in their own right, but taking their place among the daemons of the city of Athens. In this role they would be closer to men than to the "younger gods", to whom they conceded the right to rule. They had to give up, or at least ameliorate, their "furious nature".[82]

The Greeks of Eastern Pontus and Cappadocia were unlikely to have missed the allusion to the main goddess of their regions, since it was claimed that the rites for Ma were derived from Iphigenia in Taurus, the subject of a play by Euripides in which Orestes once again

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[80] Aeschylus , *Eumenides*, 417. *Ara* (singular) is also mentioned in Sophocles' *Electra*, 111, along with Hades, Peresphone, Hermes of the Underworld and the Furies.

[81] It is possible that Aeschylus joined together the idea of the cult of the Great Mother and that of the cult of Ma in creating his imagery of the Furies, perhaps being aware of the equation of Athena and Maliya amongst the Lycians, and deliberately rejecting it. In lines 185-190 he referred to the ritual of emasculation, found in the cult of the Great Mother, and in lines 195-196 he referred to the Furies as a flock of goats without a shepherd, a possible allusion to the death of the shepherd-king in the Ištar myth. The connection appears to have been made by the scholiast Demetrius Triclinius (*Scholia in Aeschylus*, p.212), who connected the act of emasculation of young men (line 187f) with the act of a wild boar, or wild boars, apparently conflating the ritual of emasculation in the cult of Atargatis and the Great Mother with the myth of the death of Attis and Dumuzi by a wild boar.

[82] The play can be understood in terms of the resolution of the problem of blood-guilt, and avenging justice, even the problem of evil (*cf.* Winnington-Ingram 1983, *passim*), however, the place given to Athena, patron goddess of Athens, seems to represent the self-appointed role of the Greeks in "civilizing" the gods of the surrounding peoples.

escaped the punishment of the wild and foreign gods, who, somewhat unjustly, demanded his death.

Aeschylus' and Euripides' presentation of the "old gods" indicates that the cult of Ma did not obtain favourable accommodation within the pantheon of Olympic gods, one that accorded her the high status she had in the local cult. Similarly, Lucian's satire *The Syrian Goddess* appears to have been intended to point out that the Syrian cults could never be fully accepted in the Greek world because the respective cultic systems were inherently different: he rejected the identification of the gods of the two systems, which had been promoted by the Seleucids. Lucian's point was probably that the whole cultic system, both Greek and Syrian, was outdated and inappropriate (as he also indicated in his *Peregrinus*), and that he thought that the idea that all the cults were the same[83] was ridiculous.

Therefore, those who kept a strong attachment to their native gods were placed at a disadvantage when compared with those who had fully adopted Hellenic culture. Since assimilation into Greek culture was the aspiration of all upward mobile people,[84] this placed the old non-Greek cults at a disadvantage, as they were less likely to be carried forward into a world shaped increasingly by Hellenic culture.

3.1.6 Constitutio Antoniniana

According to our formal literary sources, Caracalla, in 212, granted Roman citizenship to all free persons within the empire.[85] This happened around the time Gregory was born (*c*.213). This extension of Roman citizenship to the wider population became a significant

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[83] For example, Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris, passim.*

[84] It was also the aspiration of cities as a whole to be seen as truly Greek: in Bithynia-Pontus, the city of Bithynia claimed that its founders came from the Arcadian Greek city of Mantinea, and Dio Chrysostom honoured Nicea with the claim that it had Greek and Macedonian forebears, "not small groups of sorry specimens who came together from this place and that" (Mitchell 1984, p.131).

[85] Sherwin-White 1973, p.98 n.68 (citing Ulpian, *Digest*, 1:5:17; Cassius Dio, 77:9:5).

factor in the planning of his career, since it probably influenced Gregory's decision to undergo training to become a Roman lawyer.[86]

Despite the clear indication in these sources that Roman citizenship was extended to all free people in the empire, a doubt arises as to whether those free persons working the great landed estates in Eastern Pontus and Cappadocia were granted citizenship. One possible reading of the Greek text from the surviving papyrus of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* is that every free person became a Roman citizen except the *dediticii*. If the *dediticii* were a significant and permanent part of the population of the Roman Empire, this would have meant that Roman citizenship was denied to this group. However, it is probably a better reading of this document to say that every free person became a Roman citizen, including the *dediticii*, and everyone remained a citizen of their own city except the *dediticii*, whose continued to be excluded from citizenship of their local cities.[87] On this reading, Roman citizenship was granted to all free persons in the Empire, but this did not change their status in regard to the cities in the regions in which they lived.[88] Because of the ambiguity in the reading, and uncertainty about what belonging to the *dediticii* meant, the extent of the application of Caracalla's decree is not clear. This is important in regard to Eastern Pontus because of the likely continuation of great landed estates, possibly worked by *dediticii*.

The *peregrini dediticii* were defined by Gaius as those who had fought against the

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[86] *vide* Section 3.2.4 Christian Beginnings, Legal & Philosophical Education

[87] Suggested by Sherwin-White 1973, p.97, citing A.H.M. Jones, "Another interpretation of the CA", in Jones 1935, pp.223-235. However, he thought, "the administrative point involved in this interpretation is somewhat recondite," and therefore discarded this interpretation, primarily on the basis that he considered the *dediticii* to be an insignificant group in the Empire.

[88] Jones 1935, *passim*. A similar conclusion was drawn by MacKenzie 1949, pp.51-73, Sherwin-White 1973, *passim*, and Delia 1991, pp.46f, even though they excluded the *dediticii* from this grant, considering the people encompassed under this name to be insignificant in numbers, and the qualification being a temporary status.

Romans, were defeated, and had surrendered.[89] However the status of *peregrini dediticii* appears to have only applied until more settled arrangements were established. It does not appear to have included those who eventually came to be counted as members of a *deme*, namely citizens.[90] However, the arrangements in Egypt were that most of the population were not enrolled in a *deme*, and appear to have been *dediticii* before the decree: they would have remained *dediticii*, even after Caracalla's decree. An inscription from the Rhineland, dated AD 232, referring to members of an auxiliary cohort of the *dediticii*, appears to confirm that this status continued to exist. The published reconstruction of the inscription suggests that this cohort were from Alexandria.[91] If this reconstruction is correct, it is suggestive of a continuation of the arrangements whereby the native Egyptians remained outside of the political arrangements of the cities, and remained *dediticii* even though Roman citizens.[92]

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[89] Gaius, *Institutes*, 1:13.

[90] Jones 1935, pp.229f. See also Pliny's letter (*Letters*, 10:5; see discussion in Delia 1991, pp.41-45), which implied that a man needed to be a citizen of a provincial city before he could become a Roman citizen. Apparently Pliny had previously thought that all free persons were also *demesmen*, but had just discovered that this did not apply to Egyptians. The argument that the *dediticii* were only those covered by the *Lex Aelia Sentia* appears to be controverted by Bickermann's argument (cited in Jones 1935, p.225) that they were never styled *dediticii*, but rather were called *liberti qui dediticiorum numero sunt*, or some other periphrasis. Furthermore, such a small group as covered by the *Lex Aelia Sentia* would not have warranted inclusion in this "generalized and propagandistic text", whereas the status of the majority of the population in Egypt would have warranted such a reference (*cf.* Sherwin-White 1973, p.97, who does not appear to have given sufficient weight to Jones' argument).

[91] EDH HD000364; ILS 3:2 #9184; Mackenzie 1949, pp.68f. However, Sherwin-White 1973b, p.385, read the inscription as referring to *Britonnes dediticii*, the relevant section of the published inscription reading (... balieneu[m] / vetustate conlap/sum expl(oratores) Stu[ri] / et Brit(tones) gentiles [et] / officiales Bri(ttonum) et(?) / deditic(iorum) [[Alexan]]/[[drianorum]]).

[92] Sherwin-White 1973b, pp.284f, considered that *dediticii* always referred to *peregrini dediticii* (the conquered peoples), and rejected the idea that *dediticii* meant the free villagers in Egypt (and Cappadocia), since to become

Therefore, in making an exception in relation to the *dediticii*, Caracalla probably had the native Egyptians primarily in mind, together with the native people of other provinces like Cappadocia (including its Pontic territories) which were probably also administered in a similar way. In these communities the ordinary people were probably not enrolled in one of the few cities.[93] Their new status was that they were citizens of Rome (and therefore liable to Roman taxation), but did not become citizens of their local cities (and therefore the cities were not eligible to collect taxation from them). However, even though the *dediticii* were not enrolled in the local cities, they came under Roman law, so that everyone in the Empire came under the same law. At the local level the old distinctions appear to have been retained.

In the province of Cappadocia, including the territory later included in the province of Pontus, a distinction appears to have continued in local affairs between city folk (ἀστικοί) and country folk (χωριτικοί). This might have gone beyond the usual distinction made in discussing the differences between the city people and country people on cultural and educational grounds, since a distinction between these two groups appears to have continued to exist until the fifth century, according to a letter of Isidore of Pelusium. Writing with an eye on conditions in Egypt, he said that, until recently, Cappadocians were excluded from high offices (ἀρχαί), whereas Egyptians still remained excluded from these offices.[94]

This suggests that some kind of distinction must have continued to operate between

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a citizen of Rome meant the loss of *dediticii* status. Jones 1935, pp.233-235, argued that since the *dediticii* owed their obligations directly to the state, as tenants of the public lands, it was against public policy to have them share in local civil obligations. Since the subordinate status of these workers appears to have endured after this decree, Jones' reading seems more likely.

[93] Jones 1935, pp.231-234.

[94] Isodore of Pelusium, *Letters,* 1:489, PG 78:448-9, cited in Jones 1935, p.234. Jones 1940, p.82, thought that most of Cappadocia remained under bureaucratic rule, and that each of the few cities of Cappadocia had small territories (*vide* Jones 1971, pp.184, who then argued that most of the imperial land was in the eastern half of the province, around Caesarea).

people in the town and the country, but Caracalla's edict meant that everyone now came under the same laws, the laws of the Romans, even if local laws and customs continued to have some force.[95] Previously the laws of the *deme* would have prevailed in the legal affairs of citizens of the city except for the minority who were already Roman citizens. Possibly the country people would have come under the laws of city as well, since the country territory belonged to the city; perhaps the laws were implemented for them with local variants. In any event, now everyone could claim the legal privilege of having their affairs dealt with under Roman law: all free persons were equal under the one set of laws.[96]

This change in citizenship rights amongst the free people is another instance of a shift in the underlying cultural and political situation of the people in Eastern Pontus, similar to the introduction of Greek cults and Roman celebrations, already considered. These changes, and the consequent disruption of social and cultural norms, might have contributed to the willingness of some of the people to consider rival claims for their religious allegiance.

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[95] Modrzejewski 1971, pp.320-232.

[96] Whether existing local laws continued to have any effect has been debated. Modrzejewski 1977, pp.480f, citing his 1970 article, pp.317-377, thought it possible that local rights and customs might have been maintained alongside the Roman laws. Where there was a conflict, Roman laws would have prevailed.

3.2 Christian Beginnings

3.2.1 Christianity in the Apostolic Period

In the fourth century letter *To the Celibates*, it was claimed that Neocaesarea was an apostolic see.[97] This description might have originated from the need to distinguish a particular Christian congregation, one that claimed to represent the followers of all the apostles, from those of possible rivals, in particular, from those that followed the teachings of Marcion, which only accepted the apostleship of Paul. It is unlikely that any of the apostles actually visited the Roman client kingdom of Pontus, and even less likely that they travelled inland to Neocaesarea. The claim of apostolic origin might have simply arisen from a connection with the apostles as a result of Pontus being one of those named regions in *1 Peter*. This letter could have been written in the apostolic period, indeed in AD 64 or earlier.

It is possible that the Christians in the kingdom of Pontus were the primary focus of this letter.[98] *1 Peter* was addressed to the Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. If we date *1 Peter* in AD 64 or earlier, the geography encompassed by this list is simple to understand. On this interpretation, the places mentioned are the client kingdom of Pontus and the provinces of Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia-Pontus, which all existed

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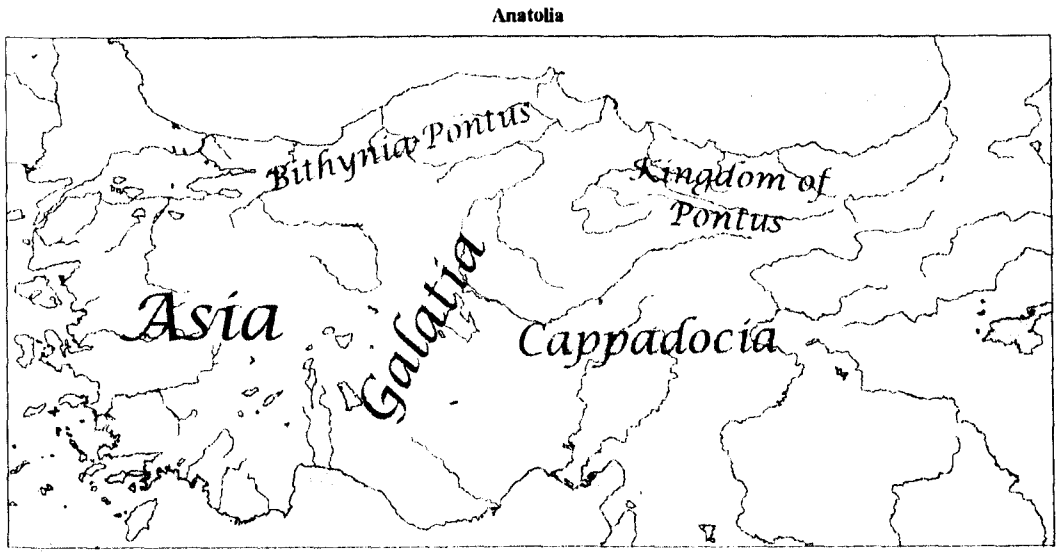
[97] *To the Celibates*, 2.

[98] Many commentators have explained the order of the names shown here as representing the order in which the places were to be visited by the person carrying the letter (for example, Elliot 2000, pp.84-93). The possibility that Christians in the kingdom of Pontus might have been addressees of this letter has been generally overlooked (for example, Selwyn 1969, pp.47f, Kelly 1969, p.3, Beare 1970, p.38, Best 1971, pp.14-16, Davids 1990, pp.7-9, and Elliot 2000, pp.84-87, all considered that Pontus referred to Bithynia-Pontus, without considering the possibility that the letter may have included the client kingdom of Pontus, and despite the fact that Pontus and Bithynia appear at the opposite ends of the list of names). Bigg 1901, pp.67f, noted that Pontus was not a province, recognizing in this name the identification of the remnant of the ancient kingdom of the Mithridatic dynasty, but he did develop this idea any further.

up to this date.[99] It is clear from this list that the writer used the names of provinces or their equivalent. He certainly did not use regional names. Regions included in these provinces included Lycaonia, Pisidia, Paphlagonia, and many others. Similarly Paul used a provincial name in his letter to the Galatian Christians, who lived in Lycaonia and Pisidia, joining them together under their provincial name when he called them "foolish Galatians".[100]



Map 3-2 Anatolian Roman Provinces & Client Kingdom AD 38 – 64

Modern commentators on *1 Peter* appear to have overlooked the possibility that the letter was addressed to Christians in the client kingdom of Pontus. One author did not think that there was any plausible explanation for the list of the regions in the letter beginning with Pontus and ending with Bithynia,[101] whereas another thought that if one argued that the list represented the names of provinces, then one would have to accept that the author was ignorant in geographical matters.[102]

[99] The client kingdom of Commagene, which existed until AD 72 and held territory in south-eastern Anatolia, was not included in this list. Perhaps Christianity had not penetrated this realm when the letter was written.

[100] *Galatians* 3:1. The argument that he was writing to Christians in north Galatia, namely to ethnic Galatians, appears to add an unnecessary complication to the situation, which was probably that he wrote a follow-up letter after he received disturbing news concerning his new converts.

[101] Beare 1970, pp.41f.

[102] Achtemeier 1996, p.85.

It is easy to confuse the various places called Pontic: this name could be used for any region bordering on the *Pontus Euxinus*. While the Mithridatic kingdom was located in the region later known as Pontus, it was not known as Pontus during that period: the Mithridatic kings considered their territory to be part of Cappadocia. Pompey invented the name in the 1st century BC, when he created the province of Pontus out of the kingdom of the defeated Mithridates, and set up a Pontic ethnic identity in his *lex Pompeia*. This legislation, which set up Pontic citizenship throughout the province, had the special rule that children of a Pontic mother should be counted as *Pontici*, in contrast to the normal rule that only paternity decided the citizenship of a child.[103] The impact of Pompey's legislation was so strong that Strabo used the term Pontus anachronistically to describe the territory of the Mithridatic kingdom, even though these kings did not use the term. After Pompey, people often called themselves Pontians if they were natives from the Anatolian coastal region of *Pontus Euxinus*, in effect, naming themselves after the sea (ὁ πόντος). Pompey's legislation explains the repeated use of the word Pontus as part of the name of the various Roman provinces, *eparcheiai* and client kingdoms formed in the region over the first three centuries of the Christian era.[104]

In Strabo's time the client kingdom of Pontus was ruled by Pythodoris, and included the territory east of Amisus up to Armenia, and going south at least as far as the Iris River.[105] It is thought that Emperor Tiberius annexed the kingdom but in AD 38 Emperor Gaius restored the ancestral territory to Polemon II, probably including most of the territory previously held by

[103] Marshall 1968, pp.107-109; Mitchell 1984, pp.123f.

[104] Mitchell 2002, pp.48-50; Marek 1985, p.79. Pontus was an identifier of lands bordering on the sea as early as Herodotus (Mitchell 2002, p.38). *cf.* Geary 1999, p.108, who described the formation of a Turkic people by conquest and constitutional law, which is somewhat analogous.

[105] Strabo, 12:3:1, 12, 39.

his mother, Pythodoris.[106] During the time that Polemon ruled this region, his territory included the towns of Sebasteia (later called Neocaesarea or Neocaesarea was located nearby), Polemonion, Pharnacia and Trapezus.[107] In AD 64 the kingdom was dissolved and its territory added to the province of Galatia.[108] There was not a separate province of Pontus until the 3rd century.

Pontus was mentioned first in the list of addressees, so the letter writer might have had the people in the Pontic kingdom particularly in mind. In this case, the reference in the letter to the "painful trial" would have had a specific meaning for them. Perhaps the king of Pontus was making life particularly difficult for the Christians in his territory. The writer conveyed the sense that things were moving rapidly towards the consummation.[109] In this period Christians could be falsely accused of common crimes.[110] The writer himself was also experiencing persecution.[111] While this might have indicated that the letter could have been written in the period immediately following Nero's persecution in 64, these conditions were experienced at other times as well. It is more likely that the problems encountered by the Christians in the provinces and this client-kingdom were unrelated to the troubles in Rome, and arose from a more generalised hostility to the Christians.

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[106] It has been asserted (most recently Marek 1993, p.79) that Trapezus was held by the Empire in a province called Pontic Cappadocia. However, Cassius Dio, 59:12, said that Caligula restored to Polemon II his ancestral domains. Strabo, 11:2:18, 12:3:29, indicated that his mother had held the cities of the coast, including Trapezus; furthermore, the coins of Trapezus are dated from the annexation of Polemon's kingdom by the Romans (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, p.147). Therefore, it is likely that Polemon II also held Trapezus.

[107] Marek 1993, pp.60f, 80f.

[108] Magie 1950, Vol.1, pp.513f, 561, 1417; Jones 1971, p.170.

[109] *1 Peter* 4:7.

[110] *1 Peter* 4:15f.

[111] *1 Peter* 4:17.

The old-style kings and the local cults worked together in a symbiotic relationship.[112] Therefore, it would not be surprising if Christians found it difficult in this kingdom since the king supported the priests and their cults, and they in turn would have supported him.[113] The Romans would not have had the resources or interest to intervene in what they would have seen as a trivial internal matter in a client kingdom. If Christianity did suffer strong resistance in the kingdom of Pontus this early setback possibly hindered its spread in this region thereafter, and continued opposition to Christianity from the aristocratic leaders of the communities in Eastern Pontus may account for Christianity's relative weakness in Neocaesarea up until Gregory's time.

The consensus in the commentaries is that *1 Peter* should be dated towards the end of the first century, but this is not possible if we identify the kingdom of Pontus with the mention of Pontus in *1 Peter*. As already mentioned, the king's territory was added to Galatia in 64, so that, from that time onwards, there was not even a separate province of Pontus (leaving aside the province of Bithynia-Pontus already discussed). Between 72 and c.112 there also was not a separate province of Cappadocia, that territory also having been added to Galatia.[114] While a

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[112] Sullivan 1978, *passim*, observed that it was the widespread practice of the leaders of these eastern dynastic communities to hold both military and religious offices, with the role of the kings being intimately involved with the maintenance of the cults.

[113] Before becoming king of Pontus, Polemon was dynast and high priest in Olba in Cilicia (Sullivan 1978, pp.926-928). He was married to the Jewish princess Berenice, a marriage for which he was willing to undergo circumcision (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:7:3; *cf.* Sullivan 1978, p.925.) However, she might not have been married to him when he was king of Pontus: Josephus said that he married Berenice while king of Cilicia [that is, dynast of Olba], but the marriage did not endure long.

[114] Magie 1950, Vol.1, p.605; Loriot 1976, p.46 n.2; Bosworth 1976, *passim*. Two inscriptions refer to separate *eparcheiai* in this combined province, mentioning Galatia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Pisidia, Paphlagonia, Lycaonia (or Isauria) and Amenia Minor (CIL 3:312; *cf.* Magie 1950, Vol.2, p.1460). An inscription (CIL 3:249) in honour of Didius Marinus, *procurator familiarum gladiatoriarum* for Asia, Bithynia, Galatia, Cappadocia,

definitive statement on dating *1 Peter*, which must necessarily deal with the question of authorship of the letter, is beyond the scope of this work, we can tentatively conclude that the datable evidence in the letter suggests there was a Christian Church in the kingdom of Pontus in the apostolic period, and that it encountered some difficulties, possibly from those in authority.

3.2.2 2nd Century Christian Expansion

The *Pontus Euxinus* afforded the coastal cities easy access to the main centres of Greek civilization, and even more so because a number of these cities were founded as Greek colonies.[115] Amisus, a colony of Miletus, was the most important: it received Athenian settlers from the 5th century BC onwards. Trapezus and a number of other cities on the south coast of the *Pontus Euxinus* were colonies of Sinope, which itself was also a colony of Miletus.[116] In the same way, the *Pontus Euxinus* would have provided an easy conduit for the introduction of Christianity into the coastal cities.[117] A letter of Pliny the Younger, the Roman governor of the province (*c*.111-*c*.113) shows the presence of a noticeable number of Christians in that province at the beginning of the second century.

In a letter[118] possibly written in Amastris[119] (in the Pontic part of Bithynia-Pontus), Pliny

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Lycia, Pamphylia, Cilicia Cyprus, Pontus, Paphlagonia, also suggests that these regions represented separate *eparcheiai*.

[115] The coastal cities of the Pontus Euxinus appear to have belonged to "interconnected networks" that were largely self-contained, on both the economic and the social level, within the confines of the Sea: the narrow and difficult straights of the Bosporus might have been a factor in the relative isolation of this region (Mitchell 2002, pp.40-48).

[116] Magie 1950, Vol.1, p.183.

[117] Anderson and Gregoire (in Anderson, Cumont and Gregoire 1910, p.21), were inclined to date inscription #11 from Amisus, possibly Christian, to the first century AD.

[118] The letters appear to be genuine: *vide* Sherwin-White 1966, pp.691f; Radice 1969, pp.11-33, did not dispute the authenticity of the letters.

reported to Emperor Trajan upon his strenuous and successful efforts to suppress Christianity in that place. Pliny had found that Christianity was strongly entrenched, with adherents ranging from Roman citizens to slaves. By taking stern measures against the cult, he believed that he had reduced its baneful impact. He said that he had made preliminary examinations of the accused persons, giving them opportunities to recant; where that failed to bring about the desired result, if the offenders were Roman citizens he had listed them to be sent to Rome for trial, and if they were only natives he had them executed forthwith. By his actions, Pliny believed that he had revived the proper respect for the gods and their cults, even if he had not eliminated the new cult.[120]

The Church in Bithynia-Pontus appears to have survived: Eusebius said that Dionysius of Corinth (*c.*170) wrote to the church at Amastris in Pontus, and later mentioned that the bishop of Amastris convened a council to consider the question of the date of the celebration of Easter.[121] Furthermore, in his satire on Alexander of Abonouteichus (another coastal city of Pontus in Bithynia-Pontus), Lucian has Alexander complain that Pontus was "full of atheists and Christians".[122] Alexander lived in the second half of the second century AD. On the basis of this evidence, it is likely that the churches on the Pontic coast thrived during this period. This would have included the church in Trapezus, which city had traditional links with Sinope.

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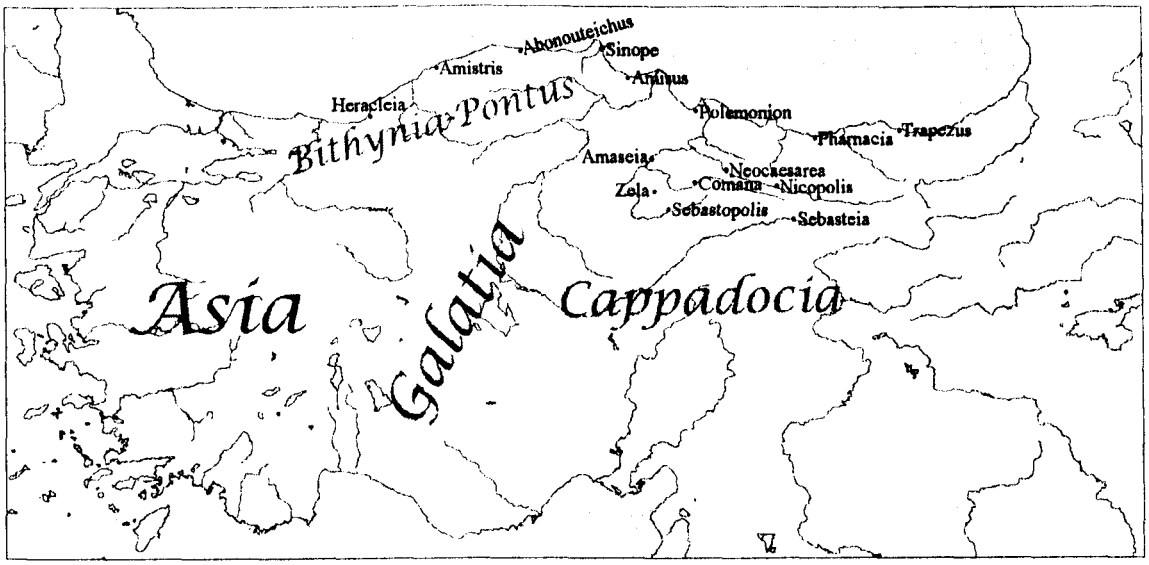
[119] Sherwin-White 1966, p.693, noted that the letters about the Christians are placed between letters sent by Pliny dealing with the affairs of Amisus and Amastris: these were both coastal cities, in the eastern and western halves, respectively, of Pontus in Bithynia-Pontus. It is unlikely that Pliny's action was taken in Amisus, as he said that it was a free city that administered its own laws.

[120] Pliny, *Letters*, 10:96.

[121] Eusebius, *EH*, 4:23 and 5:23. Marcion, the founder of an eponymous heretical movement, was probably from from Sinope in Bithynia-Pontus (DCB, *s.v. Marcion*).

[122] Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 25. This appears to refer to the Christianity in the province of Bithynia-Pontus. It has limited evidentiary value for Christianity east of Amisus.

Anatolia



Map 3-3 2nd Century Pontic cities

Apostolic Christianity was challenged by Marcion of Sinope (a town of Bithynia-Pontus) in the first half of the second century. The Marcionite Church appears to have been very successful. While it is known that Marcion acquired many followers in Syria and Mesopotamia,[123] hard evidence for the success of the Marcionite Church in Anatolia is limited. Our best source for early Marcionite success, outside of Syria and Mesopotamia, is Justin Martyr, who, in 150, said that Marcion had made many converts in every nation.[124] The only evidence for an enduring Marcionite Church in Anatolia is the reference to the Marcionites who died in the Decian persecution in the middle of the 3rd century, in Smyrna.[125] Nevertheless, the fact that we know so little of Christianity as a whole in the regions of Bithynia-Pontus and Eastern Pontus from the time of Pliny until Gregory, even though Lucian

[123] Drijvers 1984, p.3, noted that Ephraem the Syrian, in the second half of the 4th century, devoted most of his intellectual energy to opposing Marcionism.

[124] Justin Martyr, *1st Apology*, 26. The *Chronicle of Edessa* stated that Marcion left the Church in 137 (Drijvers 1984, p.4). Hoffmann 1984, pp.31-74, argued that Marcion's primary sphere of influence was in "the east" (rather than in Rome), and that his activity probably came to an end around 154.

[125] *Martyrdom of Pionius*, 21:5. In *Herameron*, 2:4, and *Letters*, 188:1, Basil referred to the teachings of the Marcionites, Valentinians and Manichaeans. However, it is not clear from this reference whether Marcionism and Valentinianism continued to be important in his region at that time.

said that the region was full of Christians, suggests that most of the Christians in this region might have been heretical, and if so, probably Marcionite.

There does not seem to have been a flourishing apostolic church in Neocaesarea before Gregory's time. While there are questions about the veracity of the fourth century claim that there were only seventeen Christians associated with the apostolic city church of Neocaesarea when Gregory took office, this claim should perhaps be understood as a statement about the weakness of the apostolic Church in that region, rather than a claim about the weakness of Christianity more inclusively understood. While it is possible that the apostolic Church was established in Neocaesarea in the apostolic period, it is likely that it struggled against local resistance from the leaders of the native cults for the next two hundred years, and also competed with a Marcionite rival.

3.2.3 Family & Education

Gregory was brought up as a Greek speaker, and his father would also have been a Greek speaker, since the family belonged to the elite class of society. As a property owner, it is likely that the family controlled a number of slaves or serfs to work the property. This suggests that both Gregory and his father would have also spoken Cappadocian. Gregory's own comments indicate that his father remained attached to the traditional Cappadocian gods and cults, in a way that was somewhat removed from being truly Hellenic.[126] It appears that Gregory did not follow his father's way, but instead adopted what appears to be a more Hellenic view of the world. He described this in the autobiographical section of his *Address*, saying that the death of his father meant that he was released from his father's "devotion to the gods". He thought that, in the normal course of events, he would have had no chance of escaping the life to which that upbringing would have led him.

[126] Gregory, *Address*, 1 (2, 7), considered being called "truly Hellenic" a high compliment.

> Our education from birth was under our parents: the hereditary customs (πάτρια) that lead into error were established [in our lives]. I do not think that anyone expected that we would be set free from them, and I did not hope for this, since I was a young child and without reason, and I was under a father who was devoted to the gods (δεισιδαίμων).[127]

Gregory said that the unexpected loss of his father was the beginning of his "recognition of the truth".

> Then came the loss (ἀποβολή) of my father, and orphanhood, which then was henceforth for me also the beginning of the recognition of the truth. At that point for the first time I was brought over to the saving and true *Logos*, I do not know how, having been constrained rather than on my own account. For how could this decision be attributed to me, since I was fourteen years of age?[128]

Gregory's choice of word here, ἀποβολή, loss or jettison, for the "loss" of his father is a little surprising, perhaps even disparaging of his father's memory. He does not say what was the cause of his father's death, nor does he even explicitly state that his father had died.[129] In any event, this was a signal moment in Gregory's life, for it made it possible for him to have a transforming experience, described by him as being "brought over to the saving and true *Logos*."[130]

Gregory rejoiced that this happened when he was only fourteen years old, since he did not have to answer for his actions and beliefs prior to that time. He said that, when he reached a responsible age, the saving and true *Logos* began to work within him. Gregory believed that

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[127] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (48). Gregory's comments could indicate that Gregory's father had a leading role in the support of the old cults.

[128] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (49-50)

[129] The ambiguous wording may be thought to suggest the possibility that his parents were divorced. But under Roman law, after divorce, the children of the marriage remained the "property" of the father (de Zulueta 1953, p.38), so this would not have meant that Gregory "lost" his father, unless his father disowned him. This is not likely, since Gregory referred to returning to his father's house (Gregory, *Address*, 16 (189)).

[130] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (50).

something happened within him that changed him permanently when he was released from the controlling hand of his father, and his mother had sole responsibility for his upbringing.

According to Eusebius, Gregory was also called Theodorus. Mitchell argued that this name indicates that Gregory's parents were adherents of the cult of the Highest God.[131] While the name Theodorus means "gift of god", a name that might be taken to suggest that his father was a worshipper of the Highest God, Gregory's brother was called Athenodorus, "gift of Athena",[132] a name that suggests, particularly in Neocaesarea, devotion to the cult of Ma.[133] So even if Gregory's father accepted the validity of the cult, or the idea, of the Highest God, the fact that he gave the name Athenodorus to another of his sons suggests that he might still have given a high place to the traditional cult. Such combinations were not unknown, and the range of religious expression of the people was virtually limitless. For example, in the first century, before becoming king of Pontus, Polemon was the dynast and high priest in Olba in Cilicia, yet at the same time he accepted circumcision in order to marry a Jewish princess.[134]

Gregory's statement about his father's devotion to the gods is probably a more important indicator. This suggests that Gregory's father remained devoted to the traditional gods, and did not give first place to the more philosophical concept of the "Highest God". The name Theodorus might have even derived from Ma, since the goddess was known in the Comanas in Greek as ἡ θεός or ἡ θεά.[135] (both forms could have been the root of Theodorus). As

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[131] Mitchell, 1999a, pp.102-104, argued that, while the name Athenodorus suggested that Gregory's father also worshipped Athena, she would have been worshipped as a lesser divinity under the Highest God.

[132] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:30.

[133] Of course, the name might have been one traditionally used within the family, and perhaps did not indicate current religious affiliations at all.

[134] *vide* n. 113.

[135] Strabo did not actually name the goddess, but referred to her as ἡ θεός (Strabo, 12:3:32, 36). Similarly, Appian referred to her as ἡ ἐν Κομανοῖς θεά (Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, 114). An inscription from Cappadocian Comana referred to the goddess as ἡ νικηφόρος θεά (RE *s.v. Ma*, p.78, 2d, citing Waddington, "Inscriptions de

already discussed, it is possible that the name that the people gave to the goddess, Ma, actually meant "god" or "goddess" in Cappadocian or Luwian.[136] Since the name of the goddess when translated from Cappadocian into Greek was probably *thea* or *theos*, it is possible that the name Theodorus was also intended to mean "gift of Ma".

Gregory gave no indication that his mother opposed the pursuit of his new way of life; it is even possible that his mother actively supported him. It should be noted that Gregory specifically said that his father was δεισιδαίμων: he did not include his mother in this statement. It is even possible that Gregory's birth name, Theodorus, was a compromise that met the religious needs of both mother and father. This could have been the case if his mother was already a worshipper of the Highest God. Alternatively, his mother might have come from a family that had generally lost interest in the traditional Cappadocian cults, and was more Hellenised than Gregory's father. This seems the more likely scenario.

The immediate cause of the change in his life, as he himself said, was that he was freed from his father's devotion to the gods. It is unlikely that he was transformed through the teachings of philosophy, since he said that Origen was the first and only one who persuaded him to pursue philosophy.[137] While exposure to the idea of a "Highest God", an indefinable

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la Catonie", *Bull. Hell.* VII 125ff, #1, and Ramsay, *Journal Philol.* XI, p.147). Inscriptions from Ehdessa (Macedonia), Hyrkanis (Lydia) and Pergamon referred to the goddess as Μᾶ ἀνίκητος θεά (RE *s.v. Ma*, pp.79f, 2q, 2r, 2s, and p.81).

[136] *vide* n. 34. Inscriptions from Cappadocian Comana show that individuals took the theophoric names Ma and Mas; the name Ma was probably taken by women and the name Mas was probably taken by men (Harper 1968, *passim*; Harper 1969, *passim*; Harper 1972, *passim*). Elton 2000, p.294, reported that many of the Luwian inscriptions from Cilicia Aspera were monosyllabic, such as Las, Mas and Nas, and could have been the same for men and women, as the language did not distinguish between masculine and feminine genders (*cf.* Houwink ten Cate 1961, *passim*). Perhaps Mas was the original form, and Ma was a Greek adaptation used for the feminine form.

[137] Gregory, *Address*, 11.

Hellenic monotheism, is a possible course, perhaps seen in a manifestation of the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* (Θεὸς Ὕψιστος),[138] this is not likely, given the allusion that he made to the "true Sun" only shining on him only after he met with Origen. As already discussed, this suggests that he accepted for the first time that the God of the Old Testament representing the Highest God. Rather than joining the cult of the Highest God when he was fourteen, it seems more likely that he joined the Marcionite Church, or a similar movement.[139] Gregory's repeated references in the *Address* to his personal angelic guide strongly suggests that he had come to recognize and accept the idea of angels, and to believe that they were concerned with the individual lives of "believers".[140] While this was probably a feature of the cult of the Highest God, it is also conformable to Marcion's doctrine, since Marcion acknowledged the existence of angels.[141]

3.2.4 Legal & Philosophical Education

Gregory's mother appears to have been like the proud and somewhat independent woman of Sebastopolis, who raised the inscription in honour of her father, which we considered earlier. Gregory said that his mother took control of the education of her sons, so that after the boys had completed the usual preparatory education, normal for children who were "not ignobly born and nurtured", they began to study under a rhetor, with the intention that they would become rhetors themselves. Meanwhile Gregory also began to learn Latin. After he

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[138] Mitchell 1999a, pp.102-104; Mitchell 1999b, *passim*.

[139] Gregory said that he was "brought over to the saving and true *Logos*" at the age of fourteen. If he was converted to Marcionism at that time, a possibility suggested here, this means that he still attributed a high value to Marcionite teachings, even arguing that the Marcionites revealed the "true *Logos*" to him, and implying that salvation could be found within that Church, despite the fact that he now considered that its doctrines were inadequate in relation to the Old Testament, and the nature of God.

[140] Gregory, *Address*, 4 (40-46), 5 (71-72), 17 (201); Mitchell 1999a, pp.103f.

[141] Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5:7.

had attained some acquaintance with that language, his Latin tutor suggested to him that he should study Roman law, on the grounds that this would give him a passport into a career as a rhetor in the law courts, or in some other capacity.[142] The universal application of Roman law throughout the Empire must have opened up many opportunities in Roman law for the ambitious.

Gregory proceeded with his Latin legal studies, up to the point at which he had to consider how to advance his studies further. While he thought that he could have gone either to Rome or to Berytus to study Roman law, the decision was almost made for him when an opportunity unexpectedly arose for him to travel to Caesarea, the capital of the Roman province of Palestine. He was to go as an escort for his sister, who had married an adviser to the governor of Palestine[143] and was required to rejoin him in that city. Seizing the opportunity, he accepted the task, both for the sake of his sister and her husband, and also taking this as his chance to begin his legal studies in nearby Berytus. He travelled to Palestine by the Imperial post, which was a very special privilege.[144] He would have been around eighteen years of age at this time, almost finished his formal rhetorical studies, and part way through his legal and Latin studies.

Gregory indicated that he and his brother were still under the formal management of tutors when the decision was made to travel to Palestinian Caesarea and then back to Berytus. Only one of Gregory's teachers was a teacher in Latin, and it seem likely that Gregory and his brother were still being trained as rhetors. Gregory said that it was thought they would have become expert rhetors, and that his Latin teacher also said that Gregory could follow a career in rhetoric outside of the legal system. Therefore, it is likely that both Gregory and his brother

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[142] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (60).

[143] Inscriptions from Amaseia, one from the second century and one from the third century, show two men who served governors in this way (Lane Fox 1986, p.518).

[144] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (48-72).

were still practising rhetoric right up to the time that they left Neocaesarea.

The practice of law in the eastern half of the Empire was in a state of transition in the third century. Previously, under the Empire, those who delivered speeches before the tribunal were not formally qualified in the law. By the fourth century, only those who had received formal professional legal training were able to act as advocates in the court system. Gregory's teacher of Latin, who also had some acquaintance with the law, and who thought that legal training would be useful to Gregory as a rhetor before the law courts, probably belonged to the older group of advocates. Gregory, after having studied law in Berytus, in Latin, was one of the new men.[145] He had undertaken the professional training now required for the successful functioning of the courts.[146]

In the *Address*, Gregory said that he had not practiced rhetoric for eight years, but Eusebius said that Gregory studied with Origen for five years. The ordinary explanation for this could be that for three of these eight years Gregory was being trained in law in Berytus, and this is the explanation that I prefer. Some have argued that the eight years to which Gregory referred included his last three years in Neocaesarea, asserting that during that time

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[145] Gregory, *Address*, 1 (7), thought the Roman laws to be admirable, describing them as "most Greek". This reflects Origen's own opinion of these laws. Origen considered the laws of the Greeks and the Romans to be superior to those found in the Old Testament (Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 7:5:7).

[146] Crouzel 1969, p.20, proposed that the most likely interpretation of the evidence was that Gregory studied Latin and Roman law for three years before coming to Palestinian Caesarea, and that Gregory did not study in Berytus at all. Modrzejewski 1971, pp.315f, accepted Crouzel's argument, and said that Gregory returned to Neocaesarea without "une formation professionelle sérieuse", despite pointing out Gregory's perceptive understanding of the current state of the law at the time of his speech (pp.320-323). For the reasons given above, I believe that this interpretation of the evidence is unlikely, especially since Origen implied in his letter that Gregory was equally trained in both law and philosophy. While Modrzejewski cited Origen's *Letter* and noted the technical term used, he thought that fate had intervened to prevent him from becoming as assessor, yet provided no supporting evidence for this opinion.

Gregory had devoted himself to the study of Latin and the law, when he did not practice rhetoric (or listen to rhetoric). However, this does not conform to his own statements about his education in Neocaesarea: it is more likely that he continued to follow all the normal branches of study until he left home, and he did not abandon the study of rhetoric until he came to Palestinian Caesarea.

Gregory said that he had not listened to a rhetorician for eight years, excluding those who had embraced the "good philosophy". This suggests that the eight years ran concurrently with his time with Origen. Furthermore, he said that the study of Latin lay heavily on his mind: it is hard to imagine that he would have said this if he had not studied any Latin at all in the previous five years.[147] It is more likely that his reference to his Latin studies was current, and perhaps completed in the more recent of these eight years, rather than a reference to his adolescent study, through which he had not even intended to arrive at fluency in the language.

If it is tentatively accepted that Gregory spent eight years in Caesarea and Berytus,[148] the other information we know about Gregory's time there falls into line with that assumption. Following McGuckin's dating, it is thought that Origen settled in Palestinian Caesarea in 231, initially travelling to Athens on church business and then returning to set up his school.[149] Gregory said that Origen had arrived at Caesarea "as if to meet us", implying that it was a

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[147] Gregory, *Address*, 1 (7).

[148] Mitchell 1999a, p.104. While Heine 1993a, p.17, thought that this indicated that Gregory's time with Origen must have commenced after 238, such a reference would have conflicted with Gregory's depiction of Origen having recently arrived from elsewhere, meaning Alexandria, when Gregory himself arrived in Palestinian Caesarea: setting Gregory's arrival in 238 seems too late for this.

[149] McGuckin 2004, pp.13f. *cf.* Nautin 1977, pp.65-71,410,431f; Trigg 1983, pp.138-140; Heine 1989, p.5; Mitchell 1999a, p.104.

relatively recent event, perhaps arriving in 232.[150] A departure date no earlier than around 240 is indicated by a subtle allusion to book 32 of Origen's commentary on *John* in Gregory's *Address*,[151] since that book was probably written around that time.[152] Book 22 (now lost) referred to persecution under Emperor Maximinus (235-238),[153] so it is known that the books from 22 to 32 were written after 238. The work on these commentaries on *John* was finished in Palestinian Caesarea, before Origen's second visit to Athens,[154] which is dated sometime between 238 and 244. This is agreeable with dating Gregory's departure as 240, being eight years after he arrived in Palestinian Caesarea.

Gregory and his brother had been born into a privileged position. Their mother had sufficient money to allow them to study in Caesarea and Berytus for eight years. The two brothers also had a brother-in-law who was engaged in the service of a governor. So when they completed their studies, their brother-in-law possibly carried out his responsibilities as their local patron by recommending them for legal postings similar to his own. Indeed, they appear to have been offered just such a posting, for Gregory said that they were returning

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[150] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (63), tr. Slusser. Heine 1993a, pp.16f (following Nautin 1977, p.381), thought that Gregory arrived in Palestinian Caesarea around 238. However, a seven year gap from 231 to 238 (or dating Origen's arrival in 234, a four year gap) seems too long a period to be characterised in this way.

[151] Koetschau 1894, p.xiii, drew attention to the allusion in Gregory, *Address*, 2 (18) to Origen, *Commentary on John*, 32 (87).

[152] Heine 1993b, pp.261-266, also identified another three allusions to Origen's commentary on *John*, in book 20.

[153] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:27.

[154] Work on the commentaries on Ezekiel, commenced in Palestinian Caesarea, was continued in Athens (Eusebius, *EH*, 6:32); *vide* Nautin 1977, pp.410-411. Heine 1993a, p.18 n.62, observed that the homilies on *Luke* were delivered before book 32 of *Commentary on John*.

home to take careers in the law.[155]

> For all the dismal things will await us, tumult and agitation in the place of peace, and in place of a quiet and well-ordered life a chaotic one, and in place of this freedom a harsh bondage to marketplaces, tribunals, crowds and pretentiousness (χλιδή). No longer shall we have any time to devote to divine things, nor shall we tell the words of God; we shall 'recite the deeds of human beings' (which a prophetic man deemed simple affliction) and in our case even those of wicked human beings.[156]

Gregory also said that he did not have to return home, but could have stayed in Caesarea if he had wanted to do so.[157] This suggests that he had received an offer of a post from that city, in which he could have carried out both his legal duties and continued to practice philosophy with Origen.[158] He said that a sense of gratitude forced him to act as he did and return home.

Gregory was qualified by his legal training to act as a legal assessor. The duties of assessors, summarised by the jurist Paul (Praetorian Prefect under Septimus Severus 193-211), covered all the technical functions of the court:

> Practically every duty of an assessor (duties in performance of which students of the law exercise their skills) is comprised in the following heads: judicial hearings, motions, applications by writ, edicts, decrees, missives.[159]

There were a number of tasks he would be required to fulfil in this role. In civil cases on behalf of plaintiffs, he would be required to prepare a draft of the *formulae* to put before

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[155] Dräseke 1901, p.98. Lane Fox 1986, pp.526f, noted that Gregory was expecting to be a law-court orator in Pontus, although, somewhat inexplicably, Lane Fox did not canvass the possibility that Gregory followed through on this intention (p.530).

[156] Gregory, *Address*, 16 (192-193), tr. Slusser.

[157] Gregory, *Address*, 16 (198).

[158] An Imperial ruling required students to return home within ten years of leaving to study elsewhere. His eight years of study still left him with a further two years grace. A little after this, Emperor Diocletian was asked to rule on students who had stayed at Berytus studying until they were twenty-five years of age or older (Lane Fox 1986, pp.527f, citing Justinian, *Codex*, 10:50:1).

[159] Justinian, *Digest*, 1:22:1, tr. Watson.

provincial magistrates, setting out the causes of the actions. These were required to be expressed in the correct form before the plaintiffs' cases could be heard. If the magistrate accepted an action, a judge would then be appointed, who was acceptable to both parties. The judge was required to hear the case strictly in terms of the *formula* established for the case: once he had decided the proof of the case the conclusion of the case had to be delivered exactly as laid down in the *formula*, to either condemn or absolve the person charged, in according with his decision on the facts.[160]

3.2.5 Serving an Assessor in Pontus

When Gregory returned home to Neocaesarea the city was the capital of the new province of Pontus, formed by excising part of the province of Cappadocia.[161] The province was created by 235.[162] This political realignment would have contributed to a change in the relative statuses of the two main cities within the new province, Amaseia and Neocaesarea. Despite being geographically close, both had previously asserted their rights to be called "mother cities", and were likely to have been heads of separate *eparcheiai* within the province of Cappadocia.[163] Neocaesarea, being made into the capital of the province, supplanted its rival.

A count of surviving bronze coins suggests that previously Amaseia might have been

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[160] Wenger 1940, pp.132-163.

[161] Based on Ptolemy, *Geography*, 5:6, and the coins of the region (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, pp.31-51, 133, BMC Pontus, pp.12, 35), it appears that before the province of Pontus was formed there were probably three *eparcheiai* of Pontus belonging to the province of Cappadocia: Pontus Polemoniacus, of which Neocaesarea was the capital, and Pontus Galaticus, of which Amaseia was the capital, and Pontus Cappadocicus, with the local centre of government at Trapezus. *cf.* Anderson 1903, p.36.

[162] Christol and Loriot 1986, pp.13-20; Loriot 1976, pp.44-61.

[163] *cf.* Bowersock 1995, pp.86-90, on the development of multiple metropolises within a province, and the use of the name *eparcheia* to describe the subdivision of provinces.

commercially more important than Neocaesarea, yet Amaseia appears to have stopped minting coins from the time the new province was created, and never minted again, as shown in the following table.[164] Whether this was due to the political changes, or was entirely due to an economic realignment is not entirely clear. An increase in the price of bronze during the third century probably made it generally less attractive to mint bronze coins, which might have led to a partial centralisation of this function in the provincial capitals.

City	193-235	235-238	238-244	244-249	249-251	251-253	253-259	259-268
	Severan Dynasty	Maximinus	Gordon I - III	Philip	Decius	Gallus	Valerian	Gallienus
Amaseia	295	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comana	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neocaesarea	123	0	55	3	0	19	23	36
Sebastopolis	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Trapezus	42	0	17	12	0	0	0	0
Zela	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3-1 Greek Coins by City in Pontus

It is possible that Trapezus initially remained outside of the new province, remaining in the *eparcheia* identified by Ptolemy as Pontus Cappadocicus, until after Philip's reign.[165]

[164] The collections surveyed were those in *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, BMC Pontus, *Sammlung*, the ANS database, and Ireland 2000, pp.14-33 (coins in the museum of Amasya, ancient Amaseia), in the proportions 42%, 9%, 11%, 22% and 23%. There was only one coin from Trapezus in the museum of Amasya, so the numbers shown for Trapezus are probably understated by about a quarter.

[165] Trapezus continued to mint coins up to around 249 (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, pp.156f), and maintained its importance as a strategically located Black Sea port (Boyce and Grenet 1991, p.302). Ptolemy placed it within the region of Pontus Cappadocicus, with the cities of Trapezus, Cerasus and Pharnacia (Ptolemy, *Geography*, 5:6:5; Marek 1993, p.79, accepted Ptolemy but mentioned that Jones 1971, p.511, thought that Pontus Cappadocicus was a figment of Ptolemy's imagination). It appears that Trapezus was not ranked as a metropolis, and the lack of testimony from inscriptions indicates that it was not the centre of a κοινόν. Since the count of cities does not allow for it, it appears that Trapezus, Cerusus and Pharnacia were not included in Neocaesarea's

When Gregory came home to Neocaesarea, he returned to a city that had recently had a significant increase in its status. The city would have confidently faced its new future as the centre of Roman power in that part of the world. Gregory was probably appointed to work for an assessor. Certainly if he was appointed as an official assessor in his own right, it would have not been easy for him to have taken a posting in Neocaesarea, since an assessor could not normally occupy this office within his own province. This ruling appears to have been intended to place the assessor above the suspicion that he was serving his own interests when carrying out his state duties.[166]

Modrzjewski pointed out the difficulty in filling such posts in the eastern provinces, for not only did the potential assessor have to learn Latin, but also was required to learn the specialised vocabulary of the law.[167] While an assessor could serve in his own city with the emperor's permission, it was an offence to do so without his permission.[168] The shortage of available candidates would provide a possible reason for such an extraordinary grant being sought. If such permission were granted, then the governor in Neocaesarea would have had to apply for this privilege for Gregory before he returned home.[169] Of course, to serve an existing assessor would not have required any special permission.

κοινόν. We do not have the evidence to reject Ptolemy's assertion that there was an administrative division of Cappadocia called Pontus Cappadocicus; furthermore, his assertion seems reasonable.

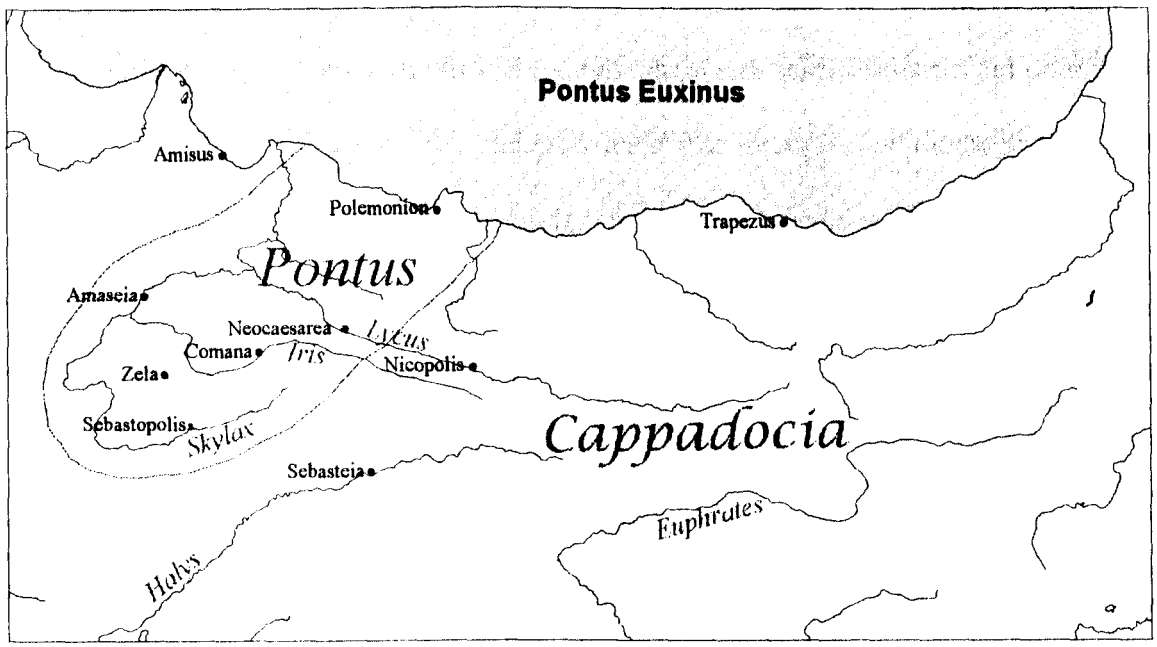
[166] *cf.* Justinian, *Digest* 1:22:4-6.

[167] Modrzejewski 1971, p.318.

[168] Lane Fox 1986, p.518. In RE *s.v. adsessor*, it is said that exceptions were only allowed as a temporary measure. This agrees with a ruling of Ulpian in *Digest* 4:6:38, which indicates that exceptions were allowed, but these required the permission of the emperor. The appointment by permission of the Emperor would have been an honour.

[169] It is probably going too far to suggest that Gregory could have been appointed *ius respondendi ex auctoritate princeps*, even if such offices still existed as late as this. It is known that the appointment of jurists *ex auctoritate princeps* continued up to Emperor Hadrian (de Zulueta 1953, pp.20f).

Anatolia



Map 3-4 Province of Pontus 235-249

Gregory was probably at least twenty-five years of age when he returned home, which also was the minimum age at which he was likely to have been offered an official post.[170] Placing his arrival in Palestinian Caesarea in 232, and allowing for the eight years that he indicated he was not involved with rhetorical studies, the year of his birth can be set around 213, given that he was possibly a couple of years older than his brother who also travelled with him. He was now ready to make his mark in the world of men. Origen hoped that Gregory would be an able advocate of Christianity. It appears that Gregory had the skill and prestige to be able to argue its cause on an equal footing with the leaders of the city, whether they considered themselves to be Greeks or Romans. Once he returned home, his new role

[170] Justinian, *Digest* 4:4:1 and 3, tr. Watson: "... For it agreed that after this age (25) the strength of a full-grown man is reached. ... And, therefore, up to this age, young men are governed by curators and under this age the administration of their own property should not be entrusted to them, even though they might be able to look after their own affairs well."

gave him a privileged position that provided him with personal access to those in authority.[171] In addition to his responsibilities as a legal advisor, it is likely that he rejoined those Christians with whom he had previously been associated.

From the *Address* one has the impression that, in returning home, Gregory was responding to an opportunity for his own advancement. He said, in a different context, "ingratitude is clearly despicable".[172] He also returned as a man of independent means and in particular, the head of his own household, since his father had died.[173]

Since the people of this community claimed that there were only seventeen Christians in the apostolic church when he became its leader, it is possible that Gregory did not formally join that apostolic church when he returned, but remained loosely associated with his former associates, possibly Marcionites or similar. If so, one assumes that he devoted himself to winning them over to the apostolic faith as he understood it. If any weight can be put on Socrates' account, Gregory was active in winning over the people to Christianity during this period while remaining a layman.[174]

If the progress of Christianity had been held back in Neocaesarea by the power of the native cults, the time was right for change. The native cults of Ma and Men were faced with the inroads being made by Hellenism; Roman political and military power had made the old war goddess redundant in the provinces, and new religious and philosophical ideas were challenging the old order. While the native cults of Ma and Men probably briefly revived under the early Severans, as suggested by the coins minted with images of Ma, they probably

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[171] The name of only one governor is known during the period when Gregory could have served an assessor, Claudius Aurelius Tiberius, who served as governor in 248. He was possibly a native of Arabia. (Christol and Loriot 1986, pp.24-32).

[172] Gregory, *Address*, 3 (21), tr. Slusser.

[173] de Zulueta 1953, p.83; Gregory, *Address*, 16 (189), in which he said he was returning to his father's house. *cf.* Slusser 1998, p.123.

[174] Socrates, *EH*, 4:27.

declined after the end of this dynasty. While not deliberately devaluing the existing cults, the Romans had introduced their own festivities, in particular the gladiatorial games, which must have had the effect of reducing the importance of the existing cultic practices in the city, and were just as bloodthirsty as the rituals of the Ma cult. While the cults probably remained important amongst the majority of the people, their once powerful hold appears to have been weakening.

While the advance of Christianity was probably aided by the weakening of the old cults, it also had to respond to the challenge of Greek religion and culture, with its cults, myths and higher education, and the challenge of Roman culture, with its ordered government and laws and state-based rituals. The normal path to success in this new world for the young aristocrat or son of a middle ranking family was to embrace both Greek culture and Roman power. Gregory himself testified to this by being educated in both arenas.

Gregory appears to have thought that the native religion represented δεισιδαιμονία of one kind, and, if his authorship of *To Diognetus* is accepted, the Jewish faith to be δεισιδαιμονία of another kind,[175] whereas Christianity offered a new way that was better than both of them, better than that offered by the Greeks and Romans, yet was also a true and high philosophy of life, truly lived. Such an approach could have offered potential converts with the intellectual resources to be able to totally renounce the old "primitive" ways, and given them the opportunity of not held back by the old ways of thinking.[176] The arguments

[175] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (48); *To Diognetus*, 1. Judaism might have been a significant force in Pontus, but we do not have the evidence to be able to adequately assess this. It had a presence there, as indicated by Le Guen-Pollet & Rémy 1991, pp.117-121, who reported on three funeral steles in Sebastopolis in Pontus that included the Jewish symbolism of a seven branched candelabra, and one with Hebrew words, and on Jewish symbols on steles in Amisos and Comana.

[176] The young Aetius (4th century founder of Eunomianism) is a good example of someone who pursued a Christian education as his path to success, actively seeking training in philosophy through the offices of the leading Lucianist bishops of his day (Philostorgius, *EH*, 3:15).

setting out the claimed superiority of Christianity over both the traditional religion and Judaism, found in *To Diognetus*, are indicative of the approach that he is likely to have taken.

3.2.6 Decian Persecution

Emperor Decius changed the provincial arrangements in this region: as a result Pontus ceased to be a separate province and was combined with Galatia. The capital of the combined province was probably established in the old Galatian capital of Ancyra since it appears that Neocaesarea lost its status.[177] This happened in around 250. This political change, resulting in the downgrading of Neocaesarea, could have been a reason for Gregory ceasing his legal work. If so, this interruption provided the opportunity for the Church to find him employment within the ranks of the official leadership, assuming that he had not already been appointed to his role some years earlier. It is likely that he was *de facto* leader of all the Christians of Pontus even before he was formally appointed as leader of the apostolic church of Neocaesarea.[178]

In 248 Emperor Philip led the celebrations of Rome's 1000 years with sumptuous Secular Games of great pomp and magnificence. The Secular Games were supposed to be held every 110 years, and represented the official thanks of the city to the gods for past benefits and the opportunity to offer prayers for future glory. A brief lull on the frontier had allowed these celebrations to take place, but this lull was of short duration. Military insurrection and the raids of the Goths led Philip to appoint Decius to command the legions in the Danube region. Decius had the dual responsibility of reforming a rebellious army and subduing the Goths. He was so successful that he found himself declared emperor by the troops that he commanded. In the ensuing battle for supremacy, Philip was killed, whereupon the Senate acknowledged

[177] Christol and Loriot 1986, pp.29-40.

[178] Ryssel 1880, pp.14f, placed Gregory's appointment between 240 and 244, on the assumption that he was appointed soon after his thirtieth birthday, being the earliest age at which Ryssel thought that he could be appointed as a bishop (based on regulations from a later time).

Decius as emperor.[179] It was usual, when an emperor first took office, for sacrifices to be made by the officials in the cities throughout the Empire in recognition of new emperor's authority and to confirm that they supported his regime. This was a particularly important event, and a dangerous one, when there were rival claimants for the throne.[180] The difference in Decius' case was that he required all citizens of the Empire to sacrifice, and furthermore, to obtain a certificate that they had done so, whereas previously the required rites of sacrifice were undertaken by the civic leadership of the cities. This was a one-time obligation: after the requirement had been met it was not necessary to do it again. The arrangements necessary to meet this requirement seem to have been put into the hands of the provincial governors: some governors required the sacrifice to be made on a given day, others allowed a certain time.[181] We do not know what happened to those who had not obtained their certificates before the time allotted had expired; it probably varied from place to place. It might have been the case in some provinces that if you were absent from your city or village at the designated time it was the end of the matter.[182]

Eusebius included an excerpt from a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria to Fabius of Antioch in his *Ecclesiastical History*, written by Dionysius soon after the troubles had ended. This letter shows that the Christians were totally overwhelmed by this attack upon them. It makes clear the widespread failure of the Christians to hold out against the threats made against them.[183] Dionysius listed only about twenty people who had forfeited their lives by

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[179] Brauer 1975, pp.3-18.

[180] Selinger 2002, pp.32-44. The importance of this oath of allegiance, and its critical timing, is captured in Tacitus, *Histories*, 2:49-51, in which it is said that when Vespasian seized power, the oath of allegiance to Vespasian was taken throughout virtually the whole of Anatolia.

[181] Selinger 2002, pp.50-53.

[182] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*, 3, claimed that those who missed the deadline for gaining their certificate were in continuing danger, but he also said that the danger unexpectedly passed.

[183] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:41.

refusing to offer the required sacrifice. Most of these died by means of fire or sword. This appears to have been the complete list of those in Alexandria who had died in this way. Dionysius said that many others fled into the countryside, but lost their lives due to hunger, thirst, cold, disease, robbers and wild beasts, or were captured and taken off as slaves. Others were killed in the cities and villages of Egypt. Dionysius closed his letter with an appeal to Fabius to confirm his judgement that the lapsed Christians should be accepted back into the fold.

The Martyrdom of Pionius provides us with the opportunity to see the actual working of the process of arrest and trial, with the scene of the action being Smyrna in the province of Asia. It appears to be a realistic account of the persecution during the time of Emperor Decius.[184] Robert thought that the text describing this martyrdom was written very near to the events described, arguing this on the basis of its sensitive and accurate description of the people and of Smyrna itself.[185] According to this account, Pionius and Asclepiades, both presbyters of Smyrna, and the holy woman Sabina, knew that a search was being made for the Christians, and calmly awaited the arrival of the prosecutors. At the appointed time Polemon, the temple warden, arrested them. He came with a party of men to take them to the market

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[184] Eusebius, *EH*, 4:15:46-47 put it much earlier, in the time of Emperor Aurelius, but Musurillo followed Bolland 1863, pp.37-46, in dating it to Emperor Decius. Vogt 1954, p.1175, accepted Eusebius' dating. Robert 1994, pp.1-9, convincingly refuted Eusebius' dating.

[185] Robert 1994, pp.1-9, argued this in a posthumous publication of his translation, and in a speech on the subject of this martyrdom, given in 1968. Musurillo 1972, pp.xxviii-xxix, unaware of Robert's views, argued that the account of the martyrdom was written later, and was inaccurate. Inexplicably, he thought that the questioning of the Christians, and their imprisonment, were elements of the story that went beyond the presumed requirement of Decius' edict that all people must obtain a certificate that they had sacrificed. This was despite the fact that Eusebius said that Origen was tortured and imprisoned, and the evidence of Dionysius, who described the fate of Macar, a Lybian, who was implored by the judge to renounce Christ, and Dionysius' account of two others who were held in prison. (Eusebius, *EH*, 6:39, 6:41).

place where they were required to sacrifice. They refused. Pionius indicated in a lengthy speech that he was aware that some Christians had sacrificed without any pressure. There was a formal interrogation, in which the temple warden asked them their names, whether they were Christians, to which church they belonged, and who they worshipped. After these preliminary enquiries they were taken off to prison to await the arrival of the proconsul. In prison there was a very small group indeed: Pionius and his two friends, another presbyter, a Macedonian woman, and a man from the sect of the Phrygians (that is, a Montanist). After spending a little time there, they were then dragged off to the temple and the authorities tried to convince them to sacrifice. They were not forced to eat the sacrificial meat: to do so would probably have been considered a sacrilege. When the governor arrived, Pionius was questioned under torture, and upon his refusal to abjure, was condemned to death, being burned alive next to Metrodorus, a member of the Marcionite sect.[186]

Dionysius' letter also shows that those who held state posts were immediately exposed to danger by their very position. Other persons were named and had to decide on the spot whether to sacrifice or face death; most appear to have chosen sacrifice. However, despite the ferocity of the attack, it appears that it was possible for many to avoid the demand to sacrifice. Flight would have given immediate relief, and this must have been the choice made by most of those Christians who did not want to be forced to choose between death and making the required sacrifice. Friends and neighbours who did not give them up to the authorities probably protected others. It is worth noting that Dionysius did not refer to any organized attempt to round up Christians for interrogation, and from the story in *The Martyrdom of Pionius*, the state does not appear to have invested enormous resources in finding Christians

[186] Robert 1994, pp. 21-45; Musurillo 1972, pp.134-167. This account appears to describe real events, including the inclusion of a scene in which a member of the Marcionite sect was seen to be martyred alongside Pionius, something that is unlikely to have been invented, and also the statement that Pionius was held with a Montanist in prison.

and bringing them into the tribunal. In Smyrna a party was dispatched under the leadership of the temple warden (νεωκόρος), with a small detachment of soldiers. The Christians, Pionius, Asclepiades and Sabina, waited for the soldiers to come and went into custody without making any attempt to flee beforehand or to resist arrest. They appear to have been foolhardy, but it was those who were willing to die for their faith, like Pionius and his colleagues, who became the glorious and triumphant martyrs of the Church in the following days.

The *libelli* from Egypt shows that the governor of Egypt demanded that each person make a written and signed declaration that they had always sacrificed, poured libations, and tasted the offerings to the gods.[187] Many Christians succumbed to the pressure and sacrificed; others allowed their friends or relatives to sacrifice on their behalf; many fled and avoided the requirement; only a few stood firm, and became martyrs.[188] The overwhelming majority of citizens complied with the order. Naturally, Decius appreciated the respectful response of the provinces, and an acknowledgement of this was recorded in an inscription found in Aphrodisias, dated October or November 250.[189]

Christians throughout the empire were subjected to these ferocious attacks, but by early 251 we have no more notices about the persecution. This suggests that most governors did not actively pursue the recalcitrants. Meanwhile the Goths were again active in the Danube region, even invading Thrace. Decius had some successes against the Goths and some losses, but eventually he was killed in the fighting. If punishment for refusal to obtain a certificate on Decius' accession still had force of law, this requirement was rendered null and void by his death. Gallus became emperor in 251, and he did not repeat Decius' extraordinary demand that everyone participate in the ritual of sacrifice on his accession, although he might have

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[187] *P. Wisconsin* 87, *P. Oxyrhynchus* 658, 1464, dated 4th, 14th and 27th June 250, respectively.

[188] Frend 1965, pp.389-439.

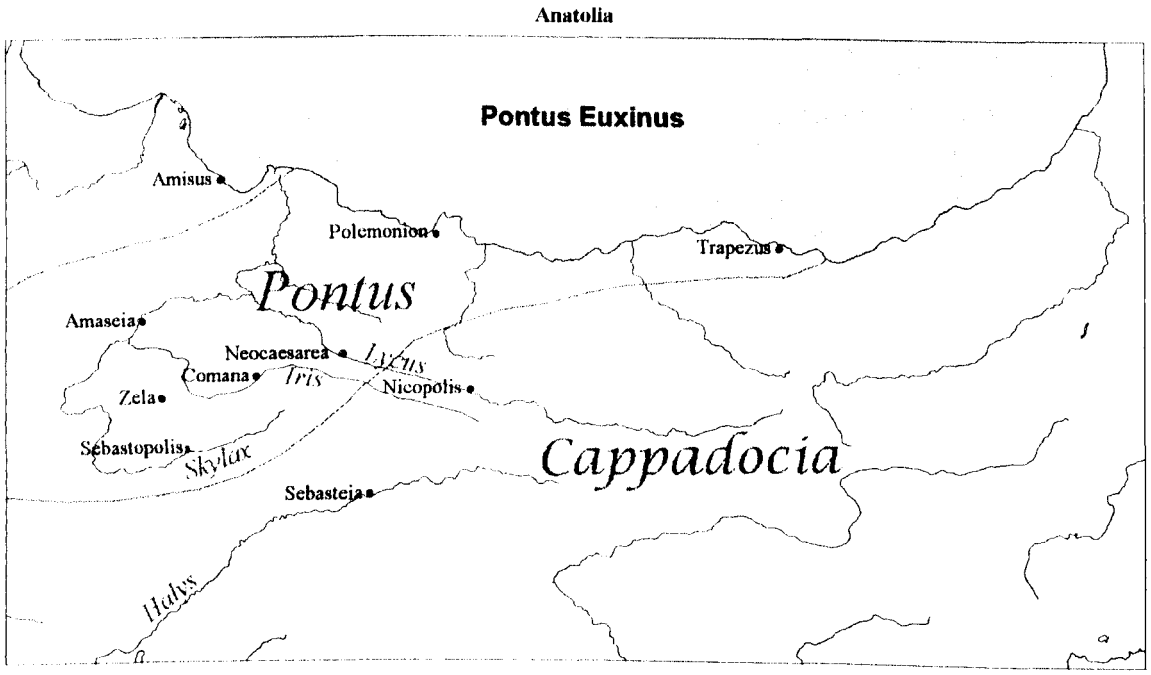
[189] MAMA viii.424; Reynolds 1982, #25, pp.140-143.

brought some troubles upon the churches.[190]

[190] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:1, quoted Dionysius of Alexandrian saying that Gallus was a persecutor of "those holy men"; Cyprian, *Letters*, 57:2, also expected harassment from Gallus.

3.3 Church Leader

At some point Gregory became bishop of the Christian church in Neocaesarea.[191] It is difficult to establish exactly when that happened. Eusebius reported that Gregory and Athenodorus, though very young, "were honoured with the episcopate in the churches of Pontus."[192] An appointment to the office of presbyter at an age younger than thirty years was later banned under Canon 11 of the Council of Neocaesarea.[193] Eusebius' comment seems to suggest that he thought that the brothers were appointed to their offices around that age, or even younger. However, an examination of the evidence in *To the Celibates*, considered later, suggests that Gregory was appointed in 251, around the age of 38, shortly after the end of the Decian persecution, replacing the previous leader of the church there, who appears to have died at that time.



Map 3-5 Province of Pontus 252 onwards

The evidence from Eusebius suggests that Gregory became bishop of the church in the

[191] Basil, *Letters*, 204:2.

[192] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:30, tr. Cruse.

[193] Hefele 1907, p.332.

provincial capital. The archaeological evidence only indicates that the province was re-established by the time of Emperor Probus (276-282), and Christol and Loriot were inclined to date the period of the joint province right up until 260.[194] The only certain information is that Pontus was reinstated as a separate province sometime after Decius' reign: it is possible that the merging of the province's territory into Galatia was only temporary. Neocaesarea again minted coins under Trebonian Gallus in 252, and while the minting of coins does not normally indicate a change in political status,[195] the fact that Amaseia does not mint coins again, but Neocaesarea does, suggests that Neocaesarea's status as provincial capital might have been re-instated. Under Gallienus, Trapezus possibly now fell within the ambit of Pontus. Neocaesarea continued to mint coins until 266, and Sebastopolis also minted coins under Gallienus.[196]

3.3.1 Canonical Letter

Our best source for the churches of the province of Pontus in the time of Gregory's leadership of the church of Neocaesarea is the *Canonical Letter*, written in the aftermath of

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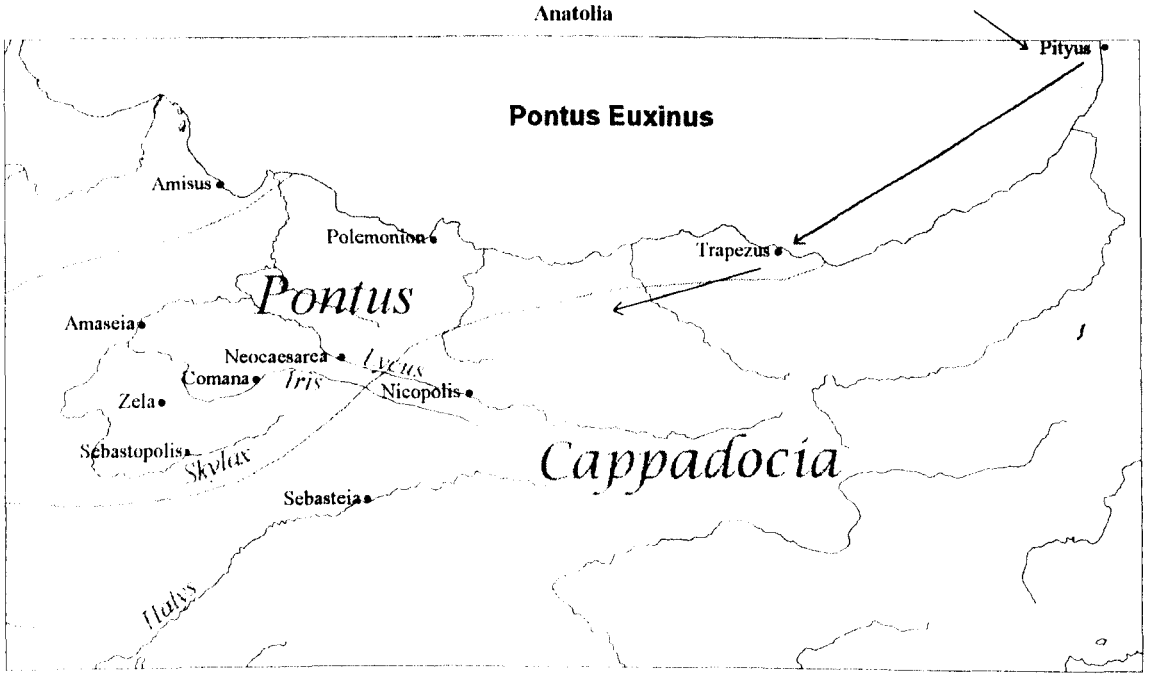
[194] The temporary status of the change is indicated by inscription CIL 3:251, but contradicted by inscription cited as G. de Jerphanion, Mél. Univ. Saint-Joseph, 13, 1930, p.246 n.21; AE, 1930, 144. Both inscriptions are also cited in Christol and Loriot 1986, pp.36-39, who argue that it likely that it was a permanent change that lasted many years. They do not consider the circumstantial evidence of the coins. A milestone dated more than 40 years later, under Diocletian, indicated that the boundaries of Pontus at that time could have included Gangra in Paphlagonia (French 1991, p.82): it is possible that this represented the boundaries of Pontus from the time of the re-establishment of the province.

[195] For example, numerous cities in Cilicia minted coins under Decius, Gallus, Valerian and Gallienus, even though most of the coins in the ANS database for Cilicia were for Tarsus and Anazarbus.

[196] *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, pp.128-133. Trapezus was probably put under Galatia in 250, which would then have controlled all the eastern Black Sea ports, and was probably included with Pontus when that province was reconstituted. Trapezus was listed under the *eparcheia* of Pontus Polemaicus in a list of signatories of Nicea (Honigmann 1939, p.46).

the invasion of the Boradi and the Goths in the middle of the third century.[197]



Map 3-6 Invasion of Boradi and Goths

This was a troubled time. From 252 the provinces of Cappadocia and Syria were subjected to a series of raids launched by the Sassanians (Persians) against Roman territory that continued at least until 260.[198] Pontus appears to have escaped these raids,[199] but instead it was exposed to the attacks of Northmen (Βοράδοι) and Goths. The sixth century Byzantine (non-Christian) historian, Zosimus, also reported upon these raids, and from his account we know that they took place over three years, now dated to either 254-256 or 255-257. Zosimus referred to the same people group, calling them Borani (men of the north wind): neither name was likely to have been the actual name of the tribe. According to Zosimus, in the first year the Borani raided Pityus, on the eastern coast of the *Pontus Euxinus*, unsuccessfully. In the

[197] Mitchell 1999a, p.106, considered the *Letter* to be an "unimpeachable historical document".

[198] Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, p.2. One of the motivations for the Sassanian attacks appears to have been the restoration of the Zoroastrian cult centres, and the sacred fire, in Anatolia (Mitchell 2002, p.58).

[199] The legionary fortress at Satala in the region of Lesser Armenia fell in one attack by the Persians (Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.237). Coins were minted in Sebasteia, in Lesser Armenia, in 252/3, one of a couple of surviving mints from this town (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, p.140).

second year they successfully raided Pityus and Trapezus. The inhabitants of the countryside around Trapezus came into the city for protection when faced with the threat of attack, but the people in the city were left undefended when the troops fled by sea. The city was taken and the Borani plundered the town, destroyed temples and other buildings, and made incursions into the countryside to seize plunder and take slaves. It was this raid that appears to have given rise to the *Canonical Letter*. In the third year they attacked Bithynia.[200]

The *Canonical Letter* represented an attempt to resolve the problems created for the churches by this invasion. This *Letter* has been attributed to Gregory ever since it was added to the *Ecclesiastical Canons* of the Byzantine Church; his authorship was accepted by the twelfth century Byzantine Canon lawyers, Balsamon and Zonaras, and as far I can establish, no modern author has rejected or even seriously questioned the attribution to Gregory. While Lane Fox pointed out that the letter showed no evidence that the author had been formally trained in Roman law, he also did not doubt Gregory's authorship,[201] although it seems reasonable to bring this matter into question on that basis. Another reason to question Gregory's authorship is that the letter appears to have been written by someone who experienced the invasion at first hand, whereas Gregory was somewhat remote from the direct impact of these events. The impact of this invasion was primarily felt in Trapezus, and on that basis, it seems more likely that the leader of the church in that city wrote the letter.

The general style and organization of the letter is not comparable with the other works attributed to Gregory. The approach taken in Gregory's letters and treatises is to clearly state what is being attempted before starting the discussion of the matters at hand. In contrast, this letter appears to burst upon the first point at issue with no introductory words. In Gregory's works, each matter is dealt with in order, whereas this letter does not seem to have been

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[200] Zosimus, 1:27, 31-36; Heather and Matthews 1991, pp.1-9. Despite the devastation wrought by these raids, it is likely that rural life resumed its normal course after the raids were over (Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.239).

[201] PG 10:1019ff; Heather and Matthews 1991, p.1; Lane Fox 1986, p.539; Mitchell 1999a, p.106.

organized with the same care. More concretely, the subjunctive mood was used 14 times in this letter, but the optative was not used at all. This is unlike the *Address*, where the optative was often used. Furthermore, the stylometric analysis presented in the previous chapter indicates that this letter does not fall within the range of Gregory's works.

Mitchell argued that the *Letter*, apart from the eleventh canon, was probably a third century creation. He noted that there are no references in the *Letter* to a hierarchical church structure, as would be later found in the post-Constantinian church: namely, the offices of bishop, priests and deacons were not mentioned. The addressee of the letter was merely called "most holy father", and the church official being sent with the letter, who was to ensure that everything was done correctly, was called a "brother and fellow-elder". The Christian community and its leaders were called by the terms ὁ λαός and οἱ προεστῶτες, rather than by the more technical terms used in the fourth century. Mitchell observed that inscriptions in Phrygia used the same terms as those found in the *Letter*. Furthermore, terminology reminiscent of that used in the New Testament for a church council (*Acts* 15:28) was used for a proposed meeting. Based on this evidence, Mitchell concluded that the church organization of the Pontic church was at an "informal and primitive stage, as it was in third century Phrygia".[202] The comments can be reasonably applied also to the church in Trapezus, from which the *Canonical Letter* probably originated. The cities most likely to have been involved appear to have been Neocaesarea, Gregory's city and the provincial capital, and Trapezus, which bore the brunt of the invasion.[203]

The content of the *Letter* suggests that someone who was directly affected by the attacks of the Boradi and the Goths wrote it, and that it was written to someone who was not directly

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[202] Mitchell 1999a, pp.107f.

[203] Heather and Matthews 1991, pp.1-3 n.2. Trapezus had a garrison and was a naval base, supporting the inland legionary establishment at Satala.

involved,[204] and that it was written from the city from which people had fled, to the leader of the church in a region into which the people had fled.[205] Since Trapezus was the centre of action, the leader of the church in Trapezus is the most likely person to have written the *Letter*. The author also made it clear in this *Letter* that he had already taken action locally to remedy the wrongs that had been occasioned by these attacks, and now wanted to ensure that his remedies were followed in other places as well.[206] Therefore, rather than the *Letter* having been written by Gregory, it is more likely that it was written to Gregory, by the leader of the church in Trapezus. Furthermore, it is not necessary to consider that such a letter written to Gregory would have undermined his authority as the bishop of the church in the provincial capital, since it is not necessary to assume that he would have established his authority throughout the province at this time; rather, it is likely that the ecclesiastical organization was still relatively underdeveloped in Pontus. The bishop of the capital might have had this kind of authority in Egypt and in other places, but there is no reason to think that it was the case in Pontus at this time.

It is difficult to imagine church leaders like Firmilian in Cappadocian Caesarea, Cyprian in Carthage, Stephen in Rome or Dionysius in Alexandria, all contemporaries of Gregory, welcoming a letter from another church leader written in the tone of this letter. However, Gregory does not seem to have had the profile that these leaders had gained at this time. Even though Gregory was born an aristocrat and should have been able to mix easily with other leaders of the Church, at the time the *Letter* was written he had not achieved the recognition in the wider Church to which his office and status might have entitled him. He was not one of "the more distinguished of the bishops", according to a letter written around this time by Dionysius of Alexandria to Stephen of Rome, who described the named bishops of Antioch,

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[204] Gregory, *Canons*, 2, 5.

[205] Gregory, *Canons*, 6.

[206] Gregory, *Canons*, 5.

Palestinian Caesarea, Jerusalem, Tyre, Laodicea, Tarsus and Cappadocia in this way.[207] While Pontus was mentioned in the letter, it was merely included as one of the "other provinces", along with Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Bithynia. Yet, if we date the *Canonical Letter* to 255 or 256, Gregory possibly had been a bishop for four years, and this was sufficient time to establish his authority and influence. In contrast, Cyprian of Carthage had been appointed bishop very soon after he became a Christian, had never served in any office previously, yet he quickly became a powerful figure in the African Church.[208] There must have been something different about the Pontic Church, or about Gregory, that meant that he remained in the background in wider Church affairs. It might have meant that he was not greatly interested in Church politics, but was content with managing the affairs of his own church and in the surrounding region.

The *Letter* was written in response to a letter written by an unidentified Church leader. This person was addressed in the *Letter* as Most Holy Father (ἱερώτατε πάππα). Based on Gregory's strategic position as church leader in the provincial capital, it not unreasonable to consider that Gregory was the Most Holy Father mentioned in the *Letter*. The author was honouring his correspondent by using πάππας. It was a title given to the leader of the Christians in a city. While it was a child's name for a father, it was similar usage to that of Jesus calling out to God the Father as "Abba".[209] The title πάππας was used by the people of Smyrna when they called for Polycarp to be summoned before the tribunal ("the papa of the Christians");[210] the martyr Saturus used it for the bishop of Carthage;[211] it is still used for the

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[207] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:5.

[208] Pontian, *Life of Cyprian*, 3-6.

[209] *Matthew* 14:36; *cf. Romans* 8:15; *Galatians* 4:6.

[210] *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 12:2. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, martyred 155/6, was also described as μακάριος, θαυμασιώτατος, διδάσκαλος, πατὴρ τῶν Χριστιανῶν in that part of the narrative of his martydom that purported to represent the things said and done, and διδάσκαλος ἀποστολικὸς καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος

bishop of Alexandria.[212] Basil used it to identify Eustathius of Sebasteia, the metropolitan bishop of neighbouring Lesser Amenia.[213] It was not used in any of Gregory's other known writings.

It is possible that at this time in this region all the church leaders were considered to be of equal status, irrespective of the status of the city or village in which the church was located. Mitchell pointed out that the letter referred to the subsequent calling of an "assembly of the saints" (συνέλθοντες οἱ ἅγιοι), which reflects a primitive condition in the churches. He noted that ἅγιοι was used by the Montanists for fellow Montanist Christians.[214] This title was also used to describe the Christians as a group in *To Diognetus*, in the third treatise (chapters 11 and 12).[215] Rather than having bishops and metropolitan bishops, as in the fourth century, the ecclesiastical structure in place in this region when the *Letter* was written might have been based on the model described in *1 Peter* 5:1-7. This passage describes a very simple hierarchy: πρεσβύτεροι and νεώτεροι, the older and the newer or younger (people). The word πρεσβύτεροι is not difficult to interpret, since this comparative adjective already carried

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ἐπίσκοπός τε τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας, in comments clearly added by the narrator (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 1:1, 5:1, 12:2; 16:1).

[211] *Martydom of Perpetua*, 4:2:3.

[212] Lampe *s.v.* πάππας; NPNF2-08, Basil, *Letters*, 120, n.2.

[213] Basil, *Letters*, 120, 121. The name of the referenced πάππας was not specified by Basil, but the scene of activity was Lesser Armenia. There were not many possible actors; the most likely was Eustathius of Sebasteia. No one but a metropolitan bishop was likely to have directed his preferred candidate to seek first the support of Basil, and failing that to seek the support of Anthimus, both metropolitans. Anthimus' agreement to the request confirms the identification. It is clear that Eustathius sought Basil's support in ordaining a bishop for an unidentified bishopric in Lesser Armenia, since the bishop of Nicopolis, a leading city in the province, was in bitter conflict with his metropolitan and would not have supported him. The bishop of Nicopolis might have been supported by other bishops in the province.

[214] Mitchell 1999a, pp.107f n.36.

[215] *To Diognetus*, 11:4-5; the term Χριστιανοί was preferred in the first segment of this work (1, 3:1, 5:1, 6:1).

an identified meaning as a noun, being the members of a council, for example, the Sanhedrin. This meaning agrees with its usage in *Acts*, where πρεσβύτεροι refers to the appointed or natural rulers of each individual church.[216] The use of the term νεώτεροι is more problematic, but the meaning is also clear, since it was used in direct opposition to the πρεσβύτεροι: it meant the people who were being led by the πρεσβύτεροι. To make sense of both terms, it must have been understood by the readers of *1 Peter* that the πρεσβύτεροι were the more mature Christians, who at the same time were the leaders of the Christian community, and the νεώτεροι were the newer, younger, or less mature Christians who benefited from the leadership of the πρεσβύτεροι.

Apostle Peter described himself as "co-presbyter" (συμπρεσβύτερος) in *1 Peter* 5:1, and addressed himself, as a presbyter, to the presbyters in the churches. This suggests that in the New Testament period, churches operated under a college of presbyters,[217] as they continued to do later in the first century at least.[218] The author of the *Canonical Letter* may have consciously avoided this terminology, not wanting to equate himself with Peter, yet he came close to this when he referred to one of his colleagues as a "companion in old age", or "co-elder" (συγγέρων), which is to say, a presbyter.

This does not exclude the possibility that the author was also formally known as a bishop. Even in the fourth century, while holding the office of metropolitan bishop, Basil described Sanctissimus as his co-presbyter, thus referring to himself as a presbyter.[219] In this sense, the office of bishop was actually that of an "overseeing-presbyter", being the one who oversaw and ruled the activities within the church or churches of a city, who also carried out the duties

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[216] *Acts* 11:30; 14:23.

[217] Davids 1990, pp.174-185; Best 1971, pp.167-172.

[218] The churches of Rome and Corinth operated under a college of presbyters in the time of Clement (*1 Clement 42* and 47:6).

[219] Basil, *Letters*, 121; *cf.* Cyprian, *Letters*, 40:1; Dionysius of Alexandria, *Letters*, 6:2.

of a presbyter.[220] Even though the author of the letter did not refer to himself or to the recipient of the *Letter* as a bishop, this does not prove that these churches rejected the idea of a single overseer (or bishop) within a city. Nevertheless, since the author did not explicitly refer to his correspondent as a bishop, it leaves open the possibility that the Pontic churches had not yet accepted the strictly hierarchical structure[221] that was being progressively introduced elsewhere, the so-called monarchical episcopate.[222]

Based on the argument presented above, even though Gregory was the leader of the church in the capital city of a province, he was probably the recipient and not the author of the *Letter*. It is also reasonable to assume that the *Letter* was a response to a letter from Gregory. As a legally trained person, Gregory was accustomed to obtaining and using opinions to provide advice. Just as he had learnt to consult the authorities in deciding a question of Roman law, in this case he appears to have consulted an authority figure within the church, namely the church leader in Trapezus, before making his decision on the action to be taken, to discover what his colleague had done. Gregory was still a young man, and probably much younger than the leaders of the other churches in this region. As we shall see later, the

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[220] This usage is continued within the Anglican Church today, which equates the words presbyter and priest, bishops being also priests.

[221] In *1 Peter* 5:3 the elders are charged not to "exercise lordship": if the local Christians had rejected the validity of the monarchical episcopate they could have found a ground of argument here.

[222] If the monarchical episcopate was not firmly established in various parts of Anatolia until the third century, it remains in question whether the arguments so strongly in favour of the monarchical episcopate, found in Ignatius' letters, can be taken as indicating that this was the existing organizational principle of the churches to which these letters were addressed In his letter, *To the Philippians*, Polycarp did not describe himself as a bishop, or refer to bishops, and in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Polycarp was generally called "blessed Polycarp" rather than "bishop". However, the narrator of this latter work, speaking in his own voice, called him "bishop" (16). In any event, it seems that Polycarp carried out the office of overseer (bishop) in Smyrna, even if he did not claim that title for himself: this latter work suggests that the title and office was established in Smyrna by the second half of the second century.

churches of Pontus were likely to have had recently a significant influx of new Christians, almost certainly the result of his leadership, yet the collapse of standards of Christian behaviour triggered by the invasion of these Boradi and Goths might have made it appear that all his efforts had been in vain.

The writer of the *Canonical Letter* appears to have been asked what he was doing about Christians who ate meat given to them by the invaders. It appears that he had already worked out how to deal with this issue. He said that there was no need to be concerned about dietary rules, since the invaders did not sacrifice meat to idols. He went on to quote Paul's statement that such rules were unimportant: "food is for the belly, and the belly is for food: God will abolish the one and the other;" and Jesus' statement that ritual washing rules could be disregarded: "it is not what enters that defiles someone, but what comes out."[223]

This question and its answer are informative. They show that the churches in Pontus continued to take seriously the decision of the first Church council, in Jerusalem, that all Gentile converts should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols.[224] It means that they kept to this ruling despite Paul's teaching that abstaining from eating such meat was only important as a concession to those Christians who might be scandalised by such action, and as a witness to non-believers.[225] The more conservative position, decided by the Jerusalem council, appears to have remained church practice. The *Didache* confirms that this was the position, since it taught that Christians should keep away from the food that has been offered to idols.[226] The

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[223] *1 Corinthians* 6:13 and *Matthew* 15:11. Dietary rules were also important amongst late antique philosophers; for example, the question of diet was central in the philosophical asceticism of the Neoplatonic philosophers, Plotinus and Proclus (Ken Parry, in a forthcoming paper on "Vegetarianism in Late Antiquity and Byzantium", citing *Vita Plotini*, 2, and *Vita Procli*, 9).

[224] *Acts* 15:20.

[225] *1 Corinthians* 10; *Romans* 14:13-23.

[226] *Didache*, 6:3. This is thought to be a second century document, containing the "two ways" teaching possibly from Alexandria, and rules for a rural church in Syria from the sub-apostolic period. (Richardson 1953, pp.163-

rule that converts to Christianity must avoid meat sacrificed to idols was not a trivial requirement: it would have impinged upon the life of people living in a community where the traditional religion was still practiced.

The author then went on to outline actions to be taken to deal with the crisis, starting with a consideration of the case of women who had been raped by the barbarians. The harsh law in *Deuteronomy* 22:20-24 provided for death for adultery, for both the man and the woman, but provided a humane excuse, in that a woman taken in a field did not have to prove her innocence, since her cries for help could not have been heard. Using this Old Testament passage as his basis, the author of the *Letter* argued that the virtuous women who had been violated should be exonerated. But rather than providing a blanket excuse, he spoke against those who, before this, were suspected of having, or were known to have, lived in a lewd manner, and who had after this been raped: he said that one should not readily (or ordinarily, προχείρως) share prayers with these women. He put the hurdle even higher than this: to be free from condemnation a woman must have "lived in complete chastity" and have "exhibited a life pure and above all suspicion." This was a hard judgement, particularly in a country where the worship of the local goddess involved ritualised prostitution.

If a Greek Christian leader from Trapezus wrote the letter, the harshness of his attitude is perhaps understandable. As a Christian leader he would have looked on the sexual licence of the native Cappadocians, following the practice of their cults, as aberrant behaviour. Since he is likely to have had few native Cappadocians in his own congregation in the Greek colony city of Trapezus, and might have even thought of Gregory's Cappadocian converts as belonging to some kind of "strange other". It is possible that Gregory's approach was more sensitive to the facts of the case, since these people were an important part of his Christian community. In *1 Peter* 1:14 Christians were charged not to fashion themselves according to

166). Lucian made mention of Christian food rules, one assumes about not eating meat sacrificed to idols, in his *Peregrinus*, 16, (Peregrinus "ate some of the food forbidden to them").

the yearning or lusts (ἐπιθυμίαι), that they had followed previously in ignorance. Forgiveness is a central part of the Christian message, and it is forgiveness that makes it possible to begin the "personal transformation" implicit in this verse from *1 Peter*. The same idea appeared somewhat obliquely in *Dialogue with Theopompus*, where the writer spoke about a "personal transformation" into the divine, made possible by the "impassible suffering" of "God the helper".[227]

The author of the *Letter* then raised the matter of those who had seized spoil as a result of the raids. This kind of behaviour was not addressed in the New Testament, one assumes because it was not encountered amongst Christians in the New Testament period. The author of the *Letter* had no doubts about the action to be taken against them. He pointed out that those who did such things were outside the fellowship of those who were "children of light": they belonged to the "sons of disobedience".[228] They were to be publicly banished from the Church.

> Only impious people who hate God and whose error has no bounds would dare to think, at the time of the raid, amid such wailing and lamentations, that a moment which brought ruin to everyone else was for them to be an opportunity for profit.[229]

This decision indicates that it came from a person who felt an intense interest, appropriate to someone who felt directly responsible for defending the rights of those who had been harmed by these wicked actions. The author went on to try to spark his respondent's personal interest and direct involvement, saying that action needed to taken "lest wrath be visited upon the entire people, and especially upon the leaders who did not flush these men out." He went on to cite the Old Testament lesson of Achan, who brought punishment upon the whole people

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[227] Gregory, *To Theopompus*, 10, tr. Slusser, p.164.

[228] Citing *Ephesians* 5:5-13.

[229] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 2, tr. Slusser; PG 10: 1025D-1028A.

by keeping some valuable items that should have gone into the "treasury of the Lord",[230] as an example of the punishment that might befall those who failed to punish the guilty for their sins. He pre-empted the excuses that the wrongdoers might give for their actions, that they had only found these goods, and not actually stolen them, or that they were merely replacing the goods that they had lost themselves.

The identity of some of the people who had done these things must have been known, since the author said that he would send "our brother and companion in old age Euphrosynos" so that the recipients of the letter would know which accusations to accept and who should be banished from the prayers.[231] This supports the contention that the leader of the church in Trapezus was the author of the letter, as his people had borne the brunt of the invasion: the *Letter* was couched in words that indicate that it was the heartfelt burden of someone who was speaking on behalf of those had been wronged by the people in a neighbouring region.

The author complained that in his correspondent's *chora* some people had even gone as far as to forcibly detain in captivity, that is, in slavery, prisoners who had escaped from the raiders. He said (perhaps in hope) that this must have been the work of "unbelievers". Since he thought (or hoped) that this action was the work of "unbelievers" he did not call for any specific Church sanction to be taken against them. Nothing lay within the Church's power that would have been effective against "unbelievers", yet despite this he charged his questioner to "send out some people" to remedy the situation. The "escaped prisoners" are mostly likely to have come from Trapezus, since this was the focal point of the raiders' attack.

Perhaps he expected his correspondent to take civil action against the wrongdoers. This was a matter that required someone to call upon the courts to adjudicate, particularly if those who did not accept the Church's jurisdiction did the misdeeds. The state provided the remedy for civil wrongs, by enabling individuals to initiate actions before the courts. Gregory was

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[230] *Joshua* 6:18-19, 7:1-26.

[231] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 5, PG 10:1037B-1037C.

pre-eminently equipped to fulfil this assignment. Since he was urged to "send out some people" the author appears to have thought that the recipient of the *Letter* was in a position whereupon he could prevail upon the governor and his advisors to take action, or he could send out "some people" to investigate these claims, and then bring an action in the courts against those falsely imprisoning the escapees, to ensure the freedom of those held against their will.

The author added a warning, apparently directed at the state authorities, that action had to be taken "lest thunderbolts come down and strike down those who are doing such things."[232] This was an allusion to the thunder, hail and fire that the Old Testament said that God rained down upon the Egyptians when they refused to release the Hebrew slaves; the hail fell only upon the Egyptians and their cattle, but left the Hebrews and their cattle unscathed.[233] One could guess that the recipient of the letter was supposed to pass on this warning to those in power in the capital.[234] If the author of the letter thought that Gregory could pass on this warning, it raises the prospect that Gregory had maintained a close relationship with some of the governors even after he became the leader of the church.

According to Zosimus, the Borani (the Boradi of the *Letter*) forced the cities of the northern coast of the ***Pontus Euxinus*** to provide them with ships and guides for their assault. After taking Pityus, they made use of the prisoners who knew how to row, and eventually

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[232] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 6, tr. Slusser; PG 10:1040A-1040B.

[233] *Exodus* 9:22-35.

[234] The story of the exodus from Egypt provides most of the Old Testament examples of this kind of power. A similar idea of the potency of the gods to punish is found in relation to the Ištar cult, where the Hittite king Muršili II, had the image of Ištar brought to him to appease her anger (Wegner 1981, pp.15f). The Hellenistic kings and dynasts appear to have kept a close hold over the priesthoods and possibly did not often receive this kind of advice from the gods. Similarly, the Romans were too canny to be governed by their priests: the leaders of the state were also members of the college of *pontifices* (North 2000, p.22, citing Cicero, *de domo*, 1), although the Roman rulers tried to avoid offending the gods, and even to gain their support.

came upon Trapezus. They took the strongly fortified city, seized its wealth, destroyed its temples and houses, and overran the surrounding districts. The *Letter* gives us a little more detail on this latter phase. It goes on to say that after the Boradi had overwhelmed Trapezus, the invaders used the captives taken in the countryside to fight for them, to point out roads to them and to indicate the houses that were suitable targets for plunder.[235] The author said the people who had done this had forgotten that they were Pontians[236] and Christians and had made themselves into Barbarians, that is to say, that they had become Boradi and Goths instead of Pontians and Christians, ravaging the country and "beating or strangling" the Pontians. While there could have been non-Christian Pontians who were also taken captive by the invaders and then put to this bloody work, our author was not concerned with them at this point. His particular concern was with those Christians who were implicated as perpetrators of this outrage.[237]

This was an extremely vexing issue for the Church. Yet the Boradi and the Goths had acted in a similar way to Xenophon's ten thousand, who had raided and pillaged on their way back to Greece, over six hundred years earlier, and the location was similar, since Xenophon's men were making their way along the southern Black Sea coast. Xenophon's men had obtained the support of some of the local people, the Mossynoecians, in their raids on other Mossynoecians, just as the Pontic people here had helped the Boradi and the

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[235] Another example of this tactic, in an even more deadly form, was observed in the thirteenth century. After the Monguls defeated each city as they passed through Khurasan and the Caucasus mountains, they made a levy from the population of that city and forced them to fight against the next city (Spuler 1972, pp.30ff).

[236] In calling the people Pontians, the author demonstrated the enduring impact of the *lex Pompeia* in creating a unique Pontic identity for the peoples of the southern Black Sea coast (Mitchell 2002, p.49).

[237] Linking the titles Pontians and Christians in this way does not mean that the writer throught of the two titles as synonyms, but rather that he was asserting that those who had a legal identity as Pontians, under the *lex Pompeia* (*vide* n.236), had betrayed their natural allegiance to their fellows.

Goths.[238] The circumstances were similar, but while Xenophon had no compunction about this course of action, the ethical demands on Christians did not permit such behaviour. It was not believed that it was acceptable to claim the excuse of intimidation, or to use this local disaster as an opportunity to take advantage of another's misfortune. Instead, Christians believed that as a result of the empowerment of ordinary believers, through the divine presence in their inner being, that ordinary people could endure even death for the sake of Jesus.[239] They thought that the martyrs (although relatively few) had demonstrated this divine inner presence. So for Christians to involve themselves in killing another person in these circumstances or aiding the enemy was hardly to be endured, or sanctioned, whatever the excuse. Our author was at a loss to know what to do with these offenders, but he proposed that, for the time being, they be excluded from the "audience". This meant that they were not to be admitted into that area where the worship activities could be heard and understood: they were excommunicated. The author proposed that an "assembly of the saints" should be held at some more settled time to decide what to do with these offenders, who were not permitted even to join the "audience".[240]

The author directed that those who were charged with investigating these matters should not accept any bribes, rewards or bounty for having recovered the stolen items. He went on to say that those who made restitution for the things that they had stolen were to be either enrolled among the penitents (if they had deliberately stolen things), or be considered worthy of the prayer (if they had merely taken things that were found in the field). In making the rulings, which went beyond general principles, the author was claiming the authority to determine Church law in this case, and sought to bind the recipient of the *Letter* by his decisions. It would appear that his rulings were accepted, since the *Letter* eventually found its

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[238] Xenophon, *Anabasis of Cyrus*, 1-5.

[239] The victory of the Christian martyrs was the underlying theme of the sermon *On All Saints*.

[240] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 7, tr. Slusser; PG 10:1040C-1040D.

way into the Canons of the Byzantine Church, albeit under Gregory's name.[241] This suggests that Gregory was prepared to accept the essentially sound and reasonable advice that he received, despite the strongly worded way in which it was delivered.

The *Letter* ended with the so-called eleventh canon, which contained definitions of some ecclesiastical terms, some of which were used in the *Letter* and some were not.[242] It appears that a later editor updated the text of the *Letter* based on the practice in the fourth century (which we know from Basil's Canons). This has given us canon eleven as it is today. Part of this canon was cited as direct speech in the text. The original *Letter* might have had only this sentence in this section, which was a definition of what it meant for someone who had given offence to be in the "audience":

> About one who is in the audience it is said, 'When one has heard the Scriptures and the instructions let him be put out, and not deemed worthy of the prayer.'

This sentence appears to have been expanded into the form of the current eleventh canon by a later editor, who attempted to match his terminology to the terminology in the *Letter*. Changes in the text from narrative to direct speech betray the composite character of this particular canon.[243] The punitive categories in this canon, "audience", and "submission" (among the penitents), appear to have been based on the words used in the *Letter*. Since the category of "submission" was not included in the section of direct speech, cited above, we can conclude that this category probably already existed and did not need to be explained. This category might have been introduced to provide a place for the Christians who had lapsed during the

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[241] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 8-10; PG 10:1041D-1045C.

[242] This canon is generally considered to be a later addition. Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.56 n.26, thought that the main ground for rejecting the canon was the implication in the canon that the Christians in Pontus had erected public basilicas. The canon implies that there was usually an oratory and a porch, yet even if there were public church buildings this early, they would not have had the consistent architecture indicated in this canon.

[243] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 11; PG 10:1048A-1048B: 'Ακούων γάρ φησι, τῶν γραφῶν καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, ἐκβαλλέσθω, καὶ μὴ ἀξιούσθω προσευχῆς.

recent persecution. The category of "audience", since it was separately explained, appears to have been an innovation introduced by the *Letter*, specifically introduced to chastise those who had offended in ways considered to be worse than to have lapsed during the persecution, since those Christians who had stolen goods did not have the excuse of duress that could have been the defence of those who had lapsed.

While the *Letter* laid down two categories of penitence to be endured before the offender could be restored into full fellowship: the "audience" and the "submission", the author said that a later assembly could decide what to do with those whose sins were so grievous that they were to be excluded from the "audience". From Basil's canons,[244] and the edited version of eleventh canon of the *Letter*, we can see that a new category was added to deal with these gross offenders, that of "weeping". Those in this category were required to stand outside the church building and seek the comfort of the prayers of those who were entering. Christianity must have had considerable appeal if people were willing to undergo this kind of humiliation in order to be eventually accepted back into fellowship.

Animosity must have existed between the people directly involved in these troubles, between those who had lost property and even the lives of their friends and family, and those who had contributed to these troubles. In this context, the category of "weeping" seems to have been appropriate. In a later period, Basil mentioned cases where this category was to be endured for between one and four years, depending on the offence.[245] Four years would not have been too long a time in the circumstances, allowing sufficient time for the wounds to be healed and forgiveness to be offered by the victims of these offences.

The pattern laid down by the author, whom I believe to be an otherwise unknown church leader of Trapezus, appears to have provided a moderate and reasonable approach to resolving the problem, excepting his prejudicial approach toward the women who were raped. By his

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[244] Basil, *Letters* 199, Canon 22.

[245] Basil, *Letters* 199, Canon 22; *Letters* 217, Canons 75-83.

(otherwise) moderate approach he provided a way forward, by which those who had seriously harmed their fellows could be restored to fellowship with those who had been the victims of their actions. He set down the means by which justice to all parties could be done and be seen to be done.

Lane Fox felt that the approach taken by the author, whom he took to be Gregory, was regressive, and a "shocking betrayal of the principles of classical law and ethics" in which Gregory had been thoroughly trained. He considered that this approach was an implicit rejection of the somewhat enlightened Roman law, which provided for personal responsibility for wrongs done, and the replacement of that law with the law of the Bible, in particular the Old Testament view that God punished the whole people for the sins of a few.[246] In this work the Old Testament was used as a primary authority. This contrasts starkly with the approach taken in the works considered as probably coming from Gregory; if these used the Old Testament at all, it was to support a line of argument that could be considered to have been drawn exclusively from the New Testament writers.

However, the author of the *Letter* supported the principle of personal responsibility. He believed that God's judgement would come down on those who did not deal with law-breakers, and he challenged his correspondent, and possibly the leaders of the state, to take action against wrongdoers. According to his rulings, the Church was to punish those who had committed wrongs, on the basis of personal responsibility. He even called upon his correspondent to take action against those who had made slaves out of free persons: yet only the state could enforce such a decision, after processes conducted according to Roman law. Far from being out of step with society and culture, by taking a strong stance against those who had so dramatically failed in their personal morality, the church leaders had begun to move into a position of moral leadership of the whole community, a development that reached a more mature stage one hundred years later, under Basil of Caesarea.

[246] Lane Fox 1986, pp.542-545.

Even though the author used mostly Old Testament examples, it is possible that he had *1 Peter* in the back of his mind throughout. It is difficult to imagine that the churches in Pontus did not treat Peter's letter as a foundation document, since it was addressed to them. Many of the things that he said indicate that the author was acutely aware of the failings of these new Christians in the light of the high standards set in *1 Peter*. Peter commended the early Christians for enduring trials, stating that their endurance would show that their faith was genuine: yet some of the Christians of Gregory's day had not endured their trial, but had demonstrated their lack of genuine faith by their sinful acts. Peter urged the Pontic Christians to leave behind the evil desires that formerly controlled their lives: in contrast, the Pontians of this time had reverted to their former covetousness. Peter wrote to "God's elect", whom he called a "holy nation": but these Christians had forgotten even that they were Pontians. Peter urged slaves to submit to their masters: yet these Christians had enslaved others. Peter urged women to rejoice in the inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit: our author suspected that some women had acted lewdly. Finally, Peter said that God's judgement began with the "family of God": our author was pro-active in ensuring that judgement for these crimes began in the Church, and even called upon the state to act where it was appropriate. Thus, even though the author was not deliberately patterning his letter on *1 Peter*, the principles outlined in *1 Peter* appear to have influenced his thinking.

The writer of the *Canonical Letter* claimed that the some people in his correspondent's region had forcibly detained captives, "which must be the work of unbelievers and ungodly people who do not even know the name of the Lord."[247] Of course, such behaviour was not of the kind that one should have expected of Christians.[248] The author of the *Letter* appears to have thought that the evidence of the behaviour of these "Christians" demonstrated they were

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[247] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 6, tr. Slusser; PG 10:1040A-1040B.

[248] Lucian mocked Christians for being over-generous, being easily imposed upon by a charlatan like Peregrinus, (Lucian, *Peregrinus*, 13).

not really converted. This suggests to us that they were indeed new converts. There appears to be an implied criticism of his correspondent here, particularly if the latter had been instrumental in bringing about the conversion of these people.

In his discussion of those who had stolen from others during the raids of the invaders, the author of the *Canonical Letter* referred to certain people who had repented during the "peace", but had reverted to their old ways during the times of "wrath":

> But if, though people have paid the penalty for earlier covetousness which took place during the peace, they return to their grasping ways as soon as the wrath arrives, profiting from the blood and misery of people who have been driven from their homes or taken captive, what else should they expect than that by contending for greed they have heaped up wrath both for themselves and for the whole people?[249]

This "peace" appears to mean the peace for the Church that followed the persecution; the "wrath" was the invasions of the Boradi and the Goths. Dionysius reported that covetous people seized the property of Christians in Alexandria in the troubles that preceded Decius' persecution.[250] While the author's reference to "covetous people" could have been an oblique reference to those who had sacrificed in order to stay and protect their property, yet their covetousness was condemned and not their apostasy, which suggests that the *Letter* was referring to those who stole from the Christians during the former troubles. In this case the *Letter* could be referring to those who were formerly covetous, but who had put this aside when they became Christians.

Therefore, the *Letter* suggests that those who had stolen the Christians' goods during Decius' persecution had repented of their actions, had become Christians themselves, and

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[249] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 2, tr. Slusser.

[250] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:41.

were now "paying the penalty", probably by undergoing "submission".[251] According to this explanation, the author assumed that, because they had fallen into the temptation of covetousness at this time, their besetting sin before their conversion must also have been covetousness. On this basis, he seems to be alluding to the shallowness of the faith and commitment of some new Christians.

A large number of the native people must have already become Christians by this time, or there would have been no point in the writer of the *Letter* expressing even feigned surprise that some Pontians did not know the name of the Lord. We can say that, despite their failings, it appears that significant numbers drawn from amongst the Pontians of Neocaesarea and the surrounding region must have taken some first steps towards becoming Christians, even though these new Christians do not appear to have been fully formed.

3.3.2 Paul of Samosata

As far as we know, Gregory only ventured once in a formal way into the affairs of the Church outside of his own province. It involved his participation in the Council of Antioch, which was called to resolve the issues raised by the teaching of the new bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata. The dispute between Paul and his opponents seems to have hinged on questions about the divinity of the incarnate Christ. Gregory probably attended this council at the invitation of his fellow bishop Firmilian, bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea.

At the time of Paul's appointment the Church had recently come through a troubled period. In 257 Emperor Valerian had initiated a policy of exile and deadly threat against the leaders of the Christian Church. In 259 Emperor Valerian marched against the Persians, crossing the Euphrates with a force of 70,000 men. He was convincingly defeated, and he and

[251] While this passage could have been referring to repeat offenders amongst existing Christians, it seems more likely that by contrasting the activity in the time of "peace", with the activity in the time of "wrath", the writer was complaining that the new converts had forgotten their repentance.

his army were taken into captivity in Persia. His successor, Gallienus, decreed that Christian places of worship were to be returned to the Christians, and that its leaders were permitted to live in peace.[252]

Deeper political troubles for the Roman Empire in Anatolia and Syria followed Valerian's defeat. The Persians renewed their attacks on Roman territory, capturing the major cities in Cilicia and Cappadocia, and also taking Sebasteia in the *eparcheia* of Lesser Armenia.[253] The Persians were stopped only by the efforts of some of Valerian's officers in Cilicia and by Odenathus of Palmyra, who seized power in the vacuum, ostensibly on behalf of the Romans. Many rivals claimed the position of emperor. After some hesitation, Odenathus gave his allegiance to Valerian's son Gallienus. Odenathus helped put down Gallienus' rival in the East, and at some time was rewarded for his assistance to the new Roman emperor, being granted authority in the Eastern provinces under the title of "Corrector of All the East". He controlled at least the province of Syria in the name of the Romans.[254] The controversy over Paul of Samosata arose during the period that Odenathus controlled Antioch.

It was said that Paul did not want to be called a bishop, but instead preferred the title

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[252] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:13.

[253] Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, pp.237f. Ptolemy (who wrote somewhere between 130 and 148), placed Sebasteia in the *eparcheia* of Pontus Polemoniacus. A coin from Verus (dated 166/7, *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, p.140) indicates that this city was then a metropolis. Since it is unlikely to have become a metropolis within Pontus, which already had a metropolis in Neocaesarea, and it was later the capital of the province of Lesser Armenia, one assumes that it was transferred to and became the capital of an *eparcheia* of Lesser Armenia, being also the chief city of a κοινόν of Lesser Armenia (Marek 1993, pp.76, 79 and 81, referred to civic leagues in Paphlagonia, Pisidia, Lycaonia and Lesser Armenia). When Ptolemy was writing, Nicopolis was probably the leading city in the large region of Lesser Armenia (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, p.137, has coins dated to Trajan): it must have been supplanted in this role by Sebasteia, based on the minting of coins there in the reign of Verus in 166/7, and in the reign of Valerian in 252/3 (*Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, p.140). Since there was an Armeniarch, there would also have been an *eparcheia* of Lesser Armenia.

[254] Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, pp.2-3 and 68-110.

ducenarius. Eusebius disdained to name Paul after the city of his bishopric, according to his usual practice of naming bishops according to the city of their office, but named him according to what must have been his native city, Samosata.[255] It is likely that Paul would have known the traditions of the Syriac-speaking Christians as well as the traditions of the Greek-speaking Christians. It appears that he brought the ideas of the Syriac-speaking Christians into greater prominence in the Syrian capital. The theological ideas that he appears to have supported meant that a confrontation was inevitable; Paul's personality appears to have made things worse. Events moved inexorably towards a crisis: Paul was appointed bishop of Antioch in *c*.260 and by *c*.264 a council had been called in Antioch to deal with a situation that had arisen for which no resolution was able to be established by the leadership of the local church.

The council was not an ordinary event, but was one of the most significant gatherings of Church leaders in the history of the Church up to that time. The attendees mentioned were indeed the leaders of the churches in the capital cities of the provinces: Firmilian from Caesarea, the capital of Cappadocia, was named first, followed by Gregory and Athenodorus, who appear from their position in the list of attendees to have had a prominent place in the affairs of the council. Others present included Helenus, from Tarsus, capital of Cilicia, Nicomas, from Iconium in Lycia-Pamphylia, Theotecnus, from Caesarea, capital of Palestine, and Maximus, from Bostra, capital of Arabia. Hymenaeus of the church of Jerusalem was also present. Dionysius of Alexandria in Egypt sent a letter to the council. Eusebius's terminology in naming these church leaders is interesting. Only Firmilian was called bishop (ἐπίσκοπος). Gregory and Athenodorus were called shepherds (ποιμένες) of the districts (παροικίαι) in Pontus; Helenus was called the shepherd of the district of Tarsus, and the other leaders present at the council were named in the same way. Since Firmilian was not the only bishop at the council, we can see that Eusebius was using this term to mean the overseer, indicating that

[255] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:27-30.

he was the person who presided over the council.[256]

The conflict between Paul and the bishops possibly brought into the open a nascent conflict between the Greek-speaking Christians and Syriac-speaking Christians. At this time Origen's Christian philosophy dominated the Christian intellectual thought-world in most of the eastern half of the Roman Empire. Certainly his theological speculations underpinned the thinking of the leaders of the Christian Church in Cappadocia, Pontus, Cilicia, Palestine and Egypt. However, there was an alternative Christian philosophic tradition in the Syriac-speaking Christian Church in Syria and Mesopotamia. Tatian, a native of Assyria and a one-time pupil of Justin Martyr, was a significant contributor to the development of this tradition.[257]

According to Tatian's doctrine, the man Jesus, aided by the eternal *Logos* dwelling within him, made the right use of his free will, destroyed the power of the Devil and opened the pathway to a better world. Tatian believed that God's spirit also works within those who open their hearts to Jesus, and the Spirit gives them victory over all the passions, including the sexual passions. Those men and women who chose to live righteously, and whose souls enter into union with the divine spirit, who follow and imitate Christ in all things, have begun the life-long process that leads to eternal salvation. The victory that follows makes a life of celibacy possible, which anticipates in some measure the marriageless perfect "life of the

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[256] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:28. Whilst it was a formal title, the term ἐπίσκοπος must also have been descriptive.

[257] Vööbus 1958, pp.31-39; *vide* Hunt 2003, pp.144-155, who argued that relatively extreme asceticism was normal within Syriac Christianity, and there was no Encratic sect, but rather an encratic ethos. Gaca 2002, pp.36-52, argued that Tatian's encratism derived from a belief that sexual desire was ruled by the Greek goddess Aphrodite, based on a literal reading of Tatian's *Against the Greeks*, 8-10, but she did not give sufficient weight to Tatian's charge to his readers to reject these ideas. Tatian thought that these ideas indicated the ridiculousness of Greek beliefs (*cf.* Hunt 2003, p.151, who similarly does not appear to give sufficient weight to the context of Tatian's condemnation of the marriage, pedastry and adultery).

angels",[258] even while still living in this world.[259]

It is possible that there were two types of Christians in Syriac-speaking Christianity, those that took on the whole yoke and accepted lifetime celibacy, who were the "righteous",[260] and those who continued with marriage and other aspects of secular life, who were the ordinary Christians.[261] The sources that have come down to us from the third century deal with teaching directed at the "righteous", or encouraging others to join the "righteous".[262] There are not any equivalent sources with messages specially developed for those who were married, being those who were not identified as "righteous". However, while Tatian's message appears to have been honoured by the Syriac-speaking Christians,[263] his name was anathema in the western churches because he preached against marriage. The condemnation

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[258] *Luke* 20:35-36; *Matthew* 22:30; *Mark* 12:25; Brock 1973, pp.5-8. Outside of the Syriac churches, the idea is also found in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration*, 37:10, as a commonplace, and in later writers. It is also found in Theodorus of Mopsuestia, *On Eucharist*, p.116. *cf.* Brown 1988, pp.83-102, who saw this demonstration of the rejection of the irresistable power of the sexual drive as representing the rejection of the power of this world over the individual.

[259] Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 5, 11-13; Drijvers 1984, pp.7-13.

[260] They were known as "Sons and Daughters of the Covenant" (Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, 6).

[261] According to Aphrahat, a fourth century Syriac Christian, the righteous will be given the right to judge the world; those whose shortcomings are not too great will also receive eternal life, after they have been rebuked; those who have earned their reward will accept it boldly, but the others will accept it meekly, knowing that they only received mercy through grace (Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, 22, 16-18). The *Book of Degrees*, a later source, put it more kindly, describing the two classes of Christians as the "perfect" and the "righteous" (Vööbus 1958, pp.190-197).

[262] Vööbus 1958, pp.62-69.

[263] It is possible that Tatian's statements quoted in Clement, *Miscellanies*, 3:12 (81), taken from Tatian's *On Perfection according to the Saviour*, were directed toward those who sought to join the class of the "perfect", as indicated in the title, rather than to Christians more generally.

of Tatian's doctrine goes back as far as Irenaeus.[264]

Celibacy was highly valued in the churches reasonably early,[265] and particularly by the Syriac-speaking churches in the third century. Some Christians in these churches, who believed that they had attained the "life of angels" in this world, appear to have flaunted their newfound "perfection" by living in a state of celibacy with persons of the opposite sex.[266] The fact that Paul, his presbyters and his deacons, adopted this practice is an indication that Paul and his supporters were influenced by the Syriac Christian tradition. Paul later claimed that the majority in Antioch supported him,[267] suggesting that a majority of the people of the church in Antioch had also become Christians under the influence of this Syriac Christian heritage, or had been won over to it through his preaching. It was claimed that Paul allowed women, even young attractive women, to be part of his intimate circle, living with him in a situation that allowed their virtue to be compromised, or at least to come under suspicion.[268]

Before he became bishop, Paul had already obtained considerable secular power and influence by virtue of the influence he was able to wield at the court of Odenathus, the "Corrector of All the East" under Emperor Gallienus. Paul had an influence with the civil powers similar to that later exercised by Basil, in that Basil also used his position in society to

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[264] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:28:1. There is little doubt that Tatian considered virginity the ideal state, and that he encouraged married people to be sexually continent (*vide* n.263).

[265] Athenagoras, *Plea Regarding Christians*, 33, (*c*.180), said that many Christians remained unmarried and lived celibate lives, and even the married only engaged in sexual relations for the purpose of having children.

[266] It was still a current practice when Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, 6, wrote against it (*vide* #7), marshalling the strongest case against it that he could muster (Vööbus 1958, pp.199-200).

[267] Paul's claim was recorded in the proceedings of a second council, called to deal with the problem created by Paul's divergence from the perceived norms (Riedematten 1952, S 26, p.153; Stevenson 1957, p.279).

[268] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:30, tr. Cruse. Paul possibly introduced this practice in Antioch from Samosata (*vide* n.259). This practice was outlawed at the Council of Ancyra (Canon 19) and at the Council of Nicaea. (Canon 3).

seek favours for others from the secular authorities.[269] In Paul's case it was claimed that he did this for money, but we do not know whether this was true. Since these interventions pre-dated his appointment to the see of Antioch, Paul's activities must have been viewed more favourably at the time he was elected. At his election, the ability to wield such influence possibly counted in his favour, just as his skill as a sophist would have been viewed favourably, since it offered to his electors the prospect that he could provide strong intellectual leadership of the church and represent it in its ongoing competition with the other cults and religions of the region.

Paul faced a barrage of claims directed against him. The bishops opposed to him later said that he "magnified himself as a sophist". In church leadership they said he promoted himself above others, placing himself in a *secretum* in the church as if he were a magistrate deciding civil cases, proclaiming his authority over all the believers in his city. In his sermons Paul appears to have attacked Origen, since the bishops said that he had expressed "harsh invectives in the congregation against the expounders of the word who had departed this life".[270] Opposition to Origen was probably a fairly safe course, since Origen was a controversial figure even in his own day.[271] It was unlikely to have been the cause of Paul being deposed from his office.

Despite the underlying disagreement, a basis of reconciliation was established, and according to a letter about this affair written a few years later, Paul "promised to change his mind". Firmilian was the head of the council that considered Paul's fate, Gregory and his

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[269] Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.80, observed that the largest group of Basil's correspondence was addressed to officials. These letters mostly dealt with pleas for remission of taxation or relief from liturgical obligations.

[270] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:30, tr. Cruse.

[271] McGuckin 2004, pp.5-23. At the end of the third century, Origen's theological system remained controversial. Junod 1992, pp.519-525, concluded that Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen* was written defensively: "Manifestement, la crise que provoquent alors certain éléments de la doctrine origénienne est sérieuse."

brother Athenodorus were cited after him: these three were the "most eminent".[272] Gregory's participation in this council, the only time at which it is known that he participated in the wider business of the Church, might have given rise to his reputation as one who was "so celebrated among the bishops of our [Eusebius'] day".[273] Gregory and Athenodorus were possibly as well placed to understand the position of the competing parties as anyone else present. Gregory and Athenodorus would have understood the arguments of those who had been strongly influenced by the teachings of Origen, since they too had studied with Origen. They possibly were sympathetic to the high value given to celibacy by the Syrian Christians, given that the native cults of both regions involved ritual prostitution: elevating the ideal of celibacy can be seen as a possible reaction to the cultic background of the region. Perhaps Gregory and Athenodorus had an impact on the decisions of the council: we do not know. The outcome was that Paul was allowed to continue in his office, and according to a later council, he agreed to amend his ways. One suspects from the sequel that the involvement of Gregory and Athenodorus at this council was a moderating influence on all those involved. In addition, Gregory probably had the skills to be able to disarm Paul in the style of a Socrates, such as was attempted again in the subsequent council.

Some time later the controversy erupted again between Paul and the bishops of the surrounding regions. The bishops of Palestine and Arabia, Hymenaeus, Theotecnus and Maximus, who were likely to have been sympathetic to Origen's teaching, plus three other bishops not previously mentioned by Eusebius (Theophilus, Proclus, and Bolanus), wrote to

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[272] The list of "most eminent" bishops is in Eusebius, *EH*, 7:28. The letter cited in *EH*, 7:30 says that Firmilian both believed and was deceived by Paul's promise, confirming that he was the head of the earlier council, since he was singled out for mention amongst all the bishops.

[273] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:30, tr. Cruse.

Paul setting forth their response and challenging him anew.[274]

> We ourselves sign our names to these few statements, and we wish to know whether you teach the same wise things with us or not. We would like you to sign your name if you wish to be reconciled with those whose names are written at the beginning of this letter.[275]

In this letter they declared their belief in one God who is unoriginate, unseen, unchanging, incomprehensible to man except in so far as he has been revealed through his Son. This statement was consistent with the teachings of Gregory. They also declared their belief in the Son of God who is the Wisdom, Power and *Logos* of God, who truly pre-existed all creation and who is God in *ousia* and *hypostasis*. They rejected the charge that their declaration that the *Logos* was Son of God and God amounted to ditheism, asserting in the words of *Colossians* 1:15 that the Son is the image of the unseen God,[276] and citing testimonies from both the Old Testament and the New Testament writers that they believed demonstrated the doctrine of the separate *hypostasis* of the Son.[277] Apparently, Paul did not give the bishops a response that satisfied them.

In *c*.268 a council of bishops were called together to examine Paul again.[278] Neither Gregory nor Athenodorus attended this council,[279] and no reasons are given in the sources

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[274] Raven 1923, pp.60f, accepted the authenticity of this letter, noting the similarity with the anathemas appended to the first creed of Sirmium, against Photinus, who was accused of following Paul of Samosata's teaching. The letter of the bishops deals with the divine pre-existence of the Son: it is not Christological; the style is simple and dignified; its content entirely suited the occasion: therefore it appears to be genuine (Riedmatten 1952, pp.129f; *cf.* Behr 2001, pp.220-224, who also concluded that it is genuine.).

[275] *Letter of Six Bishops*, p.299.

[276] *Letter of Six Bishops*, pp.290f.

[277] *Letter of Six Bishops*, pp.291-299.

[278] *cf.* Behr 2001, pp.207-235.

[279] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:30. The Theodorus mentioned at the end of the list of bishops at this council was not Gregory, since Theodorus was listed as the last of fourteen bishops (the next name was Malchion the presbyter) and bishops were either listed in relation to their ecclesiastical status or their age (Lardner 1788, p.47). We can

cited by Eusebius for their non-attendance. Unless Gregory was dead or incapacitated at this time, his absence must be considered surprising: one would have expected that he would have been invited to come if he had been still alive.[280] If he was alive and sent a letter, it has now been lost. In the absence of any other information, we can assume that Gregory died between 264 and 268, say *c*.266, at around 53 years of age.[281] This new council excommunicated Paul, but his opponents were not able to remove him from possession of the church property until after the Romans regained full control in Syria some years later.[282]

3.3.3 Pontic Christians

During the period in which Gregory was leader of the church in Neocaesarea, there were a number of military incursions into the region, and significant setbacks for the Romans. However, the coin evidence indicates that Pontus remained a relative island of stability. In the period after Valerian's defeat by the Persians, Pontus was probably the most easterly Roman province in which coins were regularly minted, albeit only bronzes. The last coins listed for the Roman mint in Cappadocian Caesarea from the London catalogue were for Gordon III in *c*.244, and for the royal mint in Antioch, those of Uranius Antoninus in c.253.[283] Perhaps the

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add that he would have been about 55 years at the time and would have been a bishop for about 17 years; he was listed as one of the "most eminent" in relation to the previous council.

[280] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:30: the bishops said they had written epistles, "and at the same time have exhorted many of the bishops at a distance, to come to our relief from this destructive doctrine," tr. Cruse.

[281] Crouzel 1969, p.26, thought that it was possible that Gregory died before the second council on Paul of Samosata in *c*.268, but he seems to have given greater weight to *Menologium Graecum*, 17 November, which placed his death during the reign of Aurelian. The fact that Eusebius did not cite any communication from Gregory at this council suggests that he had died by this time. The information in the Latin *Life*, that Gregory flourished in reign of Gallenius (260-268) and in the pontificate of Dionysius (259-268), was probably derived from Eusebius, and therefore does not contribute new data (Mitchell 1999a, pp.105f).

[282] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:29-30; *cf*. Reidmatten 1952, *passim*; Chadwick 1953, *passim*; Sample 1979, *passim*.

[283] BMC Galatia, pp.92f; BMC Galatia, p.231.

influence of the Church, in advocating reforms such as those outlined in the *Canonical Letter*, had a positive effect on maintaining civil order during these troubled times.

Lane Fox observed that the "continuing imagery of pagan games on the city's coins tempers the extreme stories of the Christian conversion of Neocaesarea."[284] The coins of Emperor Valerian minted in Neocaesarea, the emperor at the time of the *Letter*, continued to show gods and temples. The gods were as well represented in this period as during the brief reign of Emperor Gordon I (238),[285] before Gregory returned to Neocaesarea. After Valerian, during the reign of Emperor Gallienus, a time when the Church was left unhindered by the state and during which Gregory was active over a number of years, gods and temples continued to be represented on the coins, albeit on proportionately less coins.[286] Just as in the reign of Emperor Gordian I, the majority of coins minted in Neocaesarea during the reigns of Emperors Valerian and Gallienus celebrated the Actian games.[287] This practice continued until minting of coins in Neocaesarea ceased in the reign of Emperor Gallienus.[288] Lane Fox was probably correct in saying that Gregory of Nyssa's claim, paraphrased by Lane Fox, as "everyone put on the name of Christ", must have been an exaggeration. On the other hand, the coin evidence cannot be used to prove that Christianity did not significantly advance during this period. The Roman controlled the symbols of empire, such as the symbols on the coins, so it would have been an extraordinary situation if Christianity's advance in one region displaced the old state-sponsored symbols, cults and celebrations in that region, before the

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[284] Lane Fox 1986, p.538.

[285] The selection shown in *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, "Néocésarée", Gordien le Pieux #50, 50a, 62, 62a (3 out of 16), Valerien #65, 68a, 68b, 68c (4 out of 11), indicates little change.

[286] *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, "Néocésarée", Gallien #70, 70a, 73 (3 out of 18).

[287] *Recueil*, Vol.1, Part 1, "Néocésarée", Gordien le Pieux #51, 51b, 52, 53, 53a, 53b, 54, 54a, 55, 56, 57 (11 out of 16), Valerien #64, 65, 65a, 66, 66a, 67, 68b, 68c, 69 (9 out of 11), Gallien #70, 70a, 71, 72, 74, 74a, 74b, 74c, 75, 75b, 75c, 76b, 77, 78 (14 out of 18).

[288] Lane Fox 1986, p.538; Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.54.

emperor himself had converted to Christianity.

The Christian Church could have been a bastion of stability in the midst of the political upheavals and wars that plagued this region during the final years of Gregory's life. During Gregory's lifetime, Firmilian was the bishop of Caesarea, the provincial capital of the neighbouring province of Cappadocia, and Helenus of Tarsus was the bishop of the capital of his neighbouring province of Cilicia (which included Isauria at that time). Both of these men are likely to have had a close relationship with Gregory, as bishop of the provincial capital of Pontus, particularly since Firmilian was not averse to intervening in the affairs of the churches of other provinces.[289] Their united leadership must have provided a very powerful message to the wider community, and in this way, increased the prestige and status of the Church at a time when there was great political uncertainty in this part of the Roman Empire.

The success of Christianity in eastern Anatolia probably influenced its spread to places further afield. In this regard, we may profit in our understanding from further study of the legend of Gregory the Illuminator in the context of Gregory's life and works. According to his legend, Gregory the Illuminator was a native of Armenia who was educated in Cappadocia. When he returned to Armenia he converted the king of Armenia to Christianity. If Gregory the Illuminator did indeed study in Cappadocia, it is likely that Gregory's example inspired his namesake in the pursuit of his missionary endeavours.[290]

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[289] Firmilian responded to Cyprian, complaining about Stephen of Rome's position on re-baptism (*vide* Section 6 Council of Neocaesarea n.41.). He went to Antioch twice on account of Paul of Samosata, and was going there again when he died (Eusebius, *EH*, 7:30).

[290] Harnack 1908, Vol.2, pp.208-210, believed that Gregory the Illuminator copied the missionary methods of Gregory of Neocaesarea.

4 Life of Gregory

This chapter covers the various biographical accounts of Gregory life. These accounts are replete with stories about miracles and wonders, which provide us with an insight into the thinking of the people who treasured and preserved them. They were not the invention of any single writer: they belonged to the ordinary people and clearly meant something to them. Rather than dismiss the stories on the *a priori* assumption that they have little to offer us, the approach adopted here is to engage with the narrative of these stories to determine whether these stories can be used to increase our understanding of Gregory's life, and of the reactions of the people to his life. Most of the available material for studying Church history comes from the elite: we do not know much about what the ordinary people thought and believed. If we overlook the material that was derived from these oral traditions we are in danger of missing a much-needed opportunity to learn about the way that ordinary people interpreted their faith.

The account in *To the Celibates* is probably closer to the wording of the oral traditions than that found in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, but the latter's account has more detail and stories that are not found in the other version. Since they tell a number of the same stories, but from different perspectives, the approach taken here is draw elements from the two narratives, so that the most complete picture can be developed of the oral traditions that lay behind the respective narratives. This approach has not been tried before, although Ryssel and Koetschau both made extensive comparisons between the two texts in order to determine which of the two was the "original".[1] This work was somewhat inconclusive. This is not entirely surprising, since, as I argue, it appears that both narratives contain a significant degree of originality, although I place *To the Celibates* earlier than the panegyric.

One approach to the somewhat legendary accounts of Gregory's life has been to accept

[1] Ryssel 1894, pp.228-241; Koetschau 1898, pp.211-250.

some stories and to reject or ignore others. Harnack followed this approach, claiming that Gregory overcame paganism by exposing the trickery of the pagan priests and allowing the "rude multitude to enjoy their festivals still in Christian guise".[2] The approach taken by Baus was similar to that of Harnack. He thought that while Gregory of Nyssa's account was "not entirely free from legendary elements", nevertheless he believed that he could discern in these stories that Gregory followed "a well-thought-out missionary plan", "shaking the confidence of the people in the pagan priesthood and [drawing] them to Christianity by an impressive liturgy."[3] Telfer's approach was also similar, but he also made the observation that Gregory of Nyssa deliberately mixed fact and fiction in crafting his account, commenting that it was "safe to say that some of the stories which Nyssen tells he does so for no other reason than that he considered them suitable to his theme," having no real connection to Gregory. Nevertheless, he thought Gregory of Nyssa collected other stories from the people of Pontus.[4]

It has been suggested that Gregory of Nyssa's account of Gregory's life has little historical value because it includes exaggerations and inventions, accommodating the tastes of both speaker and audience one hundred and twenty years later. It has been argued that these stories should not be used to demonstrate the third-century growth of the Church.[5] Crouzel, Lane Fox and Mitchell were inclined to the view that it is impossible to separate the truth from the fiction in the narratives about Gregory.[6] MacMullen struck out into different

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[2] Harnack 1908, Vol.2, pp.205-208. Harnack's claim that this model might be able to used to explain the expansion of the Church elsewhere is not supported by the available evidence: it appears that something unusual happened in Pontus in Gregory's time.

[3] Baus 1980, p.375.

[4] Telfer 1936, p.229.

[5] Lane Fox 1986, pp.538f, said that the legends of the panegyric "should not be used to support the idea of a rapid growth in the mid-third-century Church." Mitchell 1999a, p.121, said, "from 370 onwards almost everything that was set down about Gregory belongs to the realm of legend and should be analysed as such."

[6] Crouzel 1983, p.782; Lane Fox 1986, p.530; Mitchell 1999a, p.99f.

territory, perhaps seeing in Gregory a Christian equivalent of Alexander of Abonouteichus, arguing that Gregory was a wonder-worker who played on the common people's credulity.[7] My approach is perhaps closer to MacMullen, in that I argue that the legendary accounts of Gregory's life were mostly rooted in events that were interpreted by his fellow Pontians in the same way that they had always interpreted similar extraordinary events and persons, as the acts of the gods, but in this case seeing them as the work of God, mediated through his servant, Gregory.

Not all accounts that have apparently legendary content are of the same value. The *Acts of John* is sometimes cited as an example of a work that is comparable with Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric on Gregory. However, the works are not at all comparable. The provenance of Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric is known, and it is possible to demonstrate that the stories are contextually appropriate against the background of the culture and practices of the time, even if the wondrous elements of the stories remain difficult to accept. Whereas MacMullen believed that the *Acts of John* was derived from oral traditions[8] (despite the fact that no reasons were cited for interpreting the work in this way),[9] it is much more likely that its origins were literary, not oral. Its genre is known: it was created as an apocryphal work, which is a literary form. The stories in the *Acts of John* can be refuted on the basis of what we know from other sources. The situation is different for the stories about Gregory; it would appear that they did not originate as a literary fiction, but arose as orally transmitted stories, based on the memory of the people about a real person, whose reputation endured amongst the people of that region, being written down many years later.

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[7] MacMullen 1984, pp.59-61.

[8] MacMullen 1984, pp.26. Van Esbroeck 1987, p.259, thought that the *Acts of John* inspired Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, "according to all the apocryphal categories of a conversion legend".

[9] The *Acts of John* were first testified and at the same time identified as false in Eusebius, *EH*, 3:25:6 (Schäferdiek 1974, pp.188-190).

It is argued here that the writer of *To the Celibates* did not invent the stories about Gregory, but certainly shaped existing stories according to his plan and intention, which was to demonstrate that one could be an effective Christian, even while living in the "peace of the churches," rather than in the wilderness. Similarly, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa encapsulated and preserved material about Gregory from the oral traditions of the people of Neocaesarea and Pontus. Despite their editorial input, both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa had good reason to stay close to the traditional version of these narratives, for they needed the support of the very people to whom these stories belonged. They did not own the stories; they were the property of the people of Neocaesarea and Pontus, who credited Gregory with evangelising the town and its *chora*.

4.1 Sources

4.1.1 Oral Traditions

All the versions of Gregory's life appear to have been drawn from oral traditions: it is argued that none of the stories were invented by the one writing them down. The differences between Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric and *To the Celibates* can probably be explained on the grounds that different groups differently remembered the traditions, as one would expect to be the case with traditional stories.[10] The differences in the social status and background of the persons writing down these accounts are reflected in the presentation of the stories. The stories in Gregory of Nyssa's version are more carefully crafted and laid out than the stories in *To the Celibates*. Rather than these differences being a problem, the end result is that these stories constitute an even richer mine of information than would be available if we only had one version.

Basil of Cappadocia, who claimed that the people within the boundaries of Neocaesarea, and possibly beyond, had a lively remembrance of Gregory, confirmed the importance of oral traditions in the preservation of the memory of the stories about Gregory.

> To this day he is a great object of admiration to the people of his own neighbourhood, and his memory, established in the churches ever fresh and green, is not dulled by length of time.[11]

Basil and Gregory of Nyssa had the benefit of personal recollection of the stories handed down by their grandmother. Basil in his *On the Holy Spirit* also cited two stories that were also at the heart of Gregory of Nyssa's narrative.

Gregory of Nyssa did not directly refer to the tracts that Gregory wrote,[12] and surely a

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[10] The bard or reteller of a story developed his song or narrative each time he told the story, drawing together the elements that he thought were appropriate for the occasion, crafting his account from remembered outlines, words and phrases, combining these with an element of personal inspiration to knit it together an entertaining account (Kennedy 1980, pp.9f).

[11] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74), tr. Jackson.

number of these must have survived and been available in Neocaesarea, although he does appear to have obtained evidence for Gregory's teachings from *To Diognetus*, or similar treatises.[13] He did not refer to the record of the *Dialogue with Aelian* that we know survived, a copy of which was held in Neocaesarea.[14] He also made no mention of the barbarian invasions that took place during Gregory's leadership of the church, nor did Gregory of Nyssa use the canons that were derived from a letter written following that event. He did not refer to the panegyric that Gregory wrote when taking leave of Origen, or to Gregory's *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes*, which was probably written during Gregory's period of study with Origen. The only surviving written source that Gregory of Nyssa mentioned was an inscription that he said was written with Gregory's own hand.[15]

Van Dam made a study of the record of the oral traditions found in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, which can be used as a guide. Van Dam divided the oral traditions upon which the panegyric was based into three classes. In the first class were Gregory's words, reported in direct speech in the panegyric, although he noted that it was difficult to know whether the direct speech was included for literary reasons, or whether it actually represented Gregory's words. The second class included those traditions in which the events described were focused upon things for which there were physical memorials at the time the panegyric was delivered. The third class encompassed those stories that represented the traditions of local churches, or were remembered by individual families. Van Dam pointed out that there were very few actual names mentioned in the panegyric, and suggested that the names mentioned by Gregory of Nyssa may have been the only ones that he knew.

Van Dam thought that Basil's and Gregory of Nyssa's claim to know something of the

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[12] Socrates, *EH*, 4:27; Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men, s.v. Theodorus (Gregory).*

[13] *vide* n. 91.

[14] Basil, *Letters,* 210:5.

[15] Van Dam 1982, pp.280-282; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 4 (32); Heil 1990, p.19; PG 46:913A.

episcopal career of Gregory depended almost entirely upon the oral traditions handed down by the people of Pontus. He went on to say that this meant that these stories suffered the limitations that were characteristic of orally transmitted material. Firstly, oral traditions are generally shaped to facilitate memorization and transmission. (The likely result of this is that complexity is removed, and the stories are resolved into stylised accounts following a relatively fixed form.) Secondly, oral traditions are often altered, expanded or reduced during the process of transmission. Therefore it is almost impossible to discover the original story without some form of external control. Thirdly, information transmitted orally has a continually "present" aspect, in that it primarily serves to justify beliefs and practices being advocated in the present society. Therefore, Van Dam concluded that the function of the picture of Gregory, painted by Gregory of Nyssa in this panegyric, could be thought of as justifying or explaining either Gregory of Nyssa's theology, or his view of the role of the bishop and of church administration. He thought that Gregory of Nyssa had created a kind of "charter myth", and not a historical record of the events being described.[16]

This argument is supported by the fact that there are anachronistic elements in the stories handed down to us, reflecting the fact that these accounts were written down in the fourth century, and not in the third century. Yet both the panegyric and *To the Celibates* also contain archaic references and cultural memories, which do not appear to have been fully understood by the narrators, and have been carried down through the generations possibly because those references have been embodied in the stories themselves. By finding and analysing these references we can establish a better understanding of the stories themselves, which may increase our confidence in their historicity.

This approach has been used in the study of the works of Homer. In this way, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have been mined for recollections of the Mycenaean age in which the

[16] Van Dam 1982, pp.286-288. Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.54, accepted this verdict and thought that "the truth behind the fable is now almost beyond recovery."

original stories were formed.[17] This analysis of the stories against their presumed cultural background contributes to the richness of Homeric studies.[18] Nilsson cited one example of this approach. A full body shield was described in the *Iliad*. This shield was large enough to cover the body from the chin to the feet, and was worn with a strap over the shoulder.[19] We now know that this was a description of a Mycenaean shield, for it was illustrated in exactly this form on a dagger blade retrieved from a Mycenaean grave.[20] Therefore, it can be seen that in the oral traditions that were later formed into the *Iliad*, the recollection of the old armour was retained, even though it was very unlikely that "Homer" had ever seen one. We can use this example to make a further point: Homer was able to describe a battle in which the type of shield was very relevant to the narrative, because the details were carried through in the body of the traditional story:

> The will of Zeus beat him [Aias] back, and the proud Trojans with their spears, and around his temples the shining helmet clashed horribly under the shower of strokes; he was hit constantly on the strong-wrought cheek-pieces, and his left shoulder was tiring from always holding up the big glittering shield.[21]

Similarly, in studying the narratives of Gregory's life, we can look for third century elements that will illuminate our study. This approach will give a measure of external control over changes in these stories during the one hundred years of oral transmission. Our analysis, therefore, will try to recover whatever we can from these stories, and use these fragments to

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[17] Nilsson 1933, pp.137-150; Dueck 2000, pp.31-40, noted that Strabo used Homer as a source for his geographical narrative.

[18] This approach has its dangers. For example, as explained in Nilsson 1933, p.20, "the attempts to distinguish older and later parts of the poems with the guidance of archaeological and cultural elements have proven unsuccessful."

[19] Homer, *Iliad* 16:106; 6:117.

[20] The large Mycenaean shield differed from the shield used in the later age, which was smaller and was worn with an arm-loop and hand grip.

[21] Homer, *Iliad* 16:103-107; tr. Lattimore, p.333.

illustrate material gleaned from other sources. By taking all of sources together we can hope to use the narrative sources to establish more clearly Gregory's role in changing that society.

Van Dam thought that it was possible that some of the stories in the panegyric were handed down as complete units. He suggested that the panegyric itself testified to the fact that Gregory of Nyssa built up his account from the oral traditions. An example of this is the story added to the end of his discourse, in which it was related that Gregory predicted a plague, and then was instrumental in bringing the harmful effects of the plague to an end. This story appears to have been a complete and self-contained narrative, even before it was included in the panegyric.

In stories preserved by means of oral tradition it is likely that key elements will be remembered and handed down, as small treasures, such as the names of people and places, events, and important words. In these stories, the following names were preserved: Troadias, a young martyr; Musonius, who was the first to publicly identify himself with Gregory; Stephen, Gregory's archdeacon; and, Alexander the first Christian "chief priest" of Comana. Basil's claim, in *On the Holy Spirit* (written *c*.375), that there were only seventeen Christians when Gregory took office, is another key memory. This number was not Basil's invention, since we find it cited in the Syriac translation of the letter *To the Celibates*, a work I date between 325 and 360, but the way the number was used in subsequent accounts show how easy it is for oral traditions to be subjected to exaggeration and embellishment, even though the original story elements are preserved in the narrative.

A careful reading of *To the Celibates* suggests that Gregory took over from a leader of the congregation of the apostolic Christians in the city of Neocaesarea, not from a former leader of the Christians in the entire *polis* or of Pontus as a whole. In *To the Celibates* there is no sense that Gregory's predecessor controlled other apostolic congregations, even those in the *chora* of Neocaesarea. Neither does this account exclude the possibility that there were other sects of Christians in the town at this time. The number "seventeen" in this account refers

only to the members of the apostolic congregation of the city itself.

The number "seventeen" possibly remained a constant element in the transmission of the story of Gregory's appointment to a formal role as a Christian leader.[22] However, changes to the explanatory words around the number meant that the import of this key story element became exaggerated over time. This change in meaning can be traced. Whereas the writer of *To the Celibates* indicated that there were only seventeen Christians in the apostolic Church in the city when Gregory was appointed, Gregory of Nyssa, in his panegyric in honour of Gregory, claimed that "seventeen" represented the total number of those who had received the "doctrine of faith" at that time in the *polis* and the surrounding region (περίοικος).[23] This process of rationalization and elaboration can lead to exaggeration being embedded in the account as it is transmitted over time.

4.1.2 Letter to the Celibates

It is likely that *To the Celibates* represents the first narrative account of Gregory's life that was written down. It was almost certainly written in Greek, being written from Pontus, perhaps even Neocaesarea, and then later translated into both Syriac and Georgian. While it does not survive in Greek, after examining the Syriac and Georgian texts, van Esbroeck concluded that there must have been a single original Greek model behind both of them.[24] On this basis, *To the Celibates* seems a more appropriate title for this work than the usual title of *Syriac Life*, since that title only refers to one of the surviving translations of an original work. I have taken this title from the opening paragraph: this refers to those who will "stand before

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[22] Mitchell 1999a, p.122, thought that the claim that there were only seventeen Christians in Neocaesarea was an "obvious fiction". However, the claim in *To the Celibates* is really about the number of members of the apostolic Church within the city, and therefore the claim may be related to the number of members in that specific Christian fellowship, rather than the total number of Christians in the city.

[23] *To the Celibates*, 15; Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74); Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 3 (27).

[24] van Esbroeck 1987, pp.257f.

God like an angel". The author appears to have meant those who are "not married or given in marriage", according to Syrian Christian doctrine. The writer described the kind of life idealised by the addressees of *To the Celibates* in this way:

> My brothers, let us praise God, who has pleasure in the life of all people, since he wants them all to come to a knowledge of the truth and live. He wants them to lift themselves spiritually to the exalted heights of heaven through their actions, so that even though they appear to walk on earth according to the flesh, they will stand before the majesty of God like an angel. Not only on mountains, in caves and cliff faces, and in the cracks of the earth have some been awaiting the holiness of God, but powerful heroes are also found in the peace of the churches, equipped with the armour of the Spirit, fighting vigorously the fight with the enemy through the power of the cross – just like the one we want to tell you about, the blessed Gregory, the bishop of Neocaesarea.[25]

This brings to mind the lifestyle of a Syrian ascetic of the fourth century, who "lives in the desert or in the mountains like a wild animal, totally untouched by any of the appurtenances of civilisation, which is regarded as the work of Satan."[26] Against this image, the point of this letter appears to have been to validate the life style of those who did not adopt the extreme asceticism described in the first half of this citation, and to show that Christians could be effective even while living within the "peace of the churches".[27]

To the Celibates provides us with a different perspective on the traditional memories about the life of Gregory. Whereas Gregory of Nyssa can be described as a Greek Christian, the writer of the Greek original of *To the Celibates* appears to have been more aware of his Cappadocian roots than Gregory of Nyssa. Judging by the contents of *To the Celibates*, the

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[25] *To the Celibates*, 1, from the German tr. of the Syriac by Ryssel, as are all other citations from this work.

[26] Brock 1973, pp.11f, based on Ephraem's writings. There is also the possibility that the Christians in Pontus had been influenced by Marcionite asceticism and this carried through to later times.

[27] Theodoret, *Life of Maisymas*, made a similar point, that the ascetic was not hurt by staying in the towns, since it is possible to attain the highest virtue while surrounded by crowds (Drijvers 1981, p.26, citing Theodoret, *H.Ph.* xiv).

writer does not appear to have come from the elite ranks of Pontic society: he did not mention Gregory's high birth, education or foreign study. The stories he told were those that would have belonged to the ordinary people: he did not include the story that Gregory of Nyssa told about Musonius, a high born member of Neocaesarean society, who gave accommodation to Gregory, and did not include another story that related to a Greek festival in the capital.

In 1894, Ryssel argued that Gregory of Nyssa used *To the Celibates* in crafting his panegyric.[28] This argument has some merit, since all of the events described in *To the Celibates* are found in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, whereas a number of stories in the panegyric are not found in *To the Celibates*. This seems to suggest that Gregory of Nyssa developed and expanded on an existing account.[29] In 1898, Koetschau opposed Ryssel's position,[30] claiming that the differences between the two versions meant that the panegyric could not have been based on *To the Celibates*. Instead, he thought that *To the Celibates* must be placed after Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric. He considered that the panegyric was the more reliable of the two versions.[31] In 1936, Telfer followed a similar approach, and suggested that *To the Celibates* was indirectly based on Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, the stories in the panegyric being retold orally, changing over time, and then re-codified some time later in *To the Celibates*.[32] He did not explain or argue the case for this sequence of events, beyond the

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[28] Ryssel 1894, pp.228-241; Koetschau 1898, pp.211-250. See also, MacMullen 1984, pp.59f, who thought that the Syriac version was drawn from an early fourth century original.

[29] A possible exception is that the Syriac and Georgian *Lives* include a one-line statement of the wording of an inscription, but this wording is not in Gregory of Nyssa's version; Gregory of Nyssa mentioned the inscription, but did not give the wording.

[30] Koetschau 1898, pp.211-250.

[31] Koetschau 1898, pp.238f. Van Dam 1982, pp.284f, agreed with Koetschau that the stories in the panegyric were more reliable than those in *To the Celibates*, even though he felt that Koetschau's deduction that *To the Celibates* "utilized later and less pure forms of the oral traditions about Gregory" was rather conjectural.

[32] Telfer 1936, pp.228-231; his conclusion was quoted with approval by Foukas 1969, pp.50f.

claim that *To the Celibates* "reproduces the whole range of Nyssen's material". This statement is incorrect, since there is considerable material in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric that is not in *To the Celibates*. The texts themselves do not give any indication that *To the Celibates* depended, directly or indirectly, on the panegyric, except that much of the same material was covered. While it is agreed that Koetschau has shown that Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric was not directly based on *To the Celibates*, yet similar arguments can be used to show that *To the Celibates* was not directly based on the panegyric.

It can also be argued that the two accounts are different in a way that makes it difficult to give primacy to one version over the other based on the content alone. Both accounts have the martyrdom of a boy: the panegyric gives the boy's name; *To the Celibates* does not give his name. Both accounts have a confrontation between Gregory and a prostitute: *To the Celibates* gives the name of Gregory's companion; the panegyric omits it. This kind of analysis can be applied to other stories included in both versions, with each version bringing forward different story elements.

It is unlikely that *To the Celibates* post-dated the panegyric. It is difficult to accept that a new oral tradition could have arisen after the panegyric was delivered that did not take the panegyric more carefully into account, and even more so, if a long period of time elapsed between the two versions, since the fame of Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric increased over time.[33] The delivery of Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric was a public event, and the contents of his speech would have been widely known, his speech being an innovation that would have made a great impression in Neocaesarea. The delivery of the panegyric meant that the oral traditions about Gregory were codified at that time,[34] at least for the people of Pontus, whereas the different material found in *To the Celibates* seems to indicate that it was an

[33] van Esbroeck 1987, pp.262-266.

[34] This was similar to Homer capturing the oral traditions of the Myceneans in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, establishing the stories from those days in a definitive form.

independent source and not based on the panegyric.

To the Celibates appears to be an unvarnished codification of oral traditions: each story is given discretely with only minimal effort being made to connect one story to the next; the telling of each story is formulaic, with the same elements often being repeated across different stories, such as in the prayers, Gregory's commands to the elements, and the events and words surrounding the appointment of new bishops. While Gregory of Nyssa tried to create a continuous and coherent narrative, he appears to have jumbled up a couple of stories in the process;[35] in each case this is avoided in *To the Celibates*: each story remains complete in itself. Also, the structure of the material in *To the Celibates* appears to be older than in the panegyric.[36] One example is the story of the martyrdom of a youth, which in *To the Celibates* is separated from the general account of the persecutions, yet in the panegyric it is combined with other stories about the persecutions. It is likely that it was Gregory of Nyssa himself who simplified the thread of the stories by combining otherwise separated stories; it is hard to believe that a subsequent narrator would then untangle them. In regard to this specific story, the presentation of these stories in *To the Celibates* suggests that the oral tradition, at least at this time, correctly preserved the memory that there were two periods of general persecution during Gregory's lifetime, one during the reign of Decius, and the other during the reign of Valerian, but Gregory of Nyssa appears to have not known this.

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[35] The story of the martyrdom of Trodias is confounded with the story of the temple warden in the bathhouse; Gregory of Nyssa joined the conversion of the temple warden with Gregory's appointment as leader of the church.

[36] Implied in van Esbroeck 1987, p.258. Also, in an unpublished work, "The Greco-Arabic Life of Gregory the Wonderworker," Michel van Esbroeck observed in regard to *To the Celibates* that its "structure is older even than the well celebrated panegyric of Gregory of Nyssa".

Gregory of Nyssa included six episodes that were not in *To the Celibates*.[37] If *To the Celibates* were based on the panegyric it is not easy to understand why the letter writer would have deliberately excluded these additional episodes, since some of them at least would have enhanced his account. If there was a dependency of one version upon the other, it is much more likely that Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric was dependent upon the *Letter to the Celibates*.[38]

Ryssel, who also thought that *To the Celibates* predated the panegyric, dated it before the Council of Nicaea on the grounds that its stories about the appointment of bishops did not conform to Canon 4 of the Council of Nicaea (held in 325).[39] This, of course, makes the assumption that oral traditions must always be anchored in the present, and therefore are always essentially anachronistic. Such an approach would cause us to date incorrectly Gregory of Nyssa's narrative, setting it before the Council of Nicaea, since it too presents procedures for the appointment of bishops that were in conflict with the canons of Nicaea. Instead of taking this negative view of the oral traditions, it is argued that key elements in stories are oftentimes carried forward in an oral tradition, even when they conflict with current practice. The presence or absence of archaisms and anachronisms is an important way of assessing how faithfully a story has been handed down.

Theology embedded in the narrative is perhaps a better guide to dating. It is believed that elements of the theology of the writer of *To the Celibates* can be discerned in the prayers in the narrative. The wording of part of one of these prayers, apparently addressed to the Son in his role as Demiurge and Lord of the Church, suggests that the Arian controversy was already

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[37] The following stories are omitted: Gregory's birth and upbringing, the conversion of the temple warden, Musonius' hospitality, the building of the Christian temple and its preservation through an earthquake, the introduction of martyr festivals, the story of the plague.

[38] van Esbroeck 1987, pp.257f.

[39] Ryssel 1894, p.240.

running when the narrative was written.

> "You don't disappear along with the generations and you neither change with time nor go away with time, but rather you are how you are before the beginnings of the worlds."[40]

Since the question of the pre-existence of the Son was an important issue in the Arian controversy, this fragment of *To the Celibates* suggests that the work should be dated after 325. On this basis, the latest date can be set around 360, since the writer shows no awareness of the issues debated in the 350s and the doctrinal statement that the Son is like the Father, which was forced on the churches by Constantius in that year.

4.1.3 Basil's Synopsis

Basil, bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea, writing in that city in c.375,[41] claimed that the people of Neocaesarea in Pontus were converted to Christianity as a direct result of Gregory's activities. Basil was in a good position to know the facts. He had grown up on his family's rural estate at Annesi not far from Neocaesarea. Although he wrote over a hundred years after Gregory's death, Basil himself had lived through fifty of those years, and his grandmother, the reputed source of his stories about Gregory, had lived through most of the preceding fifty years. This direct and personal connection gives us some confidence that he was as well informed as a person can be about things that happened so long before, given that he was dependent upon an oral tradition. Basil's grandmother, Macrina the Elder, was not much more than one generation removed from Gregory. While she only had learnt Gregory's teachings at second hand, she had cherished the very words of Gregory, at least those which "memory had preserved down to her day."[42] We can accept that Basil learnt the stories about Gregory from her. Since the source of these stories and the means of their transmission are clear to us, it is reasonable that we should at least carefully consider the evidence that Basil has supplied,

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[40] *To the Celibates*, 2.

[41] Fedwick 1981, pp.16f.

[42] Basil, *Letters*, 204:6, tr. Jackson.

derived from these stories. Since Gregory of Nyssa was the younger brother of Basil, he would also have had many opportunities to hear these stories himself.[43]

In his work, *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil cited the reputation of "the great Gregory" as a wonder worker and a man of spiritual authority.[44] In this section of the work he made an appeal to both Patristic authority and to tradition. He quoted the Fathers of the Church, Irenaeus, Clement of Rome, Dionysius of Rome and Dionysius of Alexandria. In his appeal to tradition, he made particular mention of "the great Gregory's" authority, claiming that Gregory's traditions had been handed down unchanged since his time. Somewhat tendentiously, Basil said that nothing had been added to the mystic rites of the church of Neocaesarea since Gregory's day.[45] Indeed, he said, the rites of that church now seemed defective, because the Neocaesareans had not moved with the times. Basil declared that the same form of doxology was used in his own church, Cappadocian Caesarea, as was being used in Neocaesarea, as anyone could check by visiting that place.

Basil described Gregory as the equal of the Apostles and Prophets, and depicted him as a man who had maintained the exact principles of the faith for his whole life. Basil claimed that Gregory was a beacon of light in the Church, who demonstrated great power over daemons and who had great evangelistic gifts, since he began with a church of only seventeen souls but brought about the result that the whole people, in town and country alike, came to a knowledge of God. Basil cited, as specific wonders attributed to "the great Gregory", changing the course of rivers, drying a lake that was the ground of a quarrel between brothers,

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[43] "... les récits de la pieuse grandmère en sont vraisemblablement une des sources principals [de Basil et Grégoire de Nysse]", (Crouzel 1963, p.422).

[44] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74-75).

[45] Basil defended himself in Basil, *Letters*, 207:3-4, against the Neocaesareans' charge that the introduction of antiphonal psalm singing in Cappadocian Caesarea was an innovation, by claiming that they were using litanies that were not introduced by Gregory.

and predicting things to come. Indeed, Basil said, "he was called a second Moses by the enemies of the Church; in all that the great Gregory accomplished, achieved through the grace that worked through him, a divine light seemed to shine forth, and the churches kept his memory exceedingly fresh."[46]

Basil was not inventing this narrative about Gregory: he was citing stories that were remembered by the people of Neocaesarea. Basil's family did not own these stories: they were the property of the people of Neocaesarea and its *chora*. It would have not served his purpose if this synopsis of Gregory's life had not resounded with his audience as being a reasonable representation of the stories known by the Neocaesareans.

4.1.4 Gregory of Nyssa's Panegyric

Gregory of Nyssa delivered a panegyric[47] on Gregory within a year or so after Basil's death in August 378.[48] Basil's death seems to have marked the beginning of a new phase in Gregory of Nyssa's ecclesiastical career. He was now free from the controlling hand of his brother, who did not always approve of his attempts at ecclesiastical diplomacy. Gregory of Nyssa returned from exile after the death of Valens, and was well received in Nyssa, if his *Letter* 6 can be attributed to that event. When Meletius of Antioch returned from exile, he summoned a council of the bishops of the eastern churches to Antioch that was held around April/May 379. A total of 153 bishops attended, including Gregory of Nyssa. The bishops at

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[46] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74).

[47] I have consistently used the term "panegyric" for this account. It seems inappropriate to call this a "hagiography", even though it is the life of a "holy person", since that genre did not exist when Gregory of Nyssa delivered this panegyric, even helping to create the genre by writing and delivering this speech. Rather, it was an epideictic display, and the specific genre was akin to that of a speech given in praise of an emperor.

[48] For discussion see Maraval 1988, pp.25-38; Maraval 1990, pp.18-20; Mitchell 1999a, pp.112ff. Following Mitchell, Basil's date of death is likely to have been August 378, especially since Basil gave no indication that he was aware of Valens' defeat in that month.

this synod agreed to a statement of faith that had previously been prepared by Damasus of Rome in 372, restoring peace to the Church on the foundation of the Nicene Creed.[49]

Upon his return from Antioch, Gregory of Nyssa settled affairs in Nyssa, in the process encountering vigorous opposition to his rule, probably from the Eunomians.[50] He was then called upon to assist in the election of a new bishop in Ibora in Pontus.[51] After this Gregory of Nyssa remained in Pontus, in Neocaesarea, being engaged in activities on behalf of the church there. Sometime after August 379[52] he suddenly found himself in the midst of a new ecclesiastical controversy, the churches being faced with the need to appoint a new bishop for Sebasteia, the provincial capital of Lesser Armenia.[53] The synod for the election of the bishop followed, at which Gregory of Nyssa found himself appointed in controversial circumstances, arising from the fact that he was the one appointed to count the votes. His opponents appear to have appealed to the governor. They were perhaps Eunomians, if the supporters of the now deceased Eustathius had been won over by Gregory of Nyssa.[54] Gregory of Nyssa said that the *comes* arrested him, with the authority of the governor, but that he was eventually able to resolve the matter satisfactorily with the civil authorities. The panegyric was delivered around that time, possibly before the election for the archbishop of Sebasteia. If so, the success of this oration could have been a factor in his election to that high office.

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[49] Lietzmann 1961, Vol.4, pp.37f.

[50] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letters*, 19:11. While the text does not exclude the possibility that Gregory of Nyssa was chased out of his own church (he "escaped from that situation"), it leaves us grounds to imply that he also overcame it.

[51] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina* 33:23; Mitchell 1999a, p.113.

[52] Mitchell 1999a, p.114.

[53] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letters*, 19:13.

[54] The text does not say who were Gregory of Nyssa's opponents. In his *Apology for an Apology*, written that year, Eunomius described Eustathius as an accursed holy man, who had become murderous in his bitterness (Jaeger 1958, 1:32-3; PG 45:257).

The panegyric was probably delivered in Neocaesarea before a crowd of citizens and visitors to the city.[55] This city was the one most likely to have commemorated the anniversary of Gregory's death, which seems to have been the occasion of the speech.[56] If this is true, in editing it for publication, Gregory of Nyssa has unfortunately obscured its place of delivery by referring to Neocaesarea as "the city", rather than as "this city". It was most likely delivered on 17 November, Gregory's anniversary day, in 379,[57] and either before or during the process of the election of the new bishop for Sebasteia.

The setting was possibly the outdoor theatre of Neocaesarea rather than one of the churches in the city. It was a great festal event, as Gregory of Nyssa indicated in his introductory sentence, and worthy of the epideictic discourse Gregory of Nyssa presented to them.[58] It is clear that the speech was designed to share the stories about Gregory and make them the property of as wide a group as possible, beyond the circle of Neocaesarea. The common heritage of the audience, as Cappadocians and Pontians, is stressed throughout the work, as occasion allowed; the panegyric also honoured separately Amaseia, Cappadocian Caesarea, and Pontic Comana.[59] However, the people from the *ethnos* of Lesser Armenia were possibly the most important group to be won over in this assembly, yet they were not mentioned. Instead, he said that none of the people gathered together now needed mythical tales to bring honour to their pedigree, since the people of these regions collectively shared in the honour of a heavenly pedigree, starting with the first paradise and ending with the

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[55] The version of the panegyric that has come down to us is probably substantially as orally delivered, but "superficially revised after delivery" (Mitchell 1999a, p.130).

[56] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 1 (1); Heil 1990, p.3; PG 46:893A.

[57] Mitchell 1999a, p.111, thought that 17 November 379 was a likely date; *cf.* Van Dam 1982, p.277.

[58] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 1 (1); Heil 1990, p.3; PG 46:893A; *vide* Kennedy 1963, pp.152-203, on epideictic oratory.

[59] *cf.* Mitchell 1999a, pp.128-130.

heavenly city.[60] When he finished his speech one can imagine it being greeted with acclamations.[61] The people of Neocaesarea, and in particular the ordinary people, were surely delighted to have their much loved stories being given such an elegant treatment, bringing honour to their town, province, and themselves. It enhanced the status of the city in a world of strong inter-city rivalry.[62]

While the panegyric included many historical elements and a number of third century fragments, it was not history as conventionally understood. Van Esbroeck considered that Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric served a different purpose, being a *logos* of the Second Sophistic.[63] This movement saw the widespread blossoming of Greek learning and culture in a number of parts of the Roman world. This renaissance of Greek oratory lasted until at least the beginning of the fifth century. Gregory was also caught up in this movement. To an even greater extent, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus were trained in its disciplines and practised as rhetors, initially in the secular environment, but later most effectively in a Christian setting as well.[64] Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric was written against this background of a flourishing Greek culture in eastern Anatolia. The work represented an important advance in the development of specifically Christian rhetoric, and its delivery was important in establishing Gregory of Nyssa's reputation as a Christian rhetorician, theologian and ecclesiastical politician. Mitchell said that it presented Gregory as "a formidable community leader, certainly no member of an oppressed and struggling minority."[65] Gregory

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[60] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 1 (5); Heil 1990, p.5; PG 46:896B-896C.

[61] Roueché 1984, pp.181-188.

[62] Mitchell 1984, pp.121,126f, noted that the perception of its past, factual or mythological, was important to the people in a city.

[63] van Esbroeck 1987, p.258. Panegyric was the technical name for the branch of epideictic oratory, being applied to a speech given at a festival (Kennedy 1963, p.167).

[64] Kennedy 1980, pp.140f.

[65] Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.54.

of Nyssa used this discourse to teach his audience how to interpret the events of the past, deal with controversies and difficulties in the present, and how to live in the future, which was to become the role of such speeches in a Christian context.[66]

Gregory of Nyssa claimed that he was not delivering an ordinary *logos*, but one of a different kind, one that was empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit. His declared purpose was to make a worthy speech about a worthy person. Technically, the panegyric was an epideictic discourse, a work of oratorical art, designed to please the ear of the listener. We know the pattern that this form of oratory was supposed to follow, since we have two treatises on this subject, both of which are attributed to Menander, an orator and rhetor of Laodicea-on-Lycus in southwest Anatolia. These are dated to the late third or early fourth century A.D. They represent a codification of the practice of epideictic oratory that had again begun to be taught enthusiastically in the second century A.D.[67] Gregory of Nyssa adapted the form of an epideictic discourse[68] one might give in honour of an emperor,[69] to bring into being a style of discourse about an ecclesiastical hero figure that emphasised his power and spiritual authority. He depicted Gregory as an Odysseus figure, who overcame all the obstacles and challenges that confronted him. In the third century, Pontius wrote a Latin biography of Cyprian of Carthage to which Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric has some similarities, but Pontius' biography had only one comparison worked out in the thorough-going way used a number of times by Gregory of Nyssa.[70]

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[66] Cameron 1991, p.146.

[67] Russell 1981, p.xi.

[68] Michel van Esbroeck, at a conference, held in 2000, in conjunction with the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute at Sydney University, said that Gregory of Nyssa redacted the popular tradition to produce a panegyric crafted according to the principles of the Second Sophistic.

[69] Menander Rhetor, 368:1-377:30, *Treatise II*, "The Imperial Oration".

[70] Pontius, *Cyprian, passim.* Pontius included a comparison with the story of Philip and the eunuch (3), designed to show that Cyprian was as quick as the eunuch in understanding the faith, despite the fact that the eunuch was a

The highest form of such a speech was a discourse in praise of an emperor. This appears to have been the model followed by Gregory of Nyssa. In this model, the discourse was required to begin with an introduction that served to introduce the subject to be discussed. Gregory of Nyssa began by setting his discourse in a Christian context, praising God and heavenly things, and declaring the superiority of the heavenly to the mundane, just as Plato has Timaeus call upon the gods and goddesses before he began his description of the making of our world.[71] In a speech in praise of an emperor, Menander stated that, after the introduction, there was to be a section in praise of the emperor's native country, and of his family. Exactly following these requirements, Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric had a brief passage in praise of Gregory's native country, the region of Pontus, and then another in praise of his noble family background. Gregory of Nyssa noted that Gregory had the distinction of being the first in his family to become a Christian. Under the next heading, "accomplishments that display character", Gregory of Nyssa described Gregory's life as one of uninterrupted virtue. He made favourable comparisons between his life and the lives of Abraham, Moses and Joseph.

Comparisons were an important feature of epideictic speech: rhetors were encouraged to bring them into account as each accomplishment was described. When delivering a panegyric in honour of an emperor, it was important to draw attention to his distinction in war. In response to this requirement, Gregory was presented as a hero who confronted and overcame the daemons in the temple, a temple that Gregory of Nyssa described as a shrine of Satan. The emperor was also to be praised for his actions in peace, under the headings of temperance,

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Jew and Cyprian formerly was outside of both the Christian and Jewish faiths. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 2 (20); Heil 1990, pp.12f; PG 46:905B-905C, did the same thing with story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, in which he contrasted Joseph's flight from the woman with Gregory's willingness to be blamed for concupiscence, and claimed that Gregory's action was equal to or greater than Joseph's.

[71] Plato, *Timaeus*, 27C.

justice and wisdom. Under the heading of "justice", the rhetor was to show that the subject was mild, humane and accessible. Once again Gregory shone through Gregory of Nyssa's account: even at the very beginning of his leadership of the church in Neocaesarea he provided prudent advice to his new flock and performed wonders of healing. Just as the rhetor was required to show that the emperor sends just and fair governors to the provinces: Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory ensured the appointment of the right man to the priesthood in Comana. As regards wisdom, Gregory resolved a dispute between two brothers over the possession of a lake, and in doing so, demonstrated the wisdom of Solomon. Menander said that the emperor was to be displayed by the rhetor as one who was successful in everything he did. Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa presented a number of wonders carried out by Gregory, and described his wise leadership of the people in a time of persecution. The required epilogue was intended to show that the benefits of the emperor's reign could be seen in the boundless prosperity of the community, Gregory of Nyssa stated that Gregory began with only seventeen Christians, but when he died there were only seventeen followers of the traditional religion. Whereas the rhetor was to refer to the many beautiful images of the emperor in many places, Gregory of Nyssa made a virtue out of the fact that the body of Gregory was not buried in the tomb already set-aside for him.

It may be thought that Gregory of Nyssa adapted the stories in *To the Celibates* to make them theologically more acceptable or less miraculous. This idea seems to be confirmed by his statement that he removed some marvels (θαύματα) from his account because their inclusion would have strained the credibility of his account, at least for unbelievers.[72] However, as each story is examined in turn, neither the argument for adaptation for theological reasons, or the argument that he toned down the miracle stories works consistently: in fact this impression is sometimes directly contradicted by the evidence of the texts. For example, in a story about emptying a lake, Gregory of Nyssa appears to have

[72] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 16 (104); Heil 1990, p.57; PG 46:958D.

deliberately excluded a prayer, which appears to be animistic, that is found in *To the Celibates*, yet elsewhere he includes a story about the moving of a large rock that is not in *To the Celibates*, and included in this story a reference to a prayer that he acknowledged might be misunderstood by his audience to be animistic. Gregory of Nyssa thought that this story was the greatest miracle of all.

Even though *To the Celibates* was written prior to the panegyric, this does not prove that it was in circulation in Neocaesarea itself, since it is possible that it was only known in the place of its destination. Yet, the fact that all the stories in *To the Celibates* are also found in the panegyric suggests that Gregory of Nyssa was aware of *To the Celibates*. However, he does not appear to have been dependent upon it: the differences between the two versions in some of the stories are too great. While Gregory of Nyssa might have even taken one or two of his stories from that version, it is clear that the substantial part of his narrative was independent of *To the Celibates*. Instead of relying upon that version, he seems to have recorded the stories as he knew them himself, in most cases probably from the stories that were handed down to him through Macrina the Elder.

4.1.5 Ordering the Stories

In stories transmitted by oral tradition, the stories are often transmitted as complete little narratives, thereby often cut off from any chronology of the life of the person described. Sometimes the stories naturally place themselves into a chronological context. This phenomenon was noted by Van Dam, who drew a comparison between the material on Gregory, and a number of the stories about Jesus, in the *Gospels*. For Jesus, we have a number of simple stories that are taken from his teaching ministry. They stand on their own, and cannot be reliably dated. But we also have the birth narratives, and the Passion Week narratives, which provide much more contextual information. Likewise, some of these stories can be dated according to context, whereas others have to be slotted into an order according to

a best guess,[73] as seen in the following table.

Story	Panegyric	To the Celibates
Childhood and Education	1	-
Study with Origen	3	-
Prostitute's Fee	2	11
Disputed Inheritance	10	9
Taming the Lycus	11	8
Retirement from Civic Life	4	1
Confrontation in the Temple	7	5
Moving the Stone	8	-
Trodias' Martyrdom	15	6
Daemon in the Bathhouse	17	7
Appointed Church Leader	5	2
Heavenly Vision (discussed in the next chapter)	6	3
Musonius	7	-
Temple of Christ	9	-
Judgement on the Jews	13	4
Comana's priest	12	10
Healing the Possessed Boy	14	12
Valerian's Persecution	16	13
Plague and Prophecy	20	-
Martyr Festivals	18	-
Burial	19	14

Table 4-1 Comparison of the Order of the Stories

Gregory of Nyssa appears to have put together the stories in a narrative sequence that he thought was the most likely. Similarly, I have rearranged the order of these stories according to the information provided by him, *To the Celibates*, *Address of Thanksgiving*, and the *Canonical Letter*. The following table outlines the order of the narrative stories followed here, with a comparison showing the order in which these stories appear in the panegyric and *To the Celibates*.[74] A number of the stories, assigned in the panegyric and in *To the Celibates* to

[73] Van Dam 1982, pp.286f.

[74] Socrates, *EH*, 4:27, referred to the great works that Gregory performed when he was a layman. This provides at least some limited support for my argument that the stories about the disputed inheritance, the taming of the Lycus, Trodias' martyrdom, and the confrontation of the former temple warden with the daemon in the bathhouse, should be placed before Gregory's ordination, even though they are placed after this event in the panegyric and *To the Celibates*.

the period when Gregory was a leader of the church, appear to be more appropriately placed in the period prior to this.[75]

4.1.6 Rufinus' Stories

Rufinus included an abbreviated account of Gregory's life in his Latin translation and elaboration of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. In this work Rufinus cited three miracles that were worked by Gregory, two of which are also found in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, and one that does not appear anywhere else. The first of these miracle stories from Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric is an account of a disputed inheritance. While Rufinus did not contradict the version of this story in the panegyric, his version is closer to that in *To the Celibates*, yet with additional elements. The second of the miracle stories, also found in the panegyric, being Gregory's encounter in the temple, was introduced by *traduntur*, it is narrated, which leaves open the possibility that he was working from an oral tradition or a written tradition. In this story it cannot be said with certainty that he was following either Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric or *To the Celibates*. The other miracle story included by Rufinus, about a cliff collapsing to make room for a church, is not found in the panegyric or in *To the Celibates*. This story was introduced by *memoratur*, it is recounted. This is an indication that Rufinus was relying only upon an oral tradition for this story.[76]

When Rufinus wrote this work, he possibly had Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric before him, since he cited Gregory's creed as a translation of the form in which it appeared in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric.[77] Gregory of Nyssa delivered his panegyric *c*.379.[78] Rufinus

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[75] Socrates, *EH*, 4:27.

[76] Rufinus, *EH*, "Gregory Thaumaturgus"; *cf.* Van Dam 1982, pp.285f.

[77] Telfer 1930, pp.142ff

[78] Based on Mitchell 1999a, pp.127f, who argued that from the evidence of Gregory of Nyssa's movements, and the way in which Gregory of Nyssa addressed his audience, the speech was delivered on 17 November 379. This date seems plausible.

wrote his work *c.*402, so the respective dates would allow for this possibility. However, the text of the panegyric does not account for all of the details he included. Unfortunately, we do not have any way of knowing whence he obtained the other details. When he included an extra story that is not found in either the panegyric or *To the Celibates*, he included a geographical detail that is feasible. He might have had an independent source for all three stories.

4.1.7 Derivative Versions

Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric has been translated into a number of languages. The following non-Greek medieval versions were dependent upon it:

- Latin, published in *Bibliotheca Casinensis* III, florilegium, 68-179.[79]
- Coptic, fragments published in van Esbroeck 1975.
- Armenian, published in *Vies et Passions des Saints* I (Venice 1874), pp.317-331.[80]
- Syriac, in manuscripts, *inter alia*: British Library Add. 14550, fol. 81ra-100rb; Sachau 321, fol. 1-19 published, E. Sachau, *Verzeichniss der syrischen Handschriften der Kön. Bibliothek zu Berlin*, t.1 (Berlin 1899), pp.94-94; fragments, catalogued as *Sparagmata syriaca* 24 in Sebastian Brock, *Catalogue of Syriac Fragments (New Finds) in the Library of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Athens 1995), pp.19f, 96f, 199-202. A resume was included by the 6th century historian Barhadbshabba, published in *Patrologia Orientalis*, t.23 (Paris 1932), pp.45-270.[81]

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[79] The provenance and substance of this work was considered by Telfer 1930, pp.142-155 and 354-363, and Mitchell 1999a, pp.130-135.

[80] Citations from Mitchell 1999a, pp.116f; citations also taken from an unpublished paper by Michel van Esbroeck, cited n.68 above, including a Coptic Bohairic version and a Slavonic version of the *Life*.

[81] Citations from van Esbroeck 1993, pp.537f, with additional citations from an address given by him, cited n. 68.

- Arabic, in manuscripts, *inter alia*: manuscript 4226 from Strasbourg, fol. 33-45.[82]

[82] van Esbroeck 1978, pp.383f.

4.2 Christian Philosopher

4.2.1 Early Education

We have reliable information about Gregory's early years, from his own recounting, in his *Address*. However, there is no evidence that Gregory of Nyssa consulted this oration by Gregory: he might not even have known of its existence.[83] Nevertheless, the memory of Gregory's youth appears to have been preserved in the oral traditions, and then written down by Gregory of Nyssa, even if this part of story was recounted somewhat defectively, when compared to our more certain information.[84] He spoke about Gregory's parents, who "were led astray in the error of idols", reporting that even though they both died at "just the time when in most people the mind sins", yet Gregory chose the path of virtue.[85] When we turn to the *Address*, we find a very similar story. Gregory tells us that he was brought up under the "misguided customs of my native land", and that his father, who feared the gods (δεισιδαίμων), died when he was fourteen. This was Gregory's "starting point on the road to knowing the truth", whereupon he "was turned over to the saving and true *Logos*."[86] These stories are similar in their essential elements, yet with some significant differences in the details. Gregory of Nyssa said that both his parents had died, instead of saying that just his father died; he also does not appear to have understood the importance of Gregory's philosophical education under Origen. Lane Fox thought that these discrepancies were telling against the historicity of the narrative,[87] but instead of this negative judgment, it rather seems

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[83] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 2 (11-22); Heil 1990, pp.8-13; PG 46:900A-905D; Van Dam 1982, pp.280-288.

[84] This story was not included in *To the Celibates*.

[85] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 1 (10), 2 (11); Heil 1990, p.7; PG 10:900A-900B; tr. Slusser, p.45.

[86] Gregory, *Address*, 5.

[87] Lane Fox 1986, p.530, complained in regard to Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric that, "wherever we can test the panegyric's stories, they are mistaken". While it is true that a number of stories fail his tests, (both parents dying,

that the nature of the differences gives confidence that the oral traditions can transmit some information, even if the details are likely to be changed in the process. It also gives us a baseline position that it is not necessary to reject all the stories as the crass inventions of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, nor is it appropriate to accept them exactly as written.

4.2.2 Study with Origen

Gregory of Nyssa's account of Gregory's study with Origen is problematic. The most generous reading of the situation is that Gregory of Nyssa did not realise that Gregory's study of philosophy took place principally with Origen, in Palestinian Caesarea, and that he did not know that Gregory also studied Latin law in Berytus during the same general period. Gregory of Nyssa referred to a separate period of study in Alexandria, and only after this was complete, and Gregory's reputation for virtue and wisdom had already been established, he went to meet and study with Origen, and that in the company of Firmilian, who later became the bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea.[88]

It is likely that Gregory of Nyssa did not realise that Origen actually ran a programme of secular philosophical studies as well as teaching Biblical exegesis. Although Gregory of Nyssa pushed Origen into the background, and incorrectly brought in Firmilian, he does not appear to have been inventing this account out of nothing, but rather he was making a guess

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how he became a Christian, studying at Alexandria rather than Palestinian Caesarea, and how he met Origen), he did not consider the impact that oral transmission of the stories has in muddling the details. While Lane Fox's opinion was endorsed by Mitchell 1999a, p.120, it seems to me that his judgement was too harsh. Rather, the closeness of these stories in the panegyric to that which we can know from elsewhere serves as confirmation that there were real events underlying these stories.

[88] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 2 (22); Heil 1990, p.13; PG 46:900C-900D; *vide* Crouzel 1989, pp.24-33. Eusebius, *EH*, 6:26f, referred to Firmilian being bishop around the time Heraclas succeeded Demetrius in Alexandria. Since this is placed c.233 (Nautin 1977, p.431) it is possible but unlikely that Firmilian was bishop from 233 until 268. It seem more likely that he was appointed some years later, and actually visited Origen in Caesarea before he was appointed bishop, as Gregory of Nyssa implied.

based on imprecisely remembered details.[89] Certainly he had reason to minimise the influence of Origen due to latter's reputation having been subjected to attacks during his own lifetime and afterwards. Yet, it is noteworthy that, while Gregory of Nyssa mentioned Gregory's study under Origen, *To the Celibates* did not mention anything about Gregory's education or training.

Using the example of Moses, who was schooled in the wisdom of the Egyptians, so Gregory of Nyssa said also that Gregory came through "all the schooling of the Greeks", and having learnt all this, Gregory rejected the knowledge of the Greeks, and became a disciple of the Gospel instead.[90] We appear to have a better knowledge of how this came about than Gregory of Nyssa, since we have Gregory's *Address*, in which the process of Gregory's philosophical education was described.

Gregory of Nyssa drew a contrast between the "knowledge of the Greeks" and being a "disciple of the Gospel". This idea is alluded to in *To Diognetus*,[91] so it not necessary to say that Gregory of Nyssa invented this idea. Even if Gregory did not write *To Diognetus*, this idea is likely to have been a commonplace in third century Christianity. However, Gregory of Nyssa would have been particularly concerned not to give any ground to the Eunomians,[92] whose primary doctrinal premise was that we are able to understand God's nature by the application of logic, in particular the logic of the Aristotelian syllogism. Hence it is not surprising that Gregory of Nyssa created an image of Gregory turning away from the knowledge of the Greeks to the firm foundation of faith.

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[89] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:27, said that Origen was invited to visit Firmilian in Cappadocian Caesarea.

[90] One can perhaps see a reflection here of Origen's letter to Gregory, in which Origen urged Gregory, having metaphorically tasted of "Egyptian wisdom", to devote himself to the Scriptures to avoid the fate of Hadad the Edomite.

[91] In *To Diognetus*, 7, it is claimed that Christian beliefs were not based on an earthly discovery, but God sent his Son, the craftsman and demiurge of all things, to reveal them.

[92] The Eunomians were probably the most important of Gregory of Nyssa's ecclesiastical opponents.

It appears that Gregory of Nyssa was aware of a work something like *To Diognetus*. He appears to have given a summary of the argument found in the first treatise in that work, following the argument that Christians rejected the gods of the Greeks and the superstitions of the Jews, and instead followed their own way, which cannot be known through human knowledge:[93]

> For after he saw Greek and barbarian philosophy alike divided into different conceptions in their opinions of the divine, and the leading exponents of the positions not converging towards one another but competing to consolidate each position separately by subtlety of speech, he left them to refute each other as if in a civil war. He for his part embraced the solid doctrine of faith, which has its foundations in no fancy logical footwork or artificial reasonings but rather was announced in simplicity of expression with equal respect for all, and which manifests its trustworthiness precisely by being above knowledge.[94]

However, Gregory of Nyssa could not be described as a disinterested narrator, for he went on to use Gregory's example to strike a further blow against Eunomians:

> For if what was said were such that it could be comprehended by the power of human thoughts, it would in no way differ from Greek wisdom. For they are of the opinion that what they are able to comprehend is the same as what is. But since comprehension of the transcendent nature is inaccessible to human reasonings, on this account faith replaces thoughts, extending itself to those things which are above reason and comprehension.[95]

Particularly relevant is the statement that "comprehension of the transcendent nature is inaccessible to human reasonings", which rejected the conclusion that we can know God through Aetius' syllogisms.[96]

4.2.3 The Prostitute's Fee

The genre of epideictic discourse required a story about the subject's youth. Gregory of

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[93] *To Diognetus*, 1-7.

[94] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 2 (13); Heil 1990, pp.9f; PG 46:901B-901C; tr. Slusser.

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] *vide* Aetius' *Syntagmation* in Wickham 1968, pp.532-569.

Nyssa's story about "the Great One's youth" deals with an incident that he said occurred when Gregory was a student in Alexandria. According to Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory became the subject of a practical joke organized by the other students. He said that this happened because Gregory's fellow students were discomfited by Gregory's example of self-control, so the students arranged for a prostitute to accuse Gregory of using her services and not paying her. Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory's companions were vexed by the woman's charges, but Gregory's response was simple: he ordered his companions to pay her off. The prostitute immediately was possessed by a daemon, threw herself around and was choking, and only Gregory's prayers brought about her release.[97] Nevertheless, according to this account, we can see that Gregory initially allowed his reputation to be besmirched.

Gregory of Nyssa compared Gregory's action with that of Joseph, who fled from the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. The analogy was not entirely apt, since the prostitute story did not match well with the Joseph story. This is evidence in support of the claim that Gregory of Nyssa was working with an existing story, and did not invent it for the purposes of his narrative. For example, there was no attempt to seduce Gregory, just a plot to discredit him. Gregory of Nyssa seems to have struggled to demonstrate that the risk to Gregory's reputation was as serious as the risk faced by Joseph.

Further evidence that the story was not a late invention of Gregory of Nyssa is provided by the presence of a similar account in *To the Celibates*, even though the writer of this account placed it at the time when Gregory was already bishop of Neocaesarea. In this account, the prostitute came to accuse Gregory in the same way, but before he paid her off, his archdeacon (named Stephen) intervened to challenge the woman, while Gregory remained silent in the face of her accusation. She mistook Stephen for Gregory, thus vindicating Gregory in the eyes of the bystanders. Nevertheless, Gregory paid her the money. After this, she was struck down by a daemon, but Gregory commanded the unclean spirit to come out of

[97] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 2 (15-17); Heil 1990, pp.10-11; PG 46:901D-904D.

her, and she went away having been made healthy again. The story found in *To the Celibates* included a reference to *James* 5:4 (asserting that the oppressed were characteristically denied their pay). According to *To the Celibates*, the woman had previously been thrown out of a brothel, so Gregory claimed that he needed to discharge his obligation to the oppressed by paying the prostitute.

Gregory of Nyssa's knowledge or intuition that this story should be set at the time of Gregory's training as a student in foreign lands appears more likely to have been correct than the setting in the version in *To the Celibates*. Gregory of Nyssa said that this encounter occurred while Gregory was engaged in a discussion with the "leading men" on some subject of philosophy. That this was indeed likely to have been the original story is confirmed in *To the Celibates*, since in that account Gregory's tormentors were called "students of depravity", and the prostitute was told to go and find Gregory who would be found seated below the "chiefs of the city". The original story possibly had both students and teachers in the respectively named roles, and the story was adapted to the form it took in *To the Celibates* over the preceding sixty to eighty years. Indeed, leaving aside the clear editorial interventions in giving a setting to the story, the only embedded indication that the story should be set when Gregory led the church was the reference in the story to the action taken by Gregory's archdeacon.

Do we know anything more about Gregory's archdeacon? Was it Gregory's brother Athenodorus? While Eusebius said that Gregory and Athenodorus were "pastors of the churches in Pontus",[98] neither *To the Celibates* nor Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric mention Athenodorus at all, yet if Athenodorus was Gregory's archdeacon, this could fit in with Eusebius' description quite well. Certainly, Gregory of Nyssa does not mention this archdeacon: he mentions a deacon, the former temple warden, but this is certainly not the same man as *To the Celibates*' archdeacon, as Gregory of Nyssa's former temple warden is

[98] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:28.

also found in *To the Celibates*. If this story should be placed in Gregory's youth, and located in Berytus, one might ask whether Stephen, Gregory's archdeacon, should be identified with Athenodorus, Gregory's brother. This suggestion offers the possibility that Eusebius' account of the joint ministry of Gregory and Athenodorus can be reconciled with *To the Celibates*. If indeed this story originated in Berytus, and was retold in his hometown, then Athenodorus is our only known source for the story. This of course, is not the only possible explanation, for example it does not eliminate the possibility that a friend of Gregory's from this days in Palestinian Caesarea and Berytus joined him in Pontus, and even became his archdeacon, but this seems less likely.

Furthermore, it can be noted that while, in Eusebius' account, it was said that Theodorus took the name Gregory, no mention is made of Athenodorus taking another name. It is sometimes thought that Gregory was a baptismal name, which he took to represent a new start in his life, signifying that he had been "awakened" to the truth of the Gospel. Therefore, it would not be without significance if his brother retained his old name, since his name had a more direct and obvious connection to the traditional religion of his people. As we have already considered, Theodorus means "gift of God", whereas Athenodorus means "gift of Athena". While he could have taken another name, it is certainly not mentioned in our sources.

Since the people of Neocaesarea knew Stephen as some kind of "archdeacon" to Gregory, this does not mean that the story has to be placed at a time when Gregory was already bishop, although that is the natural meaning of the account. It would not be surprising if the title "archdeacon" was later anachronistically attached to his name even though the story belonged to Gregory's youth. Once this concession is made, on account of the oral transmission of this story, the whole account of it in *To the Celibates* can easily be placed at the time of Gregory's and Athenodorus' education, thus meaning that the basic story elements (with the Christian lessons and Scriptural quotations being omitted) could have derived from Gregory's own

time.

Nevertheless, it must be said that the argument that Stephen and Athenodorus could be the same person, while logical and consistent with most of the evidence, has the obvious difficulty that it is not mentioned by any of our sources. The only source for the name of Gregory's archdeacon is *To the Celibates*, and it makes no mention of a family connection between Gregory and his archdeacon. Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa's account of the confrontation with the prostitute does not indicate that Gregory's friend was his own brother.

As far as we can know, the story itself was not invented on the pattern of similar stories of attempts made to defame a bishop, even the similar story of Athanasius being put upon in a similar way, since the earliest version, in *To the Celibates*, was probably written well before that story became well known in the villages of Pontus. Furthermore, the fact that stories of this type became a *topos* of later Byzantine writers is irrelevant, since Gregory of Nyssa was here creating the standard for later writers of this type of discourse. Even after it was accepted as a common theme, this does not mean that such events did not occur. A similar story is found in Paulinus' *Life of Ambrose*, in relation to his appointment as bishop of Milan. Ambrose was the governor at the time. When he went to the basilica in an attempt to calm a disturbance over the appointment of a new bishop for the city he was confronted with clamour from a minority but noisy section of the people seeking his election to the office. In an attempt to dissuade them from pursuing their objective, he invited prostitutes into his home, in order to indicate his unsuitability.[99]

While both stories have their heroes allowing their moral reputations to be besmirched, both men probably acted in accordance with the situation with which they were faced. In the case of Ambrose, it is possible that he considered that he was in mortal danger if Emperor Valentinian disapproved of these events and blamed him for allowing them to happen: it was

[99] Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose*, 3. McLynn 1994, pp.44-52, thought that the story was contextually appropriate, and did not think that it was invented in order to make disquisitions on a theme.

in his interests to suppress the clamour for his election.[100] Similarly, in Gregory's case, it is possible that he did not want to make a public spectacle of himself, particularly if these events took place at a time when Origen was in hiding from the authorities, on account of the persecution of Christian leaders under Emperor Maximinus (235 – 238).

Rather than rejecting the story of Gregory's confrontation with the prostitute, it is useful to us since it appears to give us a genuine insight into Gregory's personality and character. Although it appears that he was prepared to act in ways that could have been considered to be unexpected and possibly unacceptable for a Christian, yet he was seen to be particularly blessed by God.

Van Dam accepted the long-standing consensus that the story about the prostitute was made up by Gregory of Nyssa. He thought that this episode was introduced in order to talk about Gregory's early education, and to introduce comparisons between Gregory and the patriarchs, Abraham, Joseph and Moses.[101] The presence of the story in *To the Celibates* indicates that Gregory of Nyssa did not invent it. Apart from placing the story in Alexandria, (which was wrong because Gregory did not study in Alexandria), rather than Berytus or Caesarea, an inconvenient but not fatal mistake in a story orally transmitted, the story is consistent with the known facts about Gregory's and Athenodorus' lives. The fact that a specific name was cited in *To the Celibates* in relation to this story is a reason to increase our confidence in the reality of the underlying events described, according to the methodology described by Van Dam.

Lane Fox pointed out that memoirs of fourth and fifth century students reveal a highly competitive student culture in Berytus. Each year the students gathered themselves together in their age groups, and when the next year's recruits arrived they were made the subject of practical jokes, so that the older students could test the ability of the new recruits to handle

[100] McLynn 1994, *op cit.*

[101] Van Dam 1982, pp.278-280.

themselves.[102] This was very close to the situation described in the panegyric.[103] Therefore, we can say that the general outline of the story is not improbable.

The story as given in both versions seems to suggest that the woman underwent something like a *grand-mal* epileptic seizure: this was considered to be the result of possession by the gods (or from the Christian perspective, by daemons).[104] Poor health, perhaps giving rise to this seizure, may have been the reason she was expelled from the brothel. Both versions reported that Gregory prayed for her healing, and she was relieved from the daemon's oppression by Gregory's prayers.

I cannot see any underlying story elements that are inherently unbelievable, at least as representing what Gregory's contemporaries thought had happened.[105] We need to be careful not to anachronistically impose the standards of our own times upon the story of such an event; today such a story may receive scant regard, for we have other ways of explaining such things, but in those days the idea of God or the gods was an important part of the way the world and its events were viewed by many people. The public act of exorcising a daemon[106]

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[102] Lane Fox 1986, p.526; Collinet 1925, pp.99-111.

[103] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31:16, indicated that ragging activities also were inflicted on students in Athens in the fourth century

[104] Harnack 1908, Vol.2, pp.125-146, observed that leading Christians of the second and third centuries believed that daemon possession happened, and believed also in the power of exorcism.

[105] Van Dam 1982, p.280, claimed that Gregory of Nyssa's statement that Gregory studied in Alexandria was a "clear example of how Gregory of Nyssa tinkered with the early life of Gregory Thaumaturgus by outright inventing an episode in order to say something in his panegyric about Gregory's early education". However, the episode about the prostitute is found in *To the Celibates*, so we know that Gregory of Nyssa did not invent it; Gregory of Nyssa's mistake arose from his attempt to give it a realistic setting, and while this involved an element of invention, it was not invented out of nothing.

[106] MacMullen 1984, pp.26-29, made a reasonable case for the importance of exorcisms, but weakened it by omitting to distinguish between apocryphal acts of apostles and the more historically weighty evidence of Justin Marytr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian. He preferred the explanation for conversion found in the apocryphal

must have happened at least occasionally in order for the office of exorcist to become officially accepted within the church of Rome.[107] Gregory's audacious behaviour as recorded in this story, to which we can add the exorcism, probably distinguished him from most of his fellow Christians, and made him appear to be specially blessed with divine power.

4.2.4 Assessor

We know from his *Address*, that Gregory intended to return home and practice law, probably either in the service of the provincial governor as an assessor, or working in the service of an assessor.[108] This part of his life completely slipped out of view in these two biographical accounts. Neither Gregory's education nor any stories of his return home are found in *To the Celibates*. Gregory of Nyssa included a section in his panegyric about Gregory's return home, but he appears to have been either ignorant of Gregory's legal training or to have omitted this part of Gregory's life deliberately. The stories he related show

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Acts of Peter to Justin's and Cyprian's own accounts of their own conversions, without explaining why this obviously fictional account was preferable to those accounts which have reasonable claims to have auto-biographical.

[107] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:43. Curran 2000, p.5, thought that there were probably very few who actually served as exorcists in Rome, claiming that the office "was (and is) one of the necessary grades of clergy for an aspiring priest", (citing Ch. Piétri, *Roma Christiana* (BEFAR, pp.224f, Rome 1976)). This claim is anachronistic: Curran made the assumption that in the third century there was a natural progression from exorcist to higher grades of clergy. However, he did not support this with evidence drawn from that time. While the office of exorcist might have been an important office for the church of Rome, its members were probably drawn from and served the uneducated, the title indicating that the holder had some kind of spiritual authority amongst the people. It is worth noting that the Council of Antioch, *c*.341, (NPNF2-14, Canon 10) allowed country bishops to ordain sub-deacons, readers and exorcists, perhaps suggesting that those holding the office operated as under-presbyters, serving the needs of uneducated rural folk, the readers being educated people who could hope for advancement to the office of presbyter.

[108] Gregory, *Address*, 16 (192).

only a hint that the people once knew that he was legally trained.[109]

Gregory of Nyssa said that when Gregory returned home to Neocaesarea he refused to entertain the people with rhetorical displays, even though this was expected of him. This does not seem improbable, since he might have been behind his fellows in rhetorical skill, having devoted himself to the law and philosophy for the previous eight years. It appears that he rather quietly set about his legal work. There is no indication that he formally joined the apostolic church in Neocaesarea when he returned home, or at any time before he became leader of that church. The reputed numbers of Christians in that church at the time he became leader are evidence against that suggestion. Indeed, the story of Musonius, considered later, indicates that there were no members at all from the social elite in Neocaesarea in that church before Gregory was appointed as leader. Nevertheless, there is no reason to think that Gregory did not actively identify himself as a Christian during this period.

4.2.5 Disputed Inheritance

The story of a disputed inheritance is found in Basil,[110] in the panegyric, in *To the Celibates*, and in Rufinus: it must have been considered a very good story. Basil gives us virtually no details, but according to the other three versions, two brothers disputed the division of their inheritance; both wanted sole possession of a marshy lake, and neither was willing to allow the other the right of possession in common. The brothers were threatening to commence armed conflict, whereupon the matter was resolved when the lake emptied in response to Gregory's prayers.[111]

Gregory of Nyssa did not explain in detail the underlying cause of the dispute: he merely said that the young men were angry, and their anger was swollen by the hope of gain. The

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[109] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 3 (23-27); Heil 1990, pp.13-16; PG 46:905D-909C.

[110] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74).

[111] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 7 (49-55); Heil 1990, pp.28-32; PG 46:924C-929A; *To the Celibates*, 9; Rufinus, *EH*, "Gregory Thaumaturgus".

cause was clearly stated in *To the Celibates*, being the possession of the bountiful supply of fish in the lake. Against this, Rufinus said that although the brothers were fighting over the fish, there was only one fish in the lake, and the real reason was their antipathy to each other. This looks like a compromise description of the problem, and possibly suggests that he had both the panegyric and another account available to him, like that in *To the Celibates.*

If we put to one side the miraculous elements from this story, it resolves itself into a straightforward property dispute, subsequent to the attempt to settle and finalize a deceased estate. Under Roman law co-heirs held property in common. This dispute came about because the title to the property had to be shared between co-heirs who did not want to continue to possess the property in common. If one of the co-heirs infringed the rights of the other, the property had to be partitioned. Either party could bring an action in law for the property to be partitioned, and this action would be heard before an *iudex*, a judge. The problem in this case was that a "marshy lake" cannot be easily divided, since the water resource was shared, and there was no way to prevent one party from over-using that resource.[112]

In such a case the *iudex* had wide powers to resolve the dispute by *adiudicatio*, judicial award, and as part of this process he could make a monetary award to adjust the division between the parties in accordance with his decision. Creating an acceptable partition would have been extremely difficult in a case such as this, where both parties had a equal claim to the property, with no apparent or simple basis on which the *iudex* would be able to decide to grant the entire property to one party or the other. *To the Celibates* indicates the difficulty: Gregory went to the two men and said to them, "One can keep the lake and the other can take the money that comes to him." But one replied, "I'm not giving it up!" while the other said, "I won't let it go until my death!"

Some time before this event, while he was still with Origen, Gregory complained that he was about to enter into a life of "pretentiousness", by which he probably meant that he was to

[112] Schulz 1951, pp.206f (clause 363); Wenger 1940, pp. 59ff.

become an assessor, serving the governor of Pontus, or working for an assessor.[113] Even though Gregory of Nyssa does not place this episode within the context of the law courts, or formal legal proceedings, he said that the Teacher, Gregory, became master of the legal proceedings (γίνεται οὖν τῆς δίκης κύριος ὁ διδάσκαλος). This seems to be a case where a fragmentary memory, preserved through the oral traditions, is retold in circumstances where the narrator does not fully understand the context.

Gregory of Nyssa's wording suggests either that Gregory was appointed as the *iudex* of the case, or more likely, that he was doing the work of an assessor, appointed to draw up the statement of claim to be considered by the *iudex*. The challenge for the assessor was to frame the claim to be considered, and to write the *formulae* to be authorised by the governor for the case to proceed. The difficulty lay in the impossibility of dividing the property. Gregory of Nyssa stated that Gregory applied his own rules, "speaking out (like an oracle) in respect to the arbitration" (ἐκέχρητο πρὸς τὴν δίαιταν), and urging the young men to come to agreement through their affection for one another, in order to gain the advantage of peace instead of the economic gain they desired.

> 'For the former [the advantage of peace] lasts forever for both the living and the dead, but the advantage of the latter things [economic gain] is transitory, and the condemnation upon injustice is eternal', and other things as is likely that he said, putting in order the lack of discipline in young people.[114]

Gregory of Nyssa probably invented this speech in order to make sense of what he had heard

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[113] Gregory, *Address*, 16 (192). Not much was remembered of Gregory's return home. Although Gregory of Nyssa included a section in his panegyric about Gregory's return home (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 3 (23-27); Heil 1990, pp.13-16; PG 46:905D-909C), his stories show only traces to suggest that the people once knew that he was legally trained. *To the Celibates* does not include any reference to Gregory's education or to his return home.

[114] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 7 (51); Heil 1990, p.30; PG 46:925C. Heil 1990, pp.cxxvi, 30, in an extended note commented that no scholar has been certain about the construction of this sentence.

in the stories as handed down to him. In the fourth century, bishops did not act as judges: they were exempt from burdens of public office.[115] However, this exemption was introduced by Constantine, and thus did not apply in Gregory's time.[116] Also, despite the implication in Gregory of Nyssa's account that these young men were Christians, it is not necessary to accept this: they were possibly just local landowners who had to go to law to resolve a property ownership dispute between themselves.

Arbitration,[117] leading to peaceful co-ownership of the property, was the simplest solution. However, Gregory of Nyssa said that all attempts to resolve the matter had failed, and the parties appear to have decided to take the matter into their own hands by making war on each other.[118] Until the property was partitioned neither party could take action against the other for injuries done to their interests by the other party. Gregory's action in causing the lake to dry up resolved the issue, since it could then be partitioned between the co-heirs.

In *To the Celibates*, it was said that Gregory brought the two brothers to the lakeside and demanded that they either agree or they would both lose the lake. When they refused to agree Gregory held his hand over the lake, commanding the personified waters, as underlings of Christ, to disappear from the place. The lake immediately became empty, and the ground at the bottom of the lake became visible. This prayer could be thought to be similar to Jesus'

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[115] Acceptance of the office of *iudex* was a civic duty, enforced by the *praetor* in Rome, and by the governor in the provinces (Wenger 1940, p.59).

[116] Lietzmann 1961, pp. 2:22f, 3:82.

[117] Gregory of Nyssa appears to suggest that Gregory was an *arbiter*. An *arbiter* was in some ways different from an *iudex*, although in the *formulae* both were charged to be the *iudex* for that case. The *arbiter* was more of an expert or specialist in a particular (non-legal) field than the *iudex*. He had more discretion in discharging "fairly and justly" his responsibilities in arriving at a judgement. Fisk in Wenger 1940, pp.xviii-xxi.

[118] Until partition could be legally achieved, neither brother could take action against the other for wrongful possession. The impotence of the law in the case possibly contributed to the brothers' decision to resort to violence.

command, when he was in a boat on Lake Galilee, saying to the wind and the water, "Quiet! Be still!"[119] One notable difference between the two accounts is that, in the story about Jesus, the wind and the water are not explicitly identified as divine beings, whereas, in *To the Celibates*, the animistic belief in the daemonic power of the waters is explicitly stated, calling them "underlings of Christ". This explicit reference should be taken as a culturally determined factor, and not one borrowed from the New Testament.

Gregory of Nyssa's version of this part of the story was different from that in *To the Celibates*. Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory spent the entire night prior in prayer at the lake, but in the morning the lake had dried. In this way, the conflict between the two brothers was brought to an end. Gregory of Nyssa said that after this event, Gregory withdrew "by himself", but the wonder he had worked by divine power settled the dispute, peace replaced the anger, and normal brotherly affection returned.

While an animistic prayer like the one in *To the Celibates* would have been theologically difficult for the sophisticated Gregory of Nyssa, this is unlikely to have been the reason that he omitted this prayer from his narrative of the story. A little later we will consider the story of a rock being moved, in which Gregory of Nyssa specifically recognized that Gregory addressed a prayer to the rock as if it were a living thing. It is more likely that the version of the story of the disputed inheritance, passed down to him through Macrina the Elder, did not include this animistic prayer.

Rufinus possibly also knew of the story of the animistic prayer, but in his version Gregory's prayer was offered in a more orthodox way to the "Lord God", rather than being given as a command to the "waters". After entreating the brothers to be reconciled, he extended a palm branch over the lake, prayed to God and the lake became dry ground.

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[119] *Mark* 4:39. *cf. Luke* 8:24; *Matthew* 8:26. The idea that Jesus' performed miracles solely by word of command was important in Marcionism, since this demonstrated that the Good God is stronger than the Creator (Harnack 1924b, p.85).

Although this narrative seems extraordinary, it is fairly clear that the people told such a story, and that it was passed down to future generations by a number of different storytellers. While it is possible to dismiss this story, on the basis that is not likely to have any foundation in fact, it seems more likely that something in Gregory's life and experience gave rise to it. It is unlikely that the stories about Gregory were created in a vacuum. In this particular case, this story seems to belong to the period when Gregory was working as a legally trained person, serving the governor of Pontus or one of the governor's assessors. Looked at this way, the story can be considered to be contextually appropriate.

Figure 4-1 Lycus and valley floor next to Niksar (Neocaesarea)

Since it is likely that Gregory was doing the work of an assessor, it is possible that Gregory had some degree of management of this matter in preparation for a formal legal hearing. In this case, the matter probably dragged on for some time because there was no simple solution to the problem. Perhaps Gregory decided to resolve this problem for himself. Even the exploits of his youth indicate that Gregory knew how to exercise authority amongst men. Given the intractable nature of the dispute between these two young men, and the impending armed conflict, it is possible that Gregory took advantage of a lower level in the river at that time, and arranged for earthworks to be undertaken, breaking the wall of the lake, whereupon the lake emptied back into the river. Although this kind of action would have been audacious, the situation was dire, since the brothers were said to be gathering armed gangs to

fight with each other. It was practical interventions of this kind (on a grander scale to be sure) that appear to have contributed to the Hellenistic kings being called "gods".[120] Indeed, it is this kind of outrageous deed that is likely to have contributed to Gregory's later reputation as a wonder-worker, and probably may go some way towards an understanding of the durability of the tradition that Gregory was able to work wonders. Of course, this reconstruction cannot be established with any kind of certainty, but it is argued that this remains an appropriate approach in the attempt to discern what might have happened, so that we can try to gain an understanding of the people's reaction and remembrance of Gregory and his deeds.

This explanation suits the geography of the region. The whole valley in which Neocaesarea is situated must have once been a lake. The water rushes down the Lycus in a seething torrent through the narrow defile between the hills approaching Neocaesarea, but spreads out in the valley in which Neocaesarea was situated, where countless ages of flooding have spread thick layers of silt in what is now a flat plain, leaving a wide, delta like river course. The water leaves the valley having cut a path through the hills on the opposite side, passing though rapids in its course, and descending again to create another silted up lake on the other side of these hills.[121] Those living in these valleys must have had experience in managing the course of the river for the purpose of irrigation.[122]

Gregory of Nyssa said that, after the lake had been dried out, an orchard was established

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[120] *vide* 3.1.5 Native Cults under the Romans, n.69.

[121] Anderson 1903, p.56, citing Hamilton 1842, Vol.1, p.345, said that the two plains of Strabo's Phanaroea were "distinct basins (originally two lakes) separated by a long saddle of hilly country, through which the strong, swift stream of the Lycus has cut a channel for itself." Another description of the valley is found in Bryer and Winfield 1985, p.107.

[122] From time to time the course of the river would have changed dramatically. It is possible that such an event happened at the very time that this dispute over the lake, leading to the lake being emptied. This would represent even more closely the events described in the narrative, and certainly, in the circumstances, would have been seen by the Christians of the time as an act of God, by which God brought about a resolution of the dispute.

in the same place. This kind of change in the utilisation of the land and the water has probably occurred frequently over the millennia. When I visited the region, upon enquiry I was directed to a spot where there once was a lake. I was given a location, but was told that it would be hard to find, since it now had fruit trees growing there. I did see orchard groves in the region indicated, since this was one of the ways in which the local farmers now utilized the valley. Therefore, one can conclude that re-using the land in this way is a normal event in this region.

In *To the Celibates* it is said that Gregory reprimanded the brothers, using words that would have been appropriate if Gregory had acted in the way described above, but which also dealt with the belief that the waters had a divine power within themselves:

> And the Blessed One spoke to the brothers, "Do you now see that the waters did not belong to you? Were they subject to your commands? Were you able to command them to stay in your pond? Therefore, go in peace."

According to this scenario, the people, knowing that Gregory was a man of God, could have considered that Gregory was acting under the guidance or direction of God in bringing about a solution to this problem. It is possible that Gregory's actual deed later dropped out of the story, and it became a miracle story simply told,[123] representing a demonstration of the resilience of traditional beliefs in the power of the gods of nature, and a strong desire to re-interpret the new faith in accordance with those beliefs.

4.2.6 Taming the Unruly Lycus

Basil said that, "by Christ's mighty name Gregory commanded even rivers to change their courses."[124] The geography of the region indicates that the river is a dangerous torrent

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[123] Harnack 1924b, p.60, noted that Marcion's *Antitheses* drew attention to the contrast between Moses' unsuccessful intervention in the dispute between two brothers (*Exodus* 2:11-16) and Jesus' refusal to intervene in a similar fraternal dispute (*Luke* 12:13-15). Gregory's position was different from that of Moses, since he was probably appointed to assist in resolving the dispute, which he appears to have done with spectaculous success.

[124] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74).

upstream from Neocaesarea, where the river is forced to run in a narrow valley, from which it passes into the alluvial plain. Gregory of Nyssa localised this story at the place where the river left this narrow valley. He said that the river was required to make a sudden turn, so the force of the water ate away at the sides of the valley, and it regularly overflowed the boundaries of the riverbank once it began to enter the upper part of the plain. When I visited the region in September (autumn), the river was a torrent through the narrow valley upstream of Niksar (Neocaesarea), but appeared quiet once it entered the wide valley below. The contrast would be greater in winter and spring, since Gregory of Nyssa indicated that the river was at its most torrid following the winter rains. The people who lived alongside that part of the river were afflicted with the constant flooding of the river at that time, and after hearing of the marvels that Gregory had already accomplished, sought him out to ask him to do something to remedy their situation. *To the Celibates* put it his way:

> When the people in the village heard of the powerful wonders that our Lord was doing through the hands of the blessed Gregory, they ran over to him to inform him about their problem, saying, "We ask you, Oh Lord! Have mercy on us! The position of our village in which we live is beautiful; however, the river which always flows past and causes great damage and carries, Oh Lord, our belongings and our cattle away; it also destroys our houses down to their foundations and carries them away, even killing the people who live in the houses."[125]

This petition is of a kind that could have been put by the leading members of a village to some benefactor who might be able to assist them in resolving a desperate problem. The wording of the appeal, addressed to Gregory as "Lord" points to Gregory's status in this community.

In describing these events,[126] Gregory of Nyssa made a characteristic aside, saying that Gregory philosophised all the way with his companions "concerning the highest hope". The account of Gregory's journeying with his companions might have been an original element. It

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[125] *To the Celibates*, 8.

[126] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 8 (56-61); Heil 1990, pp.32-36; PG 46:929A-933B.

also indicates that this story could have come from the period before he became church leader, and that he went to this place with a body of disciples who were studying philosophy with him.[127] Gregory of Nyssa also included a speech reputedly from Gregory, which, following the rules of the epideictic discourse, was probably invented by Gregory of Nyssa. This speech reflected an appropriate line of argument for someone in Gregory's position, in which Gregory was reported to have said that only God can constrain the river and set its limits, for the elements are only submissive to the Lord of creation. This contrasts faith in God, the one who controls all things, with belief in the natural power of the elements themselves, and opposed the idea that the daemons control such things. Gregory of Nyssa seems to have intended this speech to be a lesson for his audience to give God his proper place, and not to give any room for the old animistic beliefs.

When he came to the site, Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory planted his staff in the marshy ground alongside the river, and from that staff a tree grew that served as a boundary for the river from that time. It was still visible when Gregory of Nyssa delivered his discourse. He said that when the river was in flood the river could be seen to pile up in the middle of the stream so as to avoid flowing beyond Gregory's tree: thus Gregory of Nyssa depicted the miracle as still continuing. The account of this miracle in *To the Celibates* is similar. It depicted Gregory commanding the waters in the name of Christ, prohibiting them from advancing into the town and devastating it at the time of the annual flooding of the river. In this version, the people did not have to wait for the tree to grow: it came up instantly.

We cannot know with any certainty what happened, but the events behind this story were probably more mundane than they appear in these versions of the story. As a member of one of families who belonged to the land-owing elite of this community, it is likely that Gregory's

[127] The fact that this element was not included in *To the Celibates* is not fatal to this interpretation, since Gregory of Nyssa is likely to have access to a better version of a story from this time, given his elite status, than the writer of *To the Celibates*, who was probably of a lower social status.

family property was also situated on the alluvial plain formed by the flooding of the Lycus, and that over the preceding decades or centuries the family had learnt how to manage the annual floods of the river by judicious use of earthworks. The result of Gregory's action, as depicted in *To the Celibates*, was that the river changed course and flowed south of the village.

If Gregory indeed resolved the problem that was being experienced by the villagers, it is likely that he was perceived by them to have worked with more than human power, since it is said that a solution to this problem had been sought but not found for many years before this. There could have been many different practical solutions. Perhaps Gregory created a very large levee between the village and the main flow of the Lycus, and then planted a tree on this levee to hold the earthworks of the levee more securely. The villagers could have been encouraged to plant more trees on the levee, making a complete barrier. The narrative represents Gregory as planting a tree. Perhaps the innovation, reported in the story, of planting a tree (or trees) on the levee was Gregory's unique contribution. This might have been the reason why his endeavours succeeded and those of others failed. One can imagine Gregory planting the tree in a grand ceremony, after work had been done of the levee, and dedicated with an appropriate prayer, even one like that found in our accounts, saying that only God can constrain the river, and calling upon the river to keep to its proper course. Such a mixing of philosophy and practical action was, perhaps, characteristic of Gregory, and in line with his opinion that action is more important than talk.[128]

Gregory of Nyssa explicitly said that the people had already tried all the conventional approaches for solving the problem, such as using rocks and earthen dykes, and everything that human ingenuity could manage. This part of the story might have been Gregory of Nyssa's invention, since it is not in *To the Celibates*. It could have been Gregory of Nyssa's

[128] Gregory, *Address*, 9 (123). Remus 1983, p.76, observed that in the Greco-Roman period, in popular imagination, the philosopher was thought to be beyond an ordinary human and capable of being thaumaturgic.

attempt to explain to himself and to his audience why a miracle was called for, when a practical solution naturally suggested itself. Gregory of Nyssa claimed that Gregory's solution was still effective over one hundred years later. Perceiving such an outcome to be an answer to prayer would not be a surprising result in Christian circles, even today.

An alternative explanation is that this story originated as a symbolic explanation of Gregory's confrontations with the Marcionites. The idea of the symbolism of the conflict with Marcionism arises because both versions of this story make much of the fact that this river was called "wolf" (λύκος), on account of it being wild and uncontrollable. This brings to mind Marcion, who was also called the "wolf of Pontus".[129] As a symbolic explanation, the tree that Gregory was said to have planted on the river bank could represent the apostolic doctrine that Gregory established amongst the Neocaesareans: Gregory's doctrine held back the strong force of the Marcionite heresy, just as the tree held back the fearsome river. However, the lack of evidence to corroborate this suggestion, and even the testimony of a physical memorial of these events (the tree found on the river-side), make it difficult to assert that this story originated in this way. Neither Gregory of Nyssa nor the writer of *To the Celibates* appears to have considered the idea that this story was either symbolic or was useful as a metaphor for the conversion of the people: for both writers, it was a simple miracle story arising from Gregory's confrontation with the forces of nature.

4.2.7 Retirement from Civic Life

According to *To the Celibates*, "Blessed Gregory" retreated to the mountains in order to find the peace of the creation: here he sought the life of completeness.[130] This was the kind of progression in spiritual life that the writer of *To the Celibates* would have expected to have been the case, since this was the pattern of life that he thought was one of two ideal life-

[129] Eusebius, *EH*, 5:13.

[130] *To the Celibates*, 1.

styles: separation from the world or leadership of the church. Indeed, his specific purpose was to show that those who had established their reputation as spiritual men in the wilderness could also continue this work by becoming leaders of the churches. *To the Celibates* said that Gregory's retreat into the mountains led to him gaining a reputation in many cities. Against this it is possible that he had already gained an impressive reputation, even before he retreated from public life.

The same two key elements are found in *To the Celibates* and the panegyric: firstly, Gregory was already famous when he was appointed leader of the church of Neocaesarea; secondly, he was in a remote retreat when he was called to that office. However, Gregory is unlikely to have made living alone a voluntary lifestyle choice. In his *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes*, Gregory praised life shared with another, and deprecated life lived alone:

> For when two men confront the same situation uprightly, even if something should befall one of them he has no small protection in his companion. The very greatest calamity for a person in trouble is not to have anyone to put him right again. Furthermore, those who live together both double their prosperity and blunt the winds of adversity; as a result, they dazzle us by day with their mutual openness, and by night they glow with quiet dignity. But the one who pursues life without sharing undergoes his life as threatening, since he has not realized that, when people stand together, even if someone thought it safe to attack them his plan would be reckless and unsafe, and that a rope of three strands is not easily snapped.[131]

Gregory possibly lived the sort of life he described here in the company of his brother, who Eusebius said later shared with him the leadership of the churches of Pontus. He possibly continued as a teacher, who attracted his own group of disciples. Slusser observed that in the panegyric Gregory is often found in company with his companions.[132] While Gregory of Nyssa generally called him "the Great" (ὁ μέγας), this appears to have been Gregory of

[131] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 20, PG 10:997C-1000A; tr. Slusser, pp.133f.

[132] Slusser 1998, pp.11f, 134 n.18; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 5 (35), 6 (42), 8 (58), 9 (68), 13 (89); Heil 1990, pp. 20, 24, 33, 39, 49; PG46:916A, 920A-920B, 929D, 937A, 949A.

Nyssa's name for him. In the context of the stories that have been handed down in the panegyric, apart from the appellation "great", and his name, he is called "teacher" (διδάσκαλος).[133] This was possibly how his inner circle knew him, and it suggests that Gregory did, indeed, have a group of disciples closely bound to him, just as he and his companions had been bound to Origen.

Gregory of Nyssa claimed that Gregory decided to retire from public life: this seems to have been correct, even though he appears to have incorrectly placed this at the time when Gregory returned home, after his education, rather than when he ceased his legal work.[134] His period of service possibly came to an end as a result of changes in the arrangement of the provinces that saw Pontus temporarily absorbed into Galatia. At this time, it appears that he declined to take his expected place as a rhetor in the governing councils of the city, and he also did not move to another city to act as an assessor.[135] It is possible that he had to give up his property in order to escape the obligations of the curial class, so that he did not have to undertake a provincial magistracy. This would then be in agreement with Gregory of Nyssa's statement that Gregory surrendered his property,[136] and retired to study philosophy. This is

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[133] Gregory is called "Teacher" in the following stories: the disputed inheritance; healing the possessed boy; the deacon in the bathhouse.

[134] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 3 (23-27); Heil 1990, pp. 12-16; PG46:905D-909B. Since serving in one's own province was exceptional, this privilege was probably only granted for a limited time.

[135] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 3 (24); Heil 1990, p.14; PG 46:908C.

[136] This pattern was repeated, even if not followed, by others from the elite class, in which, some time later, Eustathius of Sebasteia retired from public life, Basil's sister Macrina the Younger retired to a self-funded Christian retreat with her mother, and Basil abandoned a secular career in Cappadocian Caesarea in 357 or 358, and began an ascetic life in Annesi (Rousseau 1994, p.62). While Basil does not appear to have consciously patterned the lifestyle on something he learnt from Gregory, but rather he appears to have independently decided that the ideal form of such a life was in company with others, and in close association with the churches (Basil, *Letters,* 223:3; Fedwick 1979, pp.12-32, 156-160). Nevertheless, these were principles with which Gregory

not surprising, since Gregory said that he looked forward to studying philosophy after he left Origen's circle.

Sometime later, when Decius' published the command that all citizens sacrifice in recognition of his accession to the office of emperor, Gregory, his brother and their companions must have immediately fled into the countryside. This might have made the two noble brothers notorious in the eyes of some of the leaders of the communities of Pontus, although others might have admired them. The state probably did not pursue them in order to obtain their personal submission. Like most Christians at the time they escaped the ultimate penalty, probably by the simple expedient of not making it easy for the authorities to seize them, and not making it hard for the authorities to ignore them. It is possible that Gregory and his brother lost their remaining rights to the family's landed property during this period: it appears from a later story that they at least lost their property within the city itself.

4.2.8 Confrontation in the Temple

To the Celibates, the panegyric and Rufinus each have a story of the conversion of the warden of a temple situated somewhere outside of a city. According to the version in *To the Celibates*, Gregory stayed overnight in the temple, remaining awake all night, carrying out a liturgy. When he had finished his night service he left. In the morning the temple warden came to the temple and found that the oracle was unresponsive. A lively dialogue took place between the temple warden and the god, which appears to actually have been between the temple warden and the medium delivering the oracles of the god.[137] The god said that he had been driven out of the temple by Gregory's prayers. Since the temple warden was anxious to

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would have agreed. According to his own account, Basil followed the model established by Eustathius of Sebasteia. To this he added what he learnt about and liked from the practitioners of this type of life amongst the ascetics of Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

[137] Maurizio 1995, *passim*, discussed the role of the Pythia as the medium of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, and concluded that an altered state of consciousness of the Pythia played a decisive role in the work of the oracle.

ensure that the god became responsive again, he asked the god whether he would return if Gregory commanded him to do so. The god answered that he would return if this happened. The temple warden then sought out Gregory in the mountains and said to him, "If you command the god, who is honoured by the inhabitants of this land but has been driven out by your prayer, he will return to his place, and I will become a disciple of the God whom you preach." Gregory promptly agreed, and wrote down on a tablet, "Gregory, the disciple of Christ, to the idol: go in to your place!" Going back, the temple warden placed the tablet in the temple, and then asked the god whether he had returned. When the god answered affirmatively, the temple warden chided him, telling him that Gregory's god was stronger than him, since he had to obey even the disciple of that god. So the temple warden left the temple, and became a disciple of Gregory.[138]

This appears to be the story of Gregory's actual, and individualistic, response to the challenge represented by the traditional cults, and is therefore more likely to be of third century origin than of fourth century origin. "Playing" with daemonic powers in this way would not have been the approach recommended by the church leaders of the fourth century. There would have been few people who would have dared to do as he did on this occasion, but the story of Gregory's confrontation with the prostitute presents Gregory making a similar idiosyncratic response.

This story is in marked contrast to the story of the fifth century confrontation of Daniel the Stylite with the daemons in a deserted temple. Daniel's story can be placed in a scenic location on the Anatolian coast overlooking the Bosporus. Daniel was a native of the region near Samosata in North Syria, and a Syriac speaker, who believed that he was being led to take himself to Constantinople. Having arrived on the coastline opposite that city, Daniel heard some people discussing in Syriac the activities of daemons living in a temple nearby, who injured people walking past in the evening and even in the middle of the day, and who

[138] *To the Celibates*, 5; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 5 (34-39); Heil 1990, pp.20-22; PG 46:913B-917B.

also sank ships sailing past. Daniel determined to emulate the great Antony in the deserts of Egypt and to confront and defeat these daemons, whereupon he entered into the temple, offering prayers, psalms and holding the cross in front of him. He went into each corner of the temple, and claimed it for Christ. Over the following days the daemons contended mightily with Daniel, but he eventually overcome them so that they no longer troubled the people.[139]

According to this story, Daniel sought out this opportunity to confront the daemons. In Gregory of Nyssa's version, Gregory's action in staying overnight in the temple does not appear to have been premeditated, but arose out of his need to take shelter during a storm.[140] Furthermore, Gregory's action in commanding the daemon to return to the temple is virtually inconceivable in Daniel's situation: Daniel intended to assist in defeating the daemons by expelling them from this deserted temple. This is understandable on the basis that the situation in the fourth and fifth centuries was quite different from the situation in the third century, when such a confrontation with the gods of the traditional religion would have been politically dangerous as well as being likely to stir up the hostility of the local people. In the same way, Gregory's reaction to the threats of the temple warden, as reported, appears to have been well conceived, since it brought about a result for the advancement of Christianity that he would have considered satisfactory, yet it was done without bringing the wrath of the government and the people upon himself.

All three versions of the story depict Gregory commanding the daemon to return, thus giving it back its former authority. This is not something likely to have been invented by Gregory of Nyssa, by the writer of the To *the Celibates* or its Syriac translator, or by Rufinus, since this was very unusual behaviour. It seems more likely that this story represents something that really happened in the third century, during Gregory's lifetime.

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[139] *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 14-16. While Dawes' translated ναός as "church" in this story, it is clear from the context that the site was a deserted former temple.

[140] The reason for Gregory's overnight stay in the temple is not given in *To the Celibates*.

In the *Gospels*, when a daemon-possessed man was brought to Jesus, Jesus healed him, which is to say that he freed him from the power of the daemon.[141] However, in this case, Gregory commanded the daemon to enter the temple again, and his power was again seen inside the temple. He expressed his instruction to the daemon as a command, like an executive order of the state, as if he was someone who was used to giving orders. The fact that it is recounted that Gregory did not doubt the power of the daemon to be present and to act in the temple is not surprising, since the presence and power of the old gods was not denied by the Christians. In the Christian cosmology of those times, daemons were considered to be subordinate heavenly beings, who were considered to be evil because they had rebelled against God and were opposed to him.

This story is also supported by the physical evidence for such a temple as the one in which this event was reputed to have taken place. This derives from the remains of a temple of Apollo that were found opposite Neocaesarea, about 3 hours walking distance from the city (9 km in a straight line), about a quarter of the distance from Neocaesarea to Pontic Comana.[142] The temple was five metres in diameter, surrounded by oak trees, and a pediment for a statue of Apollo, which bore the inscription:

> Θεῷ Απόλλωνι Εὐσήγρειτε Στάτιος Νεών.[143]
>
> Statios Neon to god Apollo Eusegreites.

This was possibly the temple in which Gregory was believed to have had his encounter with

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[141] *Matthew* 12:22, *et al.*

[142] It should be possible to compare the description of the physical setting of the temple in *To the Celibates* with the remains of this temple of Apollo, after the archeological ground work has been done (if it is indeed scheduled at some time in the future).

[143] Sahakian 1913, pp.41-43. Sahakian, the Armenian prelate of Tokat at the time, also commented that "it is perhaps not without interest that all this district is full of historical debris and that there exist there almost an entire museum underground that awaits the pick and the spade of the archaeologist." The whole area remained unoccupied for a long time. Catalogued in Olshausen and Biller 1984, p.235, *s.v. Tahtalı.*

the temple warden, since this location is conformable to the setting of this event in both the panegyric and *To the Celibates*. A temple dedicated to Apollo is entirely appropriate for this event, even though we should understand that a god like the Cataonian Apollo[144] was probably meant by Apollo Eusegreites, rather than a truly Greek Apollo. Reinach thought that the inscription was from the Severan period,[145] which was just before Gregory's time.

It is worth noting that Rufinus actually called the temple a "temple of Apollo", which supports the suggestion that Rufinus had a source that was independent of the written sources available to us.

If there was a significant event that led to the rapid conversion of the people of Pontus to Christianity, it seems that the likely trigger was the confrontation in the temple between Gregory and the temple warden.[146] According to this story, the god of an old cult was seen to be worsted in a conflict with a follower of the cult of Christianity.[147]

Based on the evidence of the *Canonical Letter*, considered in the previous chapter, there could have been a significant influx of new Christians after the Decian persecution.[148] The relatively rapid increase in the number of Christians in a particular community is not without

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[144] According to Strabo, 12:2:6, the temple of the Cataonian Apollo was held in such honour that it was the model of all the temples in Cappadocia. (This comment probably applied to Pontus as well.) The Cataonian Apollo was a representation of the Mesopotamian and Syrian god Nabu, who also seems to have been assimulated to the leading Babylonian god, Bel (Pomponio 1978, pp.219-232).

[145] Note to the article by Sahakian 1913, p.44.

[146] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 5 (34-41); Heil 1990, pp.20-24; PG 46:917A-920A; Harnack 1908, Vol.2, pp.205-208.

[147] The observation made by MacMullen 1984, p.27, that "driving all competition from the field head-on was crucial", seems to be relevant in this context. However, it does not follow that confrontation with the local cults was the means by which people were converted in other places: the conditions in each place need to be considered individually, as far the evidence allows this.

[148] Inexplicably, according to MacMullen 1984, p.30. Perhaps the leaders of the Church exploited what could have been presented as a failure of the state to defeat the Church (*cf. Ibid.* p.34).

precedent, although the acceptance of Christianity here seems to have occurred much faster than we can demonstrate elsewhere. A study of the gravestone inscriptions from the upper Tembris valley in Phrygia indicates that it took about two generations to move from the situation where about 20% of the population was Christian to the situation where about 80% was Christian. A study of personal names and patronymics from Egypt indicated that it took about one generation for percentage of those who identified themselves as Christians to move from only 17% of the population up to 70% of the population.[149]

4.2.9 Moving the Stone

Gregory of Nyssa related that the temple warden hurried after Gregory, and caught up with him before he entered the city, so that he could learn about God, to whom his gods were subject.[150]

> When the Great One told him briefly about the mystery of the religion, the temple warden was affected like those who are uninitiated in divine things, and he thought it was beneath our understanding of God to believe that the Divine had appeared in flesh. But when Gregory said that faith in God was not strengthened by words but by wonders that happen, the temple warden sought to see some wonder from him, so as to draw near to the acceptance of the faith through an event.

The temple warden asked Gregory to move a huge rock, which could not be moved by human

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[149] Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, pp.62f. The figures for the Tembris valley cover the years 210 to 310; those for Egypt cover the years 290 to 325. The growth of Christianity did not mean the end of the traditional cults, but their importance must have been severely diminished in places where Christianity was as successful as these figures indicate; *vide* Bowersock 1990, p.22, who seems to have overstated his case when he rejected the claim made by Bowman 1990, p.217, that Christianity in Egypt "broke the importance of priesthoods and cult associations connected with pagan religion", on the basis that cult practices continued to be followed in the Koreion and in other places. The difference in the situation for these cults before and after the widespread adoption of Christianity (however defined) must have been stark.

[150] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 5 (39-41); Heil 1990, pp.22-24; PG 46:917A-920B; tr. Slusser.

strength, from one place to another place. Gregory immediately ordered the rock to move, as if it were a living thing, and through the power at Gregory's command, it moved to the place indicated. The temple warden was immediately converted, and left everything he owned, including home, wife and children, and followed Gregory.

In his amplification, Gregory of Nyssa claimed that the power of the story could not be increased or reduced by the narrator, since the plain story showed the power of God, and suggested that the story served as a lesson to those who venerated such inanimate objects:

> A stone causes people who served stones to forsake stones. A stone becomes a preacher of the divine faith and a guide to salvation for unbelievers...

Gregory of Nyssa implied here that the people of Neocaesarea previously worshipped natural rocks; these could have been meteorites.[151] While he could be using λίθος here as a metaphor for an idol, the worship of stones is found in the Old Testament, alongside a reference to man-made gods.

> I am God, your Lord. Do not make gods for yourselves either by hand or by engraving; do not put up a pillar for yourselves; and do not place a stone in the earth as an object for you to worship.[152]

Gregory of Nyssa did not invent this story, since he was at pains to explain away the animistic prayer associated with the story, providing an appropriate theological explanation for it, even though he did not give the wording of the prayer. His telling of the story appears to have been intended to nullify its influence. He said that only faithless people like the followers of Eunomius needed miracles to prove that God came in the flesh. In his *Apology for an Apology,* Eunomius had argued that the sovereign God could not have become flesh:

> If Basil is able to show that the God above all things, who is unapproachable light, having come in the flesh or being able to come, came under an authority, obeyed commands, was governed by human laws, and bore the cross, let light be said to be equal to light.[153]

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[151] Telfer 1936, p.342.

[152] *Leviticus* 26:1 (LXX).

The temple warden appears in the panegyric as if he shared in Eunomius' intellectual problems with the incarnation, for Gregory of Nyssa said that the temple warden "thought it was beneath our understanding of God to believe that the Divine had appeared in flesh." Here was an instinctive answer to Eunomius' charge: the faithful believe, they do not doubt what the Scriptures teach us.[154] In this way, Gregory of Nyssa attempted to refute Eunomius and to indicate that the truly faithful did not need such signs.[155]

The story of the moving of the stone immediately brings to mind Jesus' declaration that a person with even a small amount of faith could command a mountain to move.[156] It is likely that this Scripture, and the people's animistic belief that natural objects embodied some kind of divine power, gave rise to this story. Telfer argued that in an animistic religion each thing, rock, tree or springs, has its own spirit.[157] Since great isolated boulder rocks are found in Pontus,[158] it is likely that an animistic people would have treated these stones as having divine power.[159]

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[153] Jaeger 1958, 2:301; PG 45:897; tr. Kopecek 1979, p.493.

[154] During the next couple of years Gregory of Nyssa provided a fully reasoned response to Eunomius' challenge, in his *Against Eunomius*, in twelve books.

[155] Basil also pointed out that Jesus did not require his followers to work signs and wonders, (even though he said that this gift was bestowed on some by the Holy Spirit), but rather Jesus said that love between Christians was the true mark of being a disciple (Fedwick 1979, p.17, citing *Regulae fusius tractatae* 3:1).

[156] *Matthew* 17:20.

[157] Telfer 1956, pp.340-342, argued that the story arose out of the people's belief in the divine spirit in natural objects.

[158] Cumont and Cumont 1906, p.270, has a picture of an odd shaped rock near the village of Argosti, which may have been the object of worship at one time.

[159] Men was called Men Petraeites on four inscriptions (Lane 1971, #34, #62, #67, #68). Dexler thought that this epithet might have been derived from πέτρα, rock (Roscher ML *s.v. Men*, col.2750-61). The location of the temple near the place of a significant rock formation seems the most likely meaning of this epithet (*cf.* Lane 1976, p.75).

The writer of *To the Celibates* did not include this story: in that version, apparently told from the temple warden's point of view, the temple warden did not need this miracle to effect his conversion. The dispute with the god, carried out through the medium, was sufficient to convince him to turn from the old gods and to follow Gregory's god. It is certainly significant that this story does not appear in *To the Celibates*. This makes it more likely that this was an old animistic story from the traditional cults, which was transformed into a Christian story. It is not surprising that it found itself attached to the other stories about Gregory, as another example of his thaumaturgic powers.

4.2.10 Trodias' Martyrdom

To the Celibates and the panegyric both have a story about a martyrdom of a boy.[160] The accounts are obviously about the same event, even though he is called Trodias in the panegyric, whereas *To the Celibates* does not name the boy. Since the story is set in *To the Celibates* much earlier than its other stories about the persecutions, and these latter stories appear to relate to the persecution under Valerian, this raises the possibility that Trodias died earlier, under Decius. Even though Gregory of Nyssa joined his stories about the persecutions together, it is likely that this was done on his own initiative. The testimony of *To the Celibates* indicates that the stories as handed down to him were not joined together in this way.

According to the panegyric, Gregory was somewhere outside the city teaching his disciples or praying with them, while hiding from the state authorities who were torturing those who would not deny Christ. Suddenly he became distracted, as if he was involved in a vision and straining to listen. When, as it seemed, Gregory came out of his vision, he praised God in the words of the *Psalms* saying: "Blessed be God, who has not given us as prey to

[160] *To the Celibates*, 6; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 13 (89-91); Heil 1990, pp.49-50; PG 46:949A-949D.

their teeth."[161] When his companions asked him to explain he told them that a young man named Trodias had been martyred that very hour, but had "endured nobly". The former temple warden then asked Gregory's permission to go down into the city to see whether Gregory's prophecy was correct. Gregory warned him against doing this, but let him go after offering a prayer for his safety. Here the story drifts off and appears to be incomplete, merging into the next story.

This story possibly had its origins in the death of the son of one of the leading citizens, who became a victim of Decius' order to sacrifice. The former temple warden's freedom to move around the city suggests that this event occurred during Decius' reign. The problem for the Christians during that reign was that everyone was required to offer sacrifice to recognize his accession. If these events are dated in this way, it is likely that the former temple warden had already offered sacrifice before he had converted to Christianity, and therefore was free to move around the city, while Gregory had to remain hidden. Also, the remembrance of a single name, Trodias, who stood alone against the power of the state, is reminiscent of the story of the martyrdom of Pionius, who died in Smyrna with a few companions, also during the reign of Decius.

4.2.11 The Daemon in the Bathhouse

Both the panegyric and *To the Celibates* have a story about the successful confrontation of the former temple warden with a daemon in the bathhouse.[162] Gregory of Nyssa joined this story and the story of Trodias together. *To the Celibates* has virtually the same story as in the panegyric, but Gregory of Nyssa's story is more colourfully presented. Like the story of the

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[161] *Psalm* 124:6 (LXX 123:6).

[162] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 13 (92-94); Heil 1990, pp.50-52; PG 46:949D-953A; *To the Celibates,* 7. This story is closer to the story of Daniel the Stylite (*vide* Section 4.2.8 Confrontation in the Temple) than the story of Gregory's confrontation with the daemon in the temple, since the former temple warden in this story seems to have deliberately set out to confront the daemon in the bathhouse.

martyrdom of the boy, this story can be dated to the Decian persecution. According to this account, the temple warden still seems to be entirely spiritually dependent upon Gregory, which suggests that it happened fairly soon after he was converted.

According to Gregory of Nyssa's version, the former temple warden arrived in the city at night, and since he was dirty, he wanted to have a bath in the public baths.[163] It was believed that a certain homicidal daemon inhabited that bath, and it had a reputation for attacking those who came after dark. Therefore the bath-keeper warned him not to go into the bath, claiming that no one who went in after dark returned alive. Nevertheless, the former temple warden was determined on his adventure. All sorts of terrible things happened while he was in the bathhouse: fire and smoke appeared, the ground shook as if by an earthquake, the pavement stones flew up to reveal fire beneath, and when he tried to leave the door was barred by the daemon. However all of these terrors were overcome by the sign of the cross, the name of Christ and Gregory's prayers. The daemon himself testified to the former temple warden in a human voice that he had not survived the intended destruction through his own power, but rather that the one who had prayed for him had given him his own impassibility. So this also redounded to Gregory's glory.

This story is similar in importance to the story of Gregory's confrontation with the temple warden, since it is another manifestation of the direct challenge being made upon the old cults by the Christians. In this case it concerns the determination of the former temple warden to prove for himself the power over the daemons that Gregory had previously shown to him. While this story is not told in *To the Celibates* with the great drama invoked by Gregory of Nyssa, that account still brings out the stark nature of the conflict that took place between Christians and the worshippers of the old gods. In this version, the confrontation with the daemon appears to have actually been with a person who was believed to be possessed by the god. *To the Celibates* reported the daemon saying:

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[163] *cf.* Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.216.

"Man! You can still see the last victim with your own eyes – how can you ignore me in such a way? Nevertheless, what can I do to you when the prayer of Blessed Gregory accompanies you?"

This seems to represent the medium as one who allowed himself to be overtaken by a supernatural power and who then represented the god in human form. This accords with what we know about the cult of Ma, which Strabo said had many "divinely inspired" people.[164] We do not know how much personal control was surrendered by possessed persons to the one they thought possessed them, and how much control was consciously retained by them, yet this activity in the bathhouse is likely to have been the manifestation of such divine possession. Despite the threats that he faced, the courage of the former temple warden in the face of the threats against him was sufficient to result in the god again being humiliated. Possibly, both men were once functionaries in the same cult, and in this case the former temple warden is likely to have personally known the divinely possessed person in the bathhouse.[165]

This story is clearly explainable in terms of the traditional cults and beliefs of the people: it appears to represent an account of the actions of the former temple warden in working through for himself the implications of his conversion from the cult of Ma to Christianity. The fact that the story of the confrontation in the bathhouse clearly identifies the chief actor as the former temple warden, a person with whom Gregory of Nyssa's grandmother was probably

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[164] Strabo, 12:2:3.

[165] Firmilian, in Cyrian, *Letters,* 74:10, in describing events in c.234, said that a woman amongst them described herself as a prophetess, acting as if she was filled with the Holy Spirit. She performed wondrous and extraordinary deeds, being inspired to undergo great feats of endurance. She also declared that she would make the earth shake. She appears to have been acting out the part of one of the "divinely-inspired" people (θεοφόρητοι) that Strabo, 12:2:3, said lived in Cappadocian Comana. Likewise, she was also promiscuous, and had sexual relations with two leaders of the church there. Her activities in the church were brought to an end with difficulty.

acquainted, or knew by reputation, can be cited in support of the argument that the story of the confrontation in the bathhouse should be placed in the third century rather than being a fourth century invention. Indeed, it is much more likely to have been a story from the third century than from the fourth century, since one century later the old cults no longer held the same power to terrify the people. Since the story of the confrontation in the bathhouse is found in both *To the Celibates* and Gregory of Nyssa, this increases our confidence that it represents a story taken from the long-standing traditions of the people. While the details probably changed over time, as is characteristic of stories transmitted orally, the fundamental elements of this story are likely to have come from Gregory's time, in a story initially told, and then retold by the former temple warden, in support of the saying popularised by the temple warden himself, "Every one should commend himself to God through the priests", a saying still treasured during Gregory of Nyssa's time.[166]

[166] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 13 (94); Heil 1990, pp.52; PG 46:953A.

4.3 Bishop

4.3.1 Appointed Leader

Gregory was probably the first leader of the church of Neocaesarea who came to be formally called a bishop, adopting during his period of office the formal title already well established elsewhere for the senior presbyter.[167] However, when he was appointed, his formal title was possibly just presbyter, even though he appears to have carried the responsibilities of an overseer (which is to say, a bishop). In *To the Celibates* it was claimed that the bishopric of Neocaesarea was an apostolic see. There must have been a congregation prior to Gregory, even if it only consisted of seventeen members. Gregory of Nyssa was aware that, in his own day, seventeen members were insufficient to constitute a separate church congregation,[168] and anachronistically implied that there was not a properly constituted congregation before Gregory was appointed as its leader.[169] While it is usually thought that the statement in the stories that there were only seventeen Christians in the apostolic church was just a rhetorical device, it is the kind of information that is likely to have been remembered, as a striking reminder of the impact of Gregory's leadership, even though the context might eventually be forgotten.

The account in *To the Celibates* indicates that Gregory had a predecessor. Even a church

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[167] *vide* the letter of Dionysius of Alexandria, in Eusebius, *EH*, 7:5, referring to bishops by name in various cities of eastern Anatolia, Syria and Arabia.

[168] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 6 (47); Heil 1990, p.27; PG 46:921D. In the fourth century the leader of the church in a *polis* was called a bishop; in eastern Anatolia, the leader of a church in a village was called a country bishop; there was probably lower limit in terms of the number of Christians in village below which a country bishop could not be appointed to that village: this was probably more than seventeen, hence Gregory of Nyssa inclusion of this element in his story.

[169] Since Gregory was probably the first person to be officially known as bishop of Neocaesarea, Gregory of Nyssa might have been referring to the community's recollection of this.

of seventeen people would have had a presbyter as its leader. According to *To the Celibates* his predecessor was released by a particular act of providence and passed from the "trials of life of the time" to an eternal rest. While Gregory's predecessor's death could have been as a result of something like a famine or infectious disease, it is possible that his death was a result of the difficulties that arose as a result of the Decian persecution. Gregory predecessor did not die as a martyr, for such a glorious death would have been remembered and celebrated. However, he might have died after fleeing from those attempting to enforce the command to sacrifice.[170]

To the Celibates depicts the clerics of Neocaesarea actively seeking a replacement for their recently deceased bishop by going to Phaedimus of Amaseia, and asking him to appoint a new leader for them.[171] This relationship of dependency upon Amaseia could have arisen as a result of the small number in the congregation of Neocaesarea. The church in Amaseia was possibly numerically stronger than the community in Neocaesarea. They might explain why the community in Neocaesarea was prepared to accept continuing dependence upon the church in the neighbouring city, even though in more recent times Amaseia had had a lower civic status than Neocaesarea. In most places it is unlikely that the local members in this period were required to go elsewhere to get a new leader appointed. It is possible that they specifically wanted Gregory to be their leader, and they thought that Phaedimus was of sufficient social status to convince him to take on the office.

In Gregory of Nyssa's version of this story, Phaedimus, the president of the church in Amaseia, decided that he would appoint Gregory to be leader of the church in Neocaesarea.

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[170] *To the Celibates*, 2.

[171] The Syriac verison of *To the Celibates* anachronistically said that Gregory was ordained by the fourth century bishop, Gregory of Nazianzus. However, we can be sure that the Greek original did not have this mistake, since we know that Phaedimus was named in the Georgian translation of the Greek original of *To the Celibates* (van Esbroeck 1987, pp.257f).

This meshes reasonably well with the story in *To the Celibates*, in which the clergy in Neocaesarea sought out Phaedimus and asked him to appoint a leader for their congregation. However, Gregory of Nyssa then painted a farcical picture of Phaedimus pursuing Gregory from one remote and isolated retreat to another. According to this version, despite Phaedimus having "divine foresight" in his desire to ordain Gregory, Phaedimus was thwarted in this object because God granted Gregory many visions that enabled Gregory to escape from him. Phaedimus decided to end this struggle by ordaining him in absentia, presumably by completing the rites even though Gregory was not present. (The inherent absurdity of a story of God fighting with himself over Gregory did not concern Gregory of Nyssa.) Both versions then said that, after this, Gregory was ordained according to the usual rites.[172]

In writing this story, Gregory of Nyssa used the titles priest (ὁ ἱερεύς), and the one who presides (ὁ καθηγούμενος) as titles for Phaedimus: he appears to have avoided the title "bishop". Even though sometimes a fourth century bishop might also be called a priest or archpriest, the normal title at that time was bishop. The title "priest" did not define the office of a bishop: both a presbyter and a bishop were entitled to carry out the work of the priest, which in the fourth century was the celebration of Holy Communion and other acts of ministry to the individual spiritual needs of the Christian. It is possible that Gregory of Nyssa believed that this title had come to be used during Gregory's time, and took account of this, but this kind of scrupulous attention to detail does not appear to have been characteristic of Gregory of Nyssa. It seems more likely that Gregory of Nyssa used the wording of the stories as handed down to him. In these stories the titles priest and president were probably used instead of bishop.

One interpretation, which appears to account for all the information available to us, would suggest that there were disparate groups of Christians in Neocaesarea at the time Gregory was appointed, and that Gregory's most significant early task was to have united all of these

[172] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*,3 (26-27), 4 (28); Heil 1990, pp.15f; PG 46:908C-909.

within the umbrella of the local apostolic church.

4.3.2 Taking Office

It is possible that when Gregory entered the city to take up his office, this was the first time that he had entered the city since the Decian persecution.[173] It might have been thought that Gregory was being audacious in making a deliberately public entrance, particularly entering the city in the company of the temple warden who had abandoned his office to become a Christian.

Gregory of Nyssa placed the conversion of the temple warden immediately prior to Gregory's entry into the town, whereas it appears more likely that this happened some time before this. He said that when Gregory entered the city the whole city came out to see him because the news of Gregory's great victory over the daemons of the temple had gone ahead of him.[174] However, it is still possible that he created a sensation when he came into town, even if the temple warden had been converted some time earlier, since now he and Gregory were seen together, probably for the first time, the temple warden being the most noteworthy of his converts. If the confrontation of the temple warden with the daemon in the bathhouse is also correctly dated to just before this event, the impact of these two great "daemon fighters" coming into town together for the first time could have been electrifying.

In his description of these events, Gregory of Nyssa portrayed Gregory as if he were the central figure in a procession, like a Roman Emperor. He said that Gregory was immovable like an emperor, not looking to right or left, and unastonished at the great crowd that had gathered to see him.[175] While this story element could have been added by Gregory of Nyssa, it also reflected Gregory's own attitude, for in the *Metaphrase* he said, "Prudent anger is

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[173] Flight seems the most likely reason that he survived the order to sacrifice.

[174] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 6 (42-48); Heil 1990, pp.24-28; PG 46:920A-924B.

[175] Lane Fox 1986, pp.530f.

preferable to laughter, for the soul is kept upright by a stern facial expression."[176] It is likely that Gregory tried to follow Origen's example, in that Origen deliberately set out to appear before the people as something more than an ordinary person.[177]

According to Gregory of Nyssa, even though there were very few who embraced the faith before Gregory's arrival, now it seemed that the whole city honoured him. Even though there were only very few who had already been catechised, before the day was over Gregory had catechised sufficient numbers to constitute a congregation. Gregory was possibly hereby incorporating into the apostolic church in Neocaesarea many of those who had previously identified themselves as Christians, but remained outside of that fellowship.

Gregory of Nyssa then appears to have compressed Gregory's whole lifetime of missionary activity into one day of "proclaiming, discerning, directing, teaching, and healing."[178] He said that the next morning the common people (δῆμος) gathered again at the doors. He ministered to them by healing the sick, proclaiming and teaching the gospel, and wisely instructing all who needed instruction.[179] However, it is unlikely that the actual outcome of Gregory's entry into the city was as decisive as Gregory of Nyssa implied. The version in *To the Celibates* is more restrained: here it is said that, when Gregory entered into his bishopric, he taught the people night and day. It is likely that this meant that Gregory set about training a group of people who could act as leaders in the Church amongst the ordinary people.

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[176] Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 7:3, tr. Jarick.

[177] Brown 1988, p.162, noted that Origen strove to appear firm in countenance when appearing before the people, citing Origen, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, 3:1.

[178] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 6 (47); Heil 1990, p.27; PG 46:924A; tr. Slusser.

[179] The care of the sick and indigent was also a concern of Gregory of Nyssa, who believed that it was important that Christians respond with compassion and help to those in need (Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.83, citing Gregory of Nyssa's *De Pauperibus Amandis*).

4.3.3 Musonius

Since, according to Gregory of Nyssa,[180] Gregory had surrendered all his property when he began his life of solitary retreat, neither he, nor his companions had anywhere to stay. Gregory's companions were worried about where to stay. This group might have included his brother and the former temple warden. Gregory rebuked them for worrying about such mundane things saying that they should think of themselves as being under the shelter of God. Immediately after this, one of the most prominent men in the town, Musonius, offered him hospitality in his home, perceiving that this would bring him renown, and also to pre-empt others who were planning to do the same thing. Gregory accepted his offer. Musonius was famous for his action, being celebrated (ἀοίδιμος) on account of it.

Van Dam observed that, since this story was remembered within a family environment, it might be more reliable that the normal "church stories".[181] However, he was disappointed that the panegyric failed to quote the actual words of the song (however, there may not have been an actual song, as ἀοίδιμος can also just mean famous). In Van Dam's opinion, this story shared the weakness of the other stories included by Gregory of Nyssa, in that it was not given with sufficient definite details to enable adequate cross checking or the evaluation of its historicity. Nevertheless, since the descendents of the man so celebrated were likely to be present at the time the panegyric was delivered,[182] and other people present could also have validated whether Gregory of Nyssa was fabricating the story of this song, we can have some confidence in the basic outline of this story.

Gregory of Nyssa did not explain why Musonius' action was considered by the people to

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[180] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 6 (44-45); Heil 1990, pp.25f; PG 46:920D-921C.

[181] Van Dam did not explain why he thought that "church stories" should be thought to be inherently unreliable, and "family stories" more reliable.

[182] Van Dam 1982, p.284 n.40, noted that a person by name of Musonius was the bishop of Neocaesarea immediately prior to Atarbius (Basil *Letter*, 210:3).

be so important: it must have been more than ordinary hospitality. We can deduce that Musonius was the first head of family amongst the local elite who identified himself with Gregory. Since this was probably shortly after the troubles under Emperor Decius, as indicated by the stir created by Gregory on his entry into the city, Musonius might have been taking a risk by identifying himself with Gregory and the Christians.

4.3.4 Temple of Christ

Gregory of Nyssa said that, soon after this momentous day, the people wanted to build a "temple" (ναός) to God. They set to work to do this, "assisting to this goal with their goods and their bodies."[183] Gregory of Nyssa was able to say that this "temple" was still standing in his own day, having been built at the place Gregory stopped on that first day after his triumphal entry into the city. Gregory of Nyssa certainly knew its location.[184] It appears to have been a robust building, for it withstood a severe earthquake when all the other buildings around it came down, or perhaps it was just built using building techniques that proved to be earthquake resistant, namely, using a timber frame construction. Gregory of Nyssa implied that it was built then and there by voluntary labour and supplies, basically with what was at hand. I doubt that it was the actual church building of the people of Neocaesarea in Gregory of Nyssa's day: it would have been too small.[185]

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[183] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 6 (48); Heil 1990, pp.27f; PG 46:924A-924B, tr. Slusser.

[184] The location of this Christian temple has not been recovered. I did not encounter a church building in my brief visit to Niksar, but I was directed to the remains of "Gregory's church", which might have been the local church of the former Christians in Niksar, before the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1922. There was little left of the building except a few low loose stone walls, which might have been nothing more than fences and storage areas. The property was south of the main city centre, and it occupied an area around the size of a house block.

[185] Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.56, observed that canon 11 of the *Canonical Letter* suggested a rather large building, in which the congregation could be separated into two separate groups, but entered the caveat that this might not

Robert noted the discovery by a number of travellers in northern Anatolia of buildings, constructed by the locals, mainly of wood.[186] The same great abundance of timber certainly applied around the site of Neocaesarea. Perhaps Gregory's temple was built based on a similar simple construction technique using timber. It is worth noting that Gregory of Nyssa did not have a single word in praise of the building beyond its power to supernaturally survive through an earthquake: its method of construction may have contributed to its survival, but not to its inherent beauty. Naturally, its survival through an earthquake was attributed to Gregory's thaumaturgic and divine powers, in a way entirely consistent with the traditional beliefs of the people, which were, in regard to recognition of "the wonders of the gods", being transferred over to God.

It is also unlikely that the panegyric was delivered in this building. As Gregory of Nyssa described it, "the people wanted to build a temple"[187] and Gregory allowed them to build it. While Gregory's building was likely to have been modest, it served the purpose of a temple: it glorified the one being worshipped. Being built by the people, it was probably modelled on a traditional temple, since that was the model with which they were most familiar. Gregory of Nyssa described this building as "the temple that is pointed out to this day", suggesting that it was something that one looked at, and a monument to God.[188]

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be an authentic part of *The Canonical Letter*. It is unlikely that the people would have met inside this temple, especially if it was modelled on a traditional temple, as I have suggested.

[186] Robert 1980, p.287. I observed that, in the villages in the former Pontic region, the houses are now built of timber.

[187] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 6 (48); Heil 1990, p.28; PG 46:924B; tr. Slusser.

[188] Gregory of Nyssa indirectly claimed that there were many such "temples" in other places in Gregory's time. In another place he said that the rapid increase in the number of Christian temples caused the Emperor to become angry and envious (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 12 (79); Heil 1990, p.44; PG 46:944B). We have no other evidence that "everywhere people were zealously erecting houses of prayer in the name of Christ, which were temples" at the time of Decius' or Valerian's persecution, apart from Gregory of Nyssa's claim.

A church building was not generally called a "temple" (ναός): this word was used to describe either a traditional temple, or the tabernacle or temple of the Old Testament, or metaphorically in describing a Christian as a "temple of the Holy Spirit".[189] The word *ecclesia* could perhaps be used for a church building, but this word initially meant the assembly of the people, rather than the building. In the *Canonical Letter* "house of prayer" (εὐκτήριον) was used.[190] In the fourth century the term basilica came to be used, reflecting the actual form of the building.[191]

Sometimes "temple" was used for a church building, especially if it was in the context of church buildings displacing or rivalling temples. It was used in this context here, and again a little later in this discourse when Gregory of Nyssa wanted to describe the victory of Christianity over the old cults, saying, "Everyone in every place was zealously erecting handsome temples (ναοί) in the name of Christ".[192] The ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, used ναοί for church buildings, speaking of "temples again rising from the soil to a lofty height" after the end of the final period of persecution. In giving church buildings the name of

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[189] Lampe, *s.v.* ναός; Origen, *Against Celsus* 8:19.

[190] *Canon* 10. Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter,* 25:3, also used "house of prayer" for a martyrium he planned

[191] *cf.* White 1990, pp.12-20. Eusebius, *EH,* 8:1, (PG 20:741C-744A), adapted *Psalm* 89:39 (LXX 88:39) , a lament over the destruction of the sanctuary, to talk about the "destruction of the churches (ἐκκλησίαι)". However, he probably meant this to refer to the assemblies of the Christians, the primary meaning of the word, rather than to the buildings themselves. When discussing the actual events, *EH,* 8:2, (PG 20:744B), Eusebius spoke of both the overthrowing of the houses of prayer (τῶν προσευκτηρίων οἱ οἶκοι) and the attacks upon the leaders of the churches, thus bringing in both aspects. The writer of the *Life of Daniel the Stylite* (Daniel was a fifth century figure) used several terms for a church building, in one place calling it οἶκος Κυρίου, but followed this by calling it ἡ ἁγία ἐκκλησία; while he mentioned a ναός, this referred to a former temple (*Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 73, 14).

[192] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 12 (79); Heil 1990, p.44; PG 46:944B; tr. Slusser.

temples, he was declaring God's triumph in overcoming the persecutors.[193] This was also done elsewhere: at the end of the third century, there was a public "temple" in Nicomedia: Lactantius said that Diocletian's first official act was to order the destruction of a "very tall temple" (*fanum editisimum*), situated on elevated ground, and visible from the palace.[194]

The narrative suggests that Gregory consciously set out to provide a "Christian temple", as a focal point for his new congregation. Even if Gregory of Nyssa consciously used the term "temple" rather than "house of prayer", or its equivalent, in order to maintain a level of elevated speech in his discourse, the use of this term does appear to reflect Gregory's intention to ensure that Christianity would serve as an active rival to the traditional cults. It seems that Gregory deliberately set about to create a structure and organization for the Christian church in Neocaesarea that rivalled that of the traditional cults. The difference between the two systems lay in the focus of worship, and the values underlying them, in particular the difference in the approach to sexual morality in the cult of Ma and in Christianity.

4.3.5 Judgement upon the Jews

Both the panegyric and *To the Celibates* have a story about God's judgement upon certain Jews who tried to trick Gregory. This story appears shocking to a modern reader, and perhaps it was shocking even to Gregory of Nyssa, but it helps us to understand why Gregory's

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[193] The very few church buildings that existed at that time were probably unobtrusive structures, hardly comparable with a temple, with its public symbolic purpose. We know of a church building at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates frontier, since when this city fell to the Persians *c*.255 it was abandoned (Hopkins 1979, pp.106-117,140-177). The *Edessene Chronicle* mentioned "the temple of the church of the Christians" in the list of the damage caused by a severe flood in 201 (White 1990, p.118, rejected the suggestion that this might have been an early basilical church building. He thought it was probably a renovated house church).

[194] White 1990, p.130.

reputation just kept growing and growing. In Gregory of Nyssa's telling of this story,[195] Gregory was walking down a road and two Jews were waiting for him to come past them. One of them lay himself down and feigned death while the other acted out the part of the mourner who beseeched Gregory to provide for the poor man who had died, who needed to be prepared for burial, but had nothing. Without hesitation Gregory threw his double cloak onto the man lying on the ground, and continued on his way. (*To the Celibates* said that he cut his coat in half and threw it on the man on the ground.) The man who was feigning mourning rejoiced that he had tricked Gregory out of his cloak, and told his partner to get up. But the other man was dead, having died at the moment the garment landed on him. Gregory of Nyssa concluded that the great man was not tricked, since the dead man did indeed have need of Gregory's cloak for his burial.[196]

According to both the panegyric and *To the Celibates*, the death of the man was considered to be a miracle, but it is noteworthy that, in both versions of this story, Gregory does not actually claim this as a miracle for himself: it just happened around him. Admittedly, in *To the Celibates*, the surviving Jew pleaded with Gregory to restore his friend back to life, and Gregory did so, through a repetition of the pattern of prayer seen several times already, commanding the dead man's soul to go back into his body. This difference between the two stories is an important indicator of the way that stories that are orally transmitted change over time.

It seems that, by this time, Gregory's reputation was so great that anything unusual that happened around him was considered to be a wonder. It should be reiterated here that this was the kind of divine intervention that would have been a part of the traditional religion of the

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[195] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 10 (72-76); Heil 1990, pp.41-43; PG 46:940B-941C. *To the Celibates*, 4.

[196] Sozomen, *EH*, 7:27, recorded a similar story about Epiphanius, noting the similarity to this story about Gregory. It both cases there was one man who feigned death, and another who sought money for burying his dead companion. In both cases the man faining death died as a result of the deception.

people of this region. It is unlikely that Gregory of Nyssa or the writer of *To the Celibates* invented the story. Gregory of Nyssa might have been somewhat embarrassed in retelling his version, since he thought that many people would find the story repulsive. In defence of its inclusion in his panegyric, he drew the listener's attention to the story of Ananias who died because he lied to Apostle Peter.[197] It is also possible that Gregory's reputation as a wonder-worker caused such terror that the cloak falling on the one lying on the ground gave him a shock from which he died. If the sequence of the narrative as I have laid it out is correct, Gregory must have already built up a formidable reputation.[198]

The Jews probably thought themselves to be well placed to expose what they might have thought was Gregory's trickery, since they would have had a natural scepticism towards his reputation as a wonder-worker. A similar situation applied in Abouteichnis in Paphlagonia. In describing this situation Lucian depicted the Epicureans and the Christians as the only ones who were not deceived by Alexander's wonder-working exploits.[199] Jews and Christians must have had a similar measure of scepticism towards the wonder working of their religious opponents.

4.3.6 Choosing Comana's Priest

Both the panegyric and *To the Celibates* include an extended story about the appointment of a Christian priest in Comana.[200] The two versions present, in themselves, the basis for a

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[197] *Acts* 5:1-11.

[198] Slusser 1998, p.73, n.57, thought that the identification of these two men as Jews probably reflected the opposition of Gregory of Nyssa and his hearers to Judaism. There is no doubt that the story played a part in the contest between the Jews and the Christians for the allegiance of the people. However, this does not seem an adequate reason to attribute the identification of the two men as Jews to Gregory of Nyssa. They were also identified as Jews in *To the Celibates*.

[199] Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 25.

[200] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 9 (62-72); Heil 1990, pp.36-41; PG 46:933B-940B; *To the Celibates*, 10.

case study of the way in which oral traditions are adapted according to the perspective of the storyteller and his audience. Both versions appear to have retained considerable original material: both have the name of the new priest, Alexander, and both versions use the description "worthless" in reference to him; *To the Celibates* has the name of Alexander's father and the number of slaves that he owned; the panegyric has the name of city, Comana, and a reflection of the traditional customs on that city.

According to *To the Celibates*, the bishop of a village died from old age. This village being a dependency of Neocaesarea, the clergy came to Gregory to seek a new bishop, and presented a list of names for Gregory to consider. The name of a man who was rich but who had many personal failings was included on the list. When one of the clergy in the delegation heard the name read out he responded indignantly, "Don't give the job to anyone but Alexander." Gregory let them go while he considered the matter in prayer, asking God who to appoint as bishop. After his prayer a voice came to him and said, "You shall make no-one bishop except Alexander the blacksmith." Gregory then made enquiries from Alexander's employer, and was told that the man was extraordinary.

> "He just wants us to believe, Oh Lord, that he is capable of nothing, but I, Oh Lord, don't think he is worthless, because his works are worth something. He brings in income of more than 150 *nummi* per day, but he doesn't take more than 50 *nummi* from me, and from that he feeds himself a little bread; and what is left he gives to the poor. He doesn't eat meat, he doesn't drink wine, no one has seen him having a bath, and his meal is enough for him from one evening to the next. But from time to time he says things that are so wise that such things are not said by the philosophers of the world."

Gregory asked Alexander's employer to bring Alexander to him, under some pretext. When Alexander appeared before Gregory, Alexander tried to act childishly and speak foolishly, but Gregory was not deceived by this pretence, and said,

> "Look, this is a man whose face glows like the morning sun and whose soul will be transfigured through the shining light of the glory of heaven!"

Gregory then made Alexander swear before God that he would reveal himself as he really was, whereupon Alexander disclosed that he was the son of the Roman Maximianus. He told Gregory that when his father died he had contemplated how he could become closer to God, and concluded that, for the soul that loves God, the best kind of life was that of poverty. Whereupon he sold everything he had and gave the proceeds to the poor, and in one day he freed his slaves, 700 of them. Upon hearing his account, Gregory immediately raised him to priesthood, and told him to expound the Scriptures to the people. After Alexander had taught from the Scriptures everyone praised God because of the wisdom he brought to the people. The story in the panegyric follows similar lines, but rather than the embassy coming to Gregory from the local Christian leaders, it was sent by the leaders of the whole community, and does not have elaborate account of Alexander's unmasking.

In Gregory of Nyssa's account Alexander's speech was said to be a discourse that was full of penetrating insight. An insolent youth visiting from Attica ridiculed Alexander's speech, but he was promptly refuted when a flock of doves, shining with beauty, flew overhead: someone was heard to say that they were Alexander's doves, which quietened the complaints against Alexander, and vindicated Gregory's choice. While *To the Celibates* did not name the town, it was named as Comana by Gregory of Nyssa: it is unlikely that Gregory of Nyssa was wrong in this, for Alexander must have been famous in his own time.

Both *To the Celibates* and Gregory of Nyssa do not indicate that Gregory went on an evangelistic mission to Comana: Gregory of Nyssa said that he went to the town for a few (τινές) days. *To the Celibates* put all of the action in Neocaesarea. It was even said that Alexander came to him in Neocaesarea, and implied that Alexander had to preach before the people of Neocaesarea. The version in the panegyric seems more realistic, in that it states that Gregory went to Comana in order to appoint a chief priest for Comana, and that Alexander preached before the people of Comana, thus winning them over to his appointment (with the additional divine confirmation of that choice from "Alexander's birds").

It appears that there was already a thriving Christian community in Comana by this time, since both versions show that the community was collectively involved in the appointment of the chief Christian priest of that city, even though they had not yet been organized into a single Christian community. An embassy probably did go to Gregory following the death of the previous leader, either from the leading citizens of the city, or from the members of the city church. Gregory of Nyssa said that the people asked Gregory to come to them "to unite the church there through the priesthood" (τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐκκλησίαν διὰ τῆς ἱερωσύνης συστήσασθαι).[201] These words seems to reflect a story passed down by oral tradition that this was the first time that a bishop had been appointed to rule over the churches in that city territory, or that this was the moment at which the Christians there joined into the fellowship of the sect of the apostolic Church. Gregory's intervention might have been sought because of a conflict between the elite members of the community seeking to assert their traditional right to control and hold the most prestigious priesthoods, and the established leadership in the church there. In this case, the appointment of Alexander was a compromise, for he was a member of the right class, but with qualifications as a Christian philosopher as well. He must have stood out in his community, since act of freeing 700 slaves would have had a momentous impact upon the community.

The reference to Alexander's father is also illuminating. In Strabo's time, the high priest of Comana controlled all of Comana and its territory. He had 6000 slaves, whereas Maximianus had 700 slaves. Even with this differential, Maximianus was a substantial landowner. Since he was described as being from Rome, he could probably trace his Roman citizenship back many generations, this being a source of great pride for those who had this heritage. It also provides an indication of what we suspect happened to the landed property of the temple estates: the Emperor granted (or sold) it to wealthy individuals, like Maximianus or his forebears.

[201] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 9 (62); Heil 1990, p.36; PG 46:933B.

The story about the "doves" reported by Gregory of Nyssa seems at first sight to be incongruous: "birds" were incorporated in the story in *To the Celibates*, but in the context that their outstretched wings were symbols of the cross. What did Gregory of Nyssa think that this story signified? This appears to me to be another example of Gregory of Nyssa repeating a basic story element, even though the implications of it might not have been fully understood by him. We know that doves were sacred in the cult of Atargatis in Hieropolis in Syria, Atargatis being another avatar of Ištar.[202] So it is likely that this reference to doves had some particular significance for those who were previously worshippers of Ma. Indeed, if this event actually happened as described, we could conclude that Gregory did nothing at that time to tell the people that fortune-telling using the flight of birds, or otherwise, was anathema in Christianity. It seems that Gregory was not aiming at the immediate transformation of the people to Christian standards of this kind. The important issue for him was the appointment of an appropriate spiritual leader who could guide the people into the future. A side issue from the story about the doves is that this suggests that the meeting was held outdoors, possibly in the theatre of Comana, and that it was grand occasion.

Neither the panegyric nor *To the Celibates* indicates how the church of Comana progressed after this point, or even how the new "priest" supported himself in his new role. As far as the writers of these accounts were concerned, the appointment of Alexander as "high priest" was the end of Gregory's involvement with that church. This might have been Gregory's approach throughout his territory, namely to ensure the right person was appointed

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[202] Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 54; Strabo, 12:8:9. Doves also appear in the *Life of Daniel the Stylite*: a dove appeared when choosing the site on which his column was to be erected (24), and then after Daniel died, three crosses appeared in the sky with doves flying around them (99). It is likely that the symbol of the dove, important in the traditional religion, emerged as an important symbol in Syrian (and Pontic and Cappadocian) Christianity, probably being authenticated as a Christian symbol by association with the imagery of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus, like a dove (*Matthew* 3:16).

to each office. *To the Celibates* also said that he concentrated on teaching, so this probably meant that he trained people to become leaders as well as choosing those already well equipped.

The loss of influence of the old cults is implicitly recognized in the panegyric. Gregory of Nyssa said that the people everywhere believed the reports of the wonders worked by Gregory, and as a result everyone wanted to have a Christian church established in their community. This was probably true at an important level, for it appears that Gregory's success in confronting the cult in the temple outside Neocaesarea, and his growing reputation for wonders that rivalled that of the old gods appear to have had the effect of further undermining the cult of Ma.

Unfortunately Gregory of Nyssa did not explain how the conversion of the people came about beyond the claim that the people of the whole region were attracted to Christianity through the great wonders worked by Gregory. It would appear that Gregory of Nyssa did not know anything more than this. *To the Celibates* did not even mention the conversion of the people: it was assumed that they were already Christians. It is also striking that neither version made any mention of those aspects of the cult of Ma that must have been particularly repugnant to Christians, such as temple prostitution. This indicates that ritualised prostitution was not a living issue during Gregory of Nyssa's lifetime, and probably was not an issue even during the lifetime of his grandparents.

4.3.7 Healing the Possessed Boy

Both the panegyric and *To the Celibates* have a story of Gregory's exorcism of a possessed boy.[203] Gregory of Nyssa's version is set against the background of Gregory preaching in the country, suggesting that Gregory made the people in the country one of the focuses of his missionary activities. Gregory of Nyssa placed this story in his narrative before

[203] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 11 (77-78); Heil 1990, pp.43f; PG 46:941C-944A. *To the Celibates,* 12.

the account of Valerian's persecution. This is one of only two places where it is explicitly stated that Gregory went around preaching and teaching. The other is when Gregory of Nyssa described Gregory setting up martyr festivals, by visiting the whole of the surrounding country, and establishing them in each place. These two references provide evidence (albeit limited) of a thought-out missionary plan that involved preaching and teaching throughout the *chora* of the *polis* of Neocaesarea.[204]

According to Gregory of Nyssa's version, Gregory was conducting an open-air gathering in a place nearby in the country. A boy called out, proclaiming that "the Teacher was not saying these things of himself but another standing next to him was delivering the words."[205] Apparently the child was being somewhat disruptive, but it was only when the gathering broke up that the boy was brought to Gregory. Gregory told those gathered there that the child was unclean from a daemon. Taking a linen cloth from his shoulders, and breathing on it, he threw it on the boy. The daemon immediately caused the boy to convulse, but after Gregory placed his hand on him, the daemon fled, and the boy was normal again, and he no longer saw the second speaker.

The significance of the "second speaker" image is not explained in the narrative, but it possibly relates to the story in the Gospels that many sick people came to Jesus and he healed them. Daemons came out from many, but Jesus would not let them speak since they knew whom he was.[206] The point of this is to say that the daemons knew the truth, therefore the daemon who possessed the boy knew that Gregory did not speak on his own authority, but standing next to him was Christ, for whom he was really just the mouthpiece. This was an indication of Gregory's authority, since it gives a strong implication that Gregory acted as Christ's mouthpiece. Gregory of Nyssa did not make the connection explicitly in this

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[204] *cf.* Baus 1980, p.375.

[205] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 11 (77); Heil 1990, p.43; PG 46:941C-944A; tr. Slusser.

[206] *Mark* 1:32-34; cf. *Mark* 5:7.

panegyric, although it must have occurred to him.

Gregory of Nyssa went on to say that Gregory provided talismans to the people with which they could also work miracles, in which "the breath from his mouth was sufficient, brought to the sufferer in a linen cloth." This story represents this society as being very open to the idea of the miraculous intervention of God; this is not surprising since the priests and priestesses of Ma were also believed to have been divining inspired people. It is likely that this first generation of Christian converts expected Gregory to manifest similar divine powers, and that during his lifetime Gregory was thought to be uniquely endued with the power to cause such miracles to occur.

4.3.8 Valerian's Persecution

In 257 Emperor Valerian made a call for everyone to worship "the gods who had preserved the empire". He had reason to be worried. The empire was harassed on all sides: Italy, Greece, Dacia, Syria, Cappadocia, Bithynia-Pontus and Pontus were ravaged or threatened; the currency was continuing a steady decline though debasement and devaluation. Valerian apparently suspected that the refusal of the Christians to sacrifice was one of the causes of the Empire's troubles. The Romans were conservative and did not want to give offence to any of the gods. It is also significant that this came at a time when Valerian was probably contemplating an attack on Persia, and wanted to make sure that the ancient gods (whom the Romans believed had made Rome great) would aid Rome again.

Valerian initially aimed at working with the leaders of the church to convince them to give recognition to the ceremonies of the Roman state, without stopping them from practicing the forms of the Christian religion. Valerian was trying to find a compromise solution: he was not yet prepared to force the issue to the point of killing those who resisted. In North Africa, Cyprian was exiled, as was Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. This approach failed, and the next edict, in 258, was directed against both the clergy and influential laymen,

threatening them with imprisonment and loss of property if they refused to sacrifice, and if they persisted, with execution. Civil servants were threatened with slavery and forced labour on the Imperial estates. This persecution fell heavily upon the churches in Rome, North Africa, Spain, Egypt and Palestine. Xystus, bishop of Rome, and Cyprian died for their faith, as did other leaders in those places. However, Firmilian survived, and was even able to carry out missionary work amongst the inhabitants in his place of exile.[207]

Both the panegyric and *To the Celibates* include a story about Gregory's escape from the persecution.[208] Both versions of this story indicate that the governor at the time was particularly hostile to the Christians, so it is possible that the persecution was more intense in Pontus than in some other places. Gregory of Nyssa thought that persecution arose from the Emperor's concern that the ancestral cults were falling into neglect. Therefore, he attributed the Emperor's order to sacrifice to his envy, arising from the success of the Christian religion in winning people to its cause:

> The time came when the divine proclamation had circulated everywhere and all in the city and its environs had been converted to the true faith in the doctrine; when the altars and the temples and the idols in them had been overturned, and human life had been cleansed from the defilements associated with idols, and the disgusting burning of sacrifices had been extinguished, and the gore on the altars and the defilements from live sacrifices had been washed away; and when everyone in every place was zealously erecting handsome temples in the name of Christ.[209]

The evidence available to us indicates that this statement probably exaggerated the impact of Christianity in the Roman Empire as a whole during the Valerian's reign, even though Valerian appears to have been concerned about the advance of Christianity.

When Valerian set the process under way, it was up to each governor to ensure that the

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[207] Frend 1965, pp.421-429.

[208] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 12 (79-87); Heil 1990, pp.44-49; PG 46:944A-948B; *To the Celibates*, 13.

[209] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 12 (79); Heil 1990, p.44; PG 46:944A-944B; tr. Slusser.

Emperor's order was carried out. Gregory of Nyssa described the result in Pontus in this way:

> When this fearsome and godless proclamation had been promulgated to all the governors, what had been ordered to this end by the tyrant's cruelty permeated throughout the realm. Someone was governing the people in that place who was such that no power of enforcement was lacking for the evil onslaught, since he personally felt bitterness and hostility towards those who believed the Word. There issued from him a monstrosity among public ordinances, that they would either have to renounce the faith or be punished with punishments of every kind, including death. The keepers of the common good at that time had no other public or private duty and mission except harassing and punishing those who held the faith.[210]

Gregory of Nyssa might have been correct when he said that the governor of Pontus was particularly opposed to the Christians. He attributed the decision to impose the death penalty on the confessors to the one "governing the people in that place".

According to Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory fled when he was faced with the demand to sacrifice. Indeed, Gregory of Nyssa's presentation of this account could even be taken to suggest that Gregory had fled by himself without saying a word, and left the rest of the Christians in the town to fend for themselves.

> And so that people might be as strongly persuaded as possible that it was not dangerous to their soul to save their faith through flight, by his own example he embodied the advice to go away, since he himself withdrew from the approach of danger before the others.[211]

The story that Gregory "withdrew from the approach of danger before the others" must have been in the oral tradition that was passed down to Gregory of Nyssa: only an enemy of Gregory would have invented such a story if it were not true. The claim that Gregory fled before other Christians possibly seemed to be scandalous to Gregory of Nyssa, since it implied that Gregory abandoned to the persecutors the other Christians for whom he was supposed to care. Therefore, Gregory of Nyssa carefully crafted his account to present his flight as being deliberately intended to set an example to others, and only then introduced the

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[210] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 12 (80); Heil 1990, p.45; PG 46:944C-944D; tr. Slusser.

[211] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 12 (84); Heil 1990, p.47; PG 46:945D; tr. Slusser.

words cited above. In fact, in the persecution under Valerian, the initial attack was on the leaders of the churches, so it was natural for the leaders to have fled first. *To the Celibates* avoided this scandal by saying that Gregory initially wanted to be the first martyr from his church, but soon realised that this would cause his flock to be defenceless before the wolf, and sought God's guidance in prayer. The answer came quickly that he was to flee with his flock.[212]

During this time, it appears that Gregory and the former temple warden, now his deacon, escaped into the countryside to avoid capture. They probably went into the hills behind Neocaesarea: even today this is still a densely forested region. They were pursued right onto the very hill where they were hiding, and according to the account, doubtless relayed to us by the converted temple warden, they were not found despite being open to view. Thus they escaped capture: this possibly occurred with the connivance of the commander of the soldiers sent to find them.

Gregory of Nyssa reported that after Gregory and his deacon had foiled their pursuers, the persecution intensified. This is in conformity with our knowledge of Valerian's persecution, which became more intense over time because of its initial failure to successfully suppress the Church.

4.3.9 Plague & Prophecy

The story of the plague and prophecy is only found in Gregory of Nyssa.[213] In this story Gregory of Nyssa described an event, which can be dated *c*.259, that he believed led to the conversion of the "whole nation" (ἔθνος πᾶν) from the "Hellenic folly" (Ἑλληνικὴ ματαιότης) to the Christian religion. It is the only story in the entire panegyric that brings out the importance of Hellenic culture, festivals and religion in Neocaesarea, native culture and

[212] *To the Celibates*, 13.

[213] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 16 (99-104); Heil 1990, pp.54-57; PG 46:946A-958D.

religion being the main background to the rest of the narrative.

This story starts with an account of a great festival (ἑορτή). Since this was not just a single day event, but represented the events that happened during a "sacred month", it was probably the periodic Actian games, held each four years. These games included Olympic type events, with competitions between athletes, and gladiatorial games (which were a part of the Emperor cult), and musical competitions. This was a particularly Greek affair, with Roman trappings. Inscriptions from Aphrodisias give a glimpse of what such Greek festivals were like. For example, one inscription from Aphrodisias honoured a competitor on the kithara (like a lyre). He competed at the Actian games in Nicopolis, Hierapolis and Damascus, at a number of provincial games, including a Cappadocian Caesarea, Nicomedia in Bithynia, Tralles and Philadelphia in Asia, and at other festivals. He sometimes played alone and at other times a choir accompanied him.[214]

In this narrative, Gregory of Nyssa referred specifically to the musical component.

> The theatre was filled with those assembled; the crowd caused the seats to overflow on all sides. Since everyone was zealous to look towards the orchestra and see the spectacles and hear the music, and the stage was full of the noise of the crowded assembly, the exhibition was becoming unmanageable for those performing these wonders (θαυματοποιοί). Not only was the disorder of those crowding in preventing the enjoyment of the music, but also insufficient room was made available to those performing the wonders.[215]

Gregory of Nyssa may have had in mind some play-actors who were accompanied by music when he referred to "those performing the wonders".

By this time, the cult of Ma (amongst the Cappadocian-speaking natives) might have already suffered a mortal wound, but Gregory's message possibly had not had the same impact amongst those who identified themselves more closely as Greeks. In addition, the

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[214] Roueché 1993, pp.196f (#69) and *passim.*

[215] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 16 (100); Heil 1990, pp.55; PG 46:956B-956C. While the lexicon gives the meaning of the noun θαυματοποιός as "juggler", in the context a general meaning seems more appropriate.

trappings of Roman power in the city, like the gladiatorial games, appear to have continued unchallenged. Such games continued to be held for some time after this.[216]

However, the story of the festival was not the main subject of this story. It was introduced and elaborated by Gregory of Nyssa as the scene for presenting a prophecy, attributed to Gregory, that a plague was impending. The plague can be dated with some measure of accuracy, since it is unlikely that it was a strictly local event.[217] Zosimus reported that a plague occurred that was concurrent with the Persian victories over the Romans.[218] From this we can assume that the Persian incursions introduced the plague, which then spread throughout the Empire. Similarly, Eusebius included a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria in which he wrote about a plague that was concurrent with a civil war in Alexandria.[219] This civil war probably took place as part of the struggle for supremacy in the Empire after Valerian's defeat in 259.

Gregory's prophecy was delivered in high drama. Because there was not enough room at the festival for everyone to be seated, the cry went out in unison "Zeus, give us space!" Gregory of Nyssa made a particular point of saying that Gregory heard the daemon being called upon by name. If this was an original story element, Gregory must have been standing outside the arena, watching as so many people rushed to get inside. What is more, they were calling upon Zeus, the god of the games, for help and not upon God. Whereupon, according to Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory sent a bystander inside the arena to announce his prophecy to the people. It was delivered within the hearing of everyone inside.

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[216] We know that even the gladitorial games continued in Anatolia into the fourth century, since Basil referred to them in his *Homily on Luke 12:8* (PG31:265D), cited in Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.83.

[217] Grant 1978, pp.8-9.

[218] Zosimus, 1:36.

[219] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:22.

> Gregory's words were proclaimed as a kind of sad answer [to the people's request], "A plague follows the sacred month of all the people [the time set aside for the games]." [220]

The reaction was immediate. Rejoicing turned to lamentation, as the implication of the coming plague began to be realized.

It is possible that rumours were already circulating about a plague sweeping through that part of the Empire: Pontus is not likely to have been the first place it struck. Its onset might have been expected. If so, Gregory's prophecy would have made the people's latent fears palpable. Then, according to Gregory of Nyssa, the countryside was struck down with a pestilence, and people began dying everywhere. Sick people crowded to temples and springs, but there was no relief. The people concluded that the daemon was answering the evil prayer that had been uttered by the foolish people at the games. They turned to Gregory, asking for his prayers, which alone were considered to be efficacious against the plague. Henceforth, many of those who had remained attached to the traditional cults were brought over to the holy faith.[221]

Basil seems to have this event in mind when he said that the enemies of the Church thought of him as a second Moses:

> Moreover his predictions of things to come were such as in no wise to fall short of those of the great prophets. To recount all his wonderful works in detail would be too long a task. By the superabundance of gifts, wrought in him by the Spirit in all power and in signs and in marvels, he was styled a second Moses by the very enemies of the Church.[222]

Gregory's proclamation to the crowd, made through an intermediary, was like that of Jonah,

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[220] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 16 (101); Heil 1990, pp.55; PG 46:956D.

[221] Pontius reported on the story of a plague that happened around the same time in Carthage (Pontius, *Cyprian,* 9). He said that when the people turned on one another, Cyprian taught the people on the blessings that accompany mercy, and that this should be extended to those outside our own family. Both men worked to establish social cohesion during this difficult time, although Gregory appears to have also called upon divine aid in healing the people.

[222] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74), tr. Jackson (altered).

and the spontaneous reaction of the people in lamentation of the fate that lay ahead of them was like that of the Ninevites.[223]

Such stories appear to have become "more miraculous" over time. The accounts in Rufinus of miracles worked by Gregory were more explicitly miraculous than those reported by Gregory of Nyssa: the story of the disappearing lake in Rufinus presents Gregory stretching a green branch over the water in the style of a Moses, making a specific prayer and speech, whereas in Gregory of Nyssa's account there is no physical invocation of God's power and only an unspecified prayer. Similarly here, the people's interpretation of this event, that they were receiving an answer to their "foolish prayer", was projected back upon Gregory, to suggest that he had said that they would receive such an answer. Even in Gregory of Nyssa's version, he did not say this. In his narrative, Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory made his prophecy as if it were a kind of sad answer to their request, so that it appears that the event was interpreted in this way after it happened: Gregory of Nyssa said that the people "later realized" that the plague came as an answer to their prayer to Zeus.

We have no reason to doubt that there was such a plague during Gregory's bishopric, and it is likely that he had some involvement with these events along the lines described by Gregory of Nyssa. However, future generations probably added to the miraculous lustre of his involvement, reflecting their belief that he did indeed have thaumaturgic powers. Even in Gregory's own day, it would not be surprising if this plague was seen as the act of God, the impact of which could be ameliorated through prayer to God, and that this led to an increase in the numbers of people who converted to Christianity, this time mainly amongst the Greeks.

4.3.10 Martyr Festivals

Gregory of Nyssa said that when the persecution was over, Gregory visited the whole countryside, collecting the bodies of the martyrs from here and there, and instituting an annual

[223] *Jonah* 3.

cycle of martyr festivals.[224] We probably do not have the means of verifying the claim that Gregory was responsible for martyr festivals. They certainly existed in the Church in the first half of the fourth century, as they were discussed at the Council of Gangra. However, we can be reasonably certain that Gregory of Nyssa did not create the idea that Gregory invented martyr festivals, since he deprecated this form of worship and celebration, and does not appear to think that it naturally enhanced Gregory's reputation as a philosophical Christian. Gregory of Nyssa believed that a true Christian did not need such celebrations, since the fully formed Christian had moved past the physical and emotional, onto the spiritual plane. Whereas Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory encouraged the people to "experience good emotions", Gregory of Nyssa said that in his own day such festivals were no longer required, since "all feelings of gladness have been transferred from the pleasures of the body to the spiritual form of rejoicing."[225] It appears that Gregory of Nyssa was not comfortable with the idea that Gregory had encouraged Christians to enjoy such festivals. Even before this, such festivals had become controversial. In the Council of Gangra (dated *c*.340)[226] an unidentified Eustathius was criticised for rejecting martyr festivals. In response to this challenge, the

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[224] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 14 (95-96); Heil 1990, pp.52f; PG 46:953A-953C.

[225] *Ibid.* This ideal state had not been achieved in his own day (Slusser 1998, p.83).

[226] It is generally thought that Eustathius of Sebasteia was intended here (Barnes 1989, pp.121-124, accepted in McGuckin 2001, p.98), but the exiled Eustathius of Antioch seems to be more likely. The identification with Eustathius of Sebasteia seems to be largely dependent upon Sozomen and Socrates (or their sources), who appear to have conflated the lives of the two men. However the identification of the named Eustathius of this council with Eustathius of Antioch is conformable with the presidency of Eusebius at the council, being Eusebius of Palestinian Caesarea, who was Eustathius' main opponent. Eustathius of Antioch also seems indicated by the fact that the named bishop was not deposed at Gangra, (Eustathius of Antioch was already deposed and exiled). Either Eustathius could have accepted the old Syrian ideas on abhorence of marriage, which was rejected at this council, but in the absence of other evidence, it seems more likely that Eustathius of Antioch was the source for this teaching, rather than Eustathius of Sebasteia.

council condemned those who abhorred the martyr festivals.

If Gregory did introduce such festivals, the narrative leads us to think that they were introduced after the end of the persecution under Valerian. Such festivals were probably organized locally, rather than in the city, and would have primarily served as a replacement for the traditional festivals of the native Cappadocian-speaking people. *To the Celibates* made no mention of these festivals: this may indicate that the attribution of these festivals to Gregory is wrong, or that the writer considered that such things were not necessary for those who already were "living the life of angels".

Martyr festivals would have served as a public demonstration that the Church had not been overwhelmed by the state, even when the state used deliberate and deadly force against it. The establishment of these new festivals could have had two motives: to declare the victory of the martyrs in the great contest just conducted, and to provide the people with Christian festivals that would substitute for the traditional ones. Gregory of Nyssa thought that the latter reason predominated.[227]

[227] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 14 (96); Heil 1990, p.53; PG 46:953B-953C; tr. Slusser.

4.4 Worshippers of the Old Gods

It was said in *To the Celibates* that after the persecutions ended, Gregory and the people returned in full glory to their church; he gathered together the people of the city and saw that there were no more than seventeen non-believers there. Gregory of Nyssa provides us with a slight variation on this story: he said that when Gregory knew that he was about to die, he searched throughout the city and *chora* for those outside of the faith. Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory knew that there were less than seventeen people in Neocaesarea and its *chora* who still remained devoted to the "ancient deceit".[228]

While it is usual to reject this statement as a rhetorical invention, it should not be claimed to be an invention of Gregory of Nyssa, as the story must have existed beforehand, since it is also found in *To the Celibates*. Without doubt there is a rhetorical element to this claim, but there does not seem to be any reasonable grounds to deny that Gregory himself was the source for a statement something like this, probably made with some pride as he was dying. On the other hand, it should be understood in the most narrow manner possible, along the lines that in the city itself (excluding the *chora*) support for the traditional cults of Ma and Men had fallen away, and now the cults were only financially and physically supported in the city by a remnant. This would provide the appropriate rhetorical symmetry: Gregory was appointed to the congregation in the city, so now he compared the numbers of those previously devoted to Jesus in the city, with the numbers now devoted to Ma in the city.

In this context it must be understood here that Gregory of Nyssa distinguished between "ancient deceit" and "Hellenic folly". The former meant the gods of the native peoples, the latter meant the festivals and myths associated with the Olympian gods. It should also be recognized that Gregory's statement was qualified so that only those who were "devoted" to the old gods were counted. If this was Gregory's original wording, it is not clear whom he

[228] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 15 (97); Heil 1990, pp.53f; PG 46:953C-953D; *To the Celibates* 15.

would have included, but possibly those who regularly attended at the temples of the old gods. It may mean no more than there were hardly sufficient members to sustain one θίασος[229] serving the needs of the worshippers of the old cults of the native people in the city. Nevertheless, this statement suggests that the old gods were in serious decline by the end of his life, and that the cults had lost the support of the majority of the educated elite, upon whom they had traditionally depended.

While it is impossible to prove, it is conceivable that these cults had lost credibility during Gregory's lifetime. The confrontation with and conversion of the temple warden was probably a very significant event in this process, as would have been the temple warden's own adventures in the bathhouse. If the old cults had lost their power and credibility, Gregory had only completed the work that had been started by the Hellenes themselves, demonstrated by the subordination of the old cults in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Yet even if the old cults were dying, those in the city who did not find Christianity appealing could turn to the cults and festivals of Hellenism, which must have remained a viable alternative.

Hellenism, even if under a veneer of Christianity, would have continued to be a powerful force in this and in the succeeding centuries, if only because of the dominance of Greek literature and culture.

The evidence from the Cappadocian Fathers suggests that the old Cappadocian gods, as recognized in the cults, were relatively insignificant during the late fourth century: the ritual prostitution of the old cult of Ma does not appear to have been a pressing issue for them, nor do the cults themselves appear to have exercised control over the people. While the formal demise of the cults was possibly aided by the decision of Constantine to ban the practice of ritualised prostitution,[230] the evidence indicates that even before Constantine's intervention, Gregory's activities were a significant part of the reason that the power of the old cults over

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[229] *cf.* Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.55.

[230] Socrates, *EH* 5:10; *cf.* Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine*, 8:5.

the people of Pontus was broken.

The narrative accounts of Gregory's life, in *To the Celibates*, Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, and in Rufinus, largely concentrated on one aspect of Gregory's life and mission, being the conversion of the native people of Cappadocian Pontus to Christianity through the wonders that Gregory was believed to have worked. These stories are presented against a background of the long-standing belief of the people of Pontus in the miraculous intervention of the gods in the lives. These beliefs were transferred over to Christianity, which also has its own framework for understanding the miraculous that certainly did not minimise the miraculous element, but rather looked for it, leading to such events being seen to be even more miraculous over time.

It is recognized that these accounts present a one-sided view of Gregory and his work. This reflects the origin of the stories, which came from the people themselves. Nevertheless, it is argued here that these stories point towards an important part of his work that should not be disregarded or ignored, and the stories should be given an appropriate weight in any assessment of Gregory's effectiveness as an evangelist of Pontus.

5 Three Testimonies to Gregory's Doctrine

The panegyric contains the wording of a creed that is attributed to Gregory.[1] *To the Celibates* contains the wording of an inscription that is also attributed to Gregory. Both have a story of a vision of Mary and Apostle John. The creed, the inscription and the story of the vision of Mary and John represent three different testimonies to Gregory's doctrine, and could be considered to be succinct memorials to what could be called his doctrine of the Trinity. However, the question to be considered first is whether these can be trusted.

The earlier consensus was that the creed in the panegyric is authentic.[2] The main modern challenge to that consensus has come from Abramowski, who thought that the creed in the panegyric did not belong to the third century at all.[3] She demonstrated that it contained some fourth century elements and was able to show that these elements were likely to have been the creation of Gregory of Nyssa. She thought that the creed addressed the very questions that were exercising the minds of the Pontians and the Cappadocians at the time Gregory of Nyssa delivered the panegyric in which it is embedded.[4] Furthermore, she thought that a fragment of Gregory's teaching, found in Basil's letter against Atarbius, provided supporting evidence for her challenge to the authenticity of the creed.

Van Esbroeck put forward the evidence of the wording on the inscription, as recorded in *To the Celibates*, as an additional factor in this debate. He believed that the evidence of the inscription supported Abramowski's argument that the creed served as a compromise document, being useful in settling the dispute between those supporting Atarbius of

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[1] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 4 (32); Heil 1990, pp.18f; PG 46:912C-913A.

[2] Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* I, 4 Aufl. 1909, p.793 n.1, cited in Abramowski 1976, p.149, n.7; Dehnhard 1964, p.21, who cited Caspari 1879, pp.10-17; 25-64.

[3] Abramowski 1976, p.149, renewing the challenge to the authenticity of the creed, previously put forward by Lardner 1788, pp.48-52.

[4] Abramowski 1976, p.150.

Neocaesarea, and those who were closer to Basil. My position is that there was both a creed and an inscription, as a close examination of the wording of the panegyric also indicates, a point previously overlooked, the two sources mentioned in the panegyric previously being treated as if they were one source.

The background to the delivery of the panegyric, with its creed, was a bitter dispute between Basil and Atarbius of Neocaesarea over the nature of the Godhead. Basil held to the view that each of the individual persons of the Trinity had to be recognized in his own *hypostasis*. Atarbius appears to have been committed to a form of expression that emphasised the unity of the Godhead, inseparably united, under one *hypostasis*. Atarbius' view seems to have been closer to the doctrine taught by Gregory, at least as outlined in *To Philagrius*, than the doctrine held by Basil.

Abramowski argued that the creed in the panegyric was written by Gregory of Nyssa as a compromise, uniting the interests of those who supported the old terminology and those supporting the new terminology.[5] Despite its usefulness in this regard, it is argued here that the creed was not fundamentally re-written, but modified, being rebuilt on the framework erected by Gregory, the additions being included to satisfy the needs of the former supporters of Eustathius of Sebasteia. While the creed in the panegyric represented a doctrinal development that departed somewhat from Gregory's Trinitarian doctrine the structure and form of that creed continued to be the same as the creed handed down in the church of Neocaesarea. This latter creed was something that Gregory of Nyssa learned as a child or young man.

To Celibates has a story of a dream (a vision in the panegyric) that was said to be important in aiding Gregory attain theological clarity in developing his statement of the faith. This story had theological importance, and it should not be treated as just a quaint tale that

[5] Abramowski 1976, pp.160f, a position supported by van Esbroeck 1987, pp.255-266.

needs to be explained away, or otherwise ignored.[6]

[6] Lardner 1788, pp.49f, rejected it; Coxe described the vision story as "of little consequence" (ANF-6, p.8).

5.1 Inscription, Creed & Vision

5.1.1 Inscription

According to *To the Celibates*, after Gregory was appointed to be bishop of the church of Neocaesarea by Phaedimus of Amaseia, he approached the town. Realising that it was in the grip of idols, he prayed for God to give him "a written depiction of the hidden mysteries of the faith". A clear formula suddenly appeared on the walls of the church. This inscription probably still existed when *To the Celibates* was written, since such a monument could be reasonably expected to endure over that time. It also would have been easy for inquirers to confirm its existence and wording for themselves.

In the Syriac version of *To the Celibates* the wording of the inscription was:

> Three *hypostaseis* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one divine nature.[7]

The wording of the inscription, as handed down by the parallel Georgian version, was similar to that found in the Syriac version, but with a significant difference:

> Three *hypostaseis* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one mind of the divinity.[8]

Based on the following analysis, it appears that neither version represents the original wording on the inscription, (or in the original version of *To the Celibates*). However, these two versions suggest that the inscription had at least the wording "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".

Gregory's inscription probably did not have the words "three *hypostaseis*", even though these words must have already been in the version of the Greek model that was translated into Syriac and Georgian. The use of the expression "three *hypostaseis*" was in dispute between Atarbius and Basil, wherein Atarbius refused to accept Basil's terminology of "three *hypostaseis*". Basil would have found some of Atarbius' objections easy to answer if he could have cited an inscription in Atarbius' own church that contained this very wording.

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[7] *To the Celibates*, 3, tr. Esbreock 1987, p.257.

[8] Esbreock 1987, pp.257f.

Reference is made at the beginning of *To Philagrius* to the Christian doctrinal idea of three names. On this basis, it is possible that the inscription had "three names", and not "three *hypostaseis*". Against this it is necessary to consider that, since Atarbius seems to have made a point of there only being "one name", specifically the compound expression "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", it is likewise unlikely that the inscription included any explicit reference to there being "three names".[9]

To Philagrius also has the expression "the divine and undivided nature of the Mightier One" (ἡ θεία τε καὶ ἀμερὴς τοῦ Κρείττονος οὐσία). Therefore, it is possible the inscription had "one divine nature (οὐσία)", as indicated in the Syriac version, rather than "one mind of the divinity", as indicated in the Georgian version.[10]

However, instead of the inscription being a theological statement, it seems more likely that it was a dedication statement, such as might be found on a stele or the pedestal of a statue, with the name of the god being honoured in the dative, and the primary objective of the declaration being missionary, rather than theological. Based on the remaining wording in *To the Celibates*, such an inscription might have contained words that declared belief in the one God:

> To the one god, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Despite its simplicity, this would have been a strong Trinitarian declaration, and also non-controversial for apostolic Christians, since this wording reflects *Matthew* 28:19. This wording has the advantage that it could have contributed to Atarbius' belief that the threefold name was the true name of God. *To Philagrius* appears to have been written to answer

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[9] Basil, Letters, 210:3. Discussed in Abramowski 1976, pp.157f.

[10] It is unlikely that "according to mind" (κατὰ ἐπίνοιαν) was on the inscription, although this possibility was suggested by van Esbroeck 1987, p.258. Atarbius claimed that Gregory had used this expression, but Basil tried to explain it away on the grounds that this expression was not used dogmatically. It would have been more difficult to do this if it had appeared on the inscription.

difficulties raised by exactly such a statement of Trinitarian belief. Philagrius had asked whether the use of three names requires the doctrine that God is divided.

This type of short inscription is in line with Slusser's observation that it is unlikely that a long inscription would have been found inside a provincial third century church with limited lighting.[11] Even if it was placed on the outside of the church building, it would have been an appropriate form of words, since it met the requirement, which must have been pressing on Gregory, to avoid theological jargon in his most public naming of God, on an inscription on the wall of the church itself. The general aura of the supernatural that seems to have built up around Gregory's reputation could have contributed to the rise of the story of the inscription being miraculously inscribed on the wall of the church building.

5.1.2 Dream or Vision

To the Celibates has a story that, after the inscription miraculously appeared, Gregory received further confirmation of the true doctrine that night in a dream. In this dream Gregory saw a vision of youth holding a book in one hand, and held the hand of a young woman (a virgin) in his other hand. She was clothed in expensive robes. It is said that the youth was the Apostle John, and the virgin was Mary. They said to Gregory, "Pay attention to what you see, O man! Now see, I promise you today, that you will see the faith that has appeared from heaven. Now stand up and preach before the people like a high horn."[12]

It is possible that this story contains echoes of the story of the Transfiguration,[13] with the divine voice in that story endorsing Jesus' authority and mission. Similarly, Jesus appeared radiant in that story, which pointed towards his divine status, so also in Gregory of Nyssa's

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[11] Slusser 1998, p.55 n.28. However, such long inscriptions were not unknown (for example, the inscription already cited from Sebastopolis, IGR 3:132, Anderson 1900, pp.153-156, and the inscription already cited from Neocaesarea, Moraux 1959, p.11).

[12] *To the Celibates*, 3.

[13] *Mark* 9:2-3.

version Mary was radiant, presumably on account of her having given birth to Jesus. It could be said that the appearance of Mary in this dream or vision served to confirm the doctrine of the Incarnation, specifically the birth of Jesus from a woman, while the appearance of John was an endorsement of the fourth Gospel, and therefore confirmed the doctrine of the divinity of Christ found in that work.

Visions and revelations were a part of both the classical and the Christian traditions. People of that period gave credence to dreams and visions, although there is evidence that they were not considered conclusive in themselves. In the *Odyssey* Penelope had a dream that predicted Odysseus' return home, which Odysseus explained to her was not a dream, but a ὕπαρ, a waking vision, something that is real. This is how Gregory of Nyssa described Gregory's vision. More importantly, the vision has parallels in the Biblical narratives. Perhaps the vision by Peter of the clean and unclean foods is the closest, but the visions of Daniel are also relevant. Dionysius of Alexandria, a contemporary of Gregory, claimed that he received a revelation from a dream that validated his intention to read and repute heretical writings, against the advice of a presbyter.[14]

It is likely that the story of the dream or vision originated from Gregory himself, and we know that he considered himself to be a truthful person. In the *Address*, Gregory said that he stood up against the standard teaching on the delivery of the encomium saying that even as a boy and being taught how to speak by a rhetor, he was "unwilling to tolerate eulogizing and delivering an encomium about anyone that was not true."[15] Based on the examples cited above, there is no reason to believe that Gregory could not have such a dream, even though it is likely that elements of the story have changed over time, perhaps making the story sound more miraculous. In this regard, it should be noted that there was a strong incentive for the people to be able to claim a "divine origin" for their own creed, in the light of the ongoing

[14] Dionysius of Alexandria, *Letters*, 7.

[15] Gregory, *Address*, 10 (130), tr. Slusser.

controversy over Christian doctrine and the understanding of the Godhead in the fourth century.

In the *Address*, Gregory said that he believed that Origen had special insights from the *Logos* that enabled him to interpret the Scriptures in an unparalleled way. This story suggests that Gregory could have believed that, since he was undertaking such a difficult task, he needed the kind of direct insight into the truth of Christian doctrine that he believed Origen had received. The statement that he was promised that he would "see the faith", in *To the Celibates*, suggests that he was promised that would attain the insights that he needed in order to be able to understand (or perceive) the faith correctly.

To the Celibates does not provide any information on the wording in the creed that Gregory subsequently wrote, but its story of the dream suggests that one could expect the creed to have been based on the *Gospel of John*, and to have a strong testimony to the Incarnation, and the birth of Jesus from the virgin. However, in the creed found in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, the former is found, whereas there is no mention of the Incarnation.

Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory requested Phaedimus to allow him time to consider the form of the doctrine that he would teach, saying that he had decided that he would no longer rely upon human advice in this matter, but rather he would look for divine inspiration. The story of Phaedimus pursuing Gregory to catch him and put him under the yoke of ordination, and Gregory keeping his distance, is perhaps understandable in this context. It would appear that Gregory was determined not to submit himself to the control of another, and to be forced to preach the creed that Phaedimus might press upon him.

According to Gregory of Nyssa's version,[16] written about 140 years afterwards, God granted to Gregory a waking vision (ὕπαρ) in answer to his desire for an accurate understanding of the faith. In this vision, an old and very dignified man appeared before him. After calming Gregory's perturbation, and declaring that he had come to disclose to him the

[16] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 4 (28-33); Heil 1990, pp.16-20; PG 46:909C-913C.

truth of the pious faith (ἡ εὐσεβὴς πίστις), this man directed Gregory's gaze to a woman, larger than human size. Gregory being unable to bear the vision, looked away and listened to them discussing the doctrine. They addressed each other by name, so that Gregory realised that they were Apostle John and Mary, the mother of the Lord. During this discussion, Mary told John to "make clear to the young man the mystery of the truth".

> Mary exhorted John the evangelist to explain to the young man the mystery of the religion (τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον). Thereupon, John told to him the word (λόγος) being both symmetrical (σύμμετρος) and easy to sketch out (εὐπερίγραπτος).[17]

John did this, and gave to Gregory an explanation of the mystery in elegantly arranged words.[18]

Gregory of Nyssa reported "it was said" that Gregory wrote down and used this explanation of the mystery in his preaching in the church. It is worth noting that Gregory of Nyssa does not actually say here that he had seen the document in which Gregory had written the statement of baptismal faith: he merely said that "it was said" that Gregory wrote it down. This *mystagogia* should not be confused with the inscription to which Gregory of Nyssa later also makes reference.

5.1.3 Creed

The creed occupies a central place in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric, with the narration of miracles accompanying the presentation of the divinely inspired creed increasing its authority. Despite this obvious attempt to increase the honour with which the creed was presented, it is argued that this creed substantially represents the original baptismal creed introduced by Gregory into Neocaesarea.

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[17] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 4 (31); Heil 1990, p.17; PG 46:912C.

[18] The word σύμμετρος has a number of meanings, including "in accord with metre, in measure with, proportionable, exactly suitable, in right measure, in due proportion, symmetrical". The word εὐπερίγραπτος can mean "with a good outline or contour" or "easy to trace or sketch out".

The panegyric was written around the time there was a renewed attempt to reconcile those who held to the terminology apparently implied by the Nicene creed of a single *hypostasis* and *ousia*, with those who accepted the Nicene creed but who also held to the doctrine that there were three *hypostaseis* in the Trinity.[19] Emperor Theodosius had endorsed the leaders who had stood out for the three *hypostaseis* doctrine (they possibly represented a majority of the leading figures in the Church), and it was decided by some of the victors in this contest that they would make all reasonable appropriate efforts to reconcile those who held out for the older definitions. Their purpose appears to have been to reconcile all the non-Arians within the one Church organization. Paulinus, in Antioch, who supported the doctrine of a single *hypostasis*, appears to have supported this initiative.[20]

It was unfortunate that the word *hypostasis* became the focal point for this theological debate, as the definition of this term was not entirely clear. Origen argued that each of the persons of the Trinity is complete in their own *hypostasis*, but he also appears to have thought that each has his own distinct *ousia*.[21] The words were treated as synonyms when the Nicene Creed was written, and leaving aside those who were committed to a thorough-going Arian position, the ensuing debate on that creed centred on the question of whether one could say that the persons of the Trinity were of the same *ousia*. If the persons were of a different *ousia*, then they were naturally considered to be of a different *hypostasis*. The resolution of this matter was finally made possible by the argument, probably invented by Basil, that *hypostasis* represented the individual person in the Trinity, whereas *ousia* represented the divine "substance" shared by all three.[22] At the risk of oversimplifying the issues involved, which

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[19] On the terms established in Athanasius, *vide Letter to the Antiocheans*.

[20] Lietzmann 1961, Vol.4, pp.37f.

[21] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1:24:151, cited and discussed in Edwards 2002, pp.67-70.

[22] Basel, Letters, 214:4. This argument is also put more explicitly in Basil, *Letters*, 38, attributed to Gregory of Nyssa. The arguments for *Letter* 38 being written by Gregory of Nyssa were canvassed in Parmentier 1990, p.17,

went beyond just the theology in question, those who held to the doctrine of the one *hypostasis* wanted to emphasise the unity within the Godhead, and those who held to the doctrine of the three *hypostases* wanted to emphasise the doctrine of the separate persons within the Godhead. During Basil's life, Atarbius in Neocaesarea had been inclined to align himself with those who held to a single *hypostasis* doctrine. It appears that both he and his clergy also were not convinced about the legitimacy of the emerging new orthodoxy.

While the creed in the panegyric directly addressed the underlying issue of how to describe the relationships within the Trinity, it did not use the words *ousia* or *hypostasis* at all. If this creed was written with the purpose of advancing the cause of the new definitions and theology, it was done subtly.

The creed, which Gregory of Nyssa declared was dictated to Gregory by the Apostle John, contains four distinct clauses, one for each of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and another for the Trinity as a whole. The first section deals with the Father:

> Εἷς θεός, πατὴρ λόγου ζῶντος (σοφίας ὑφεστώσης καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ χαρακτῆρος ἀϊδίου), τέλειος τελείου γεννήτωρ, πατὴρ υἱοῦ μονογενοῦς.
>
> One God, Father of a living *Logos*, who is subsistent wisdom and power and his eternal impression, perfect begetter of a perfect one, Father of an only-begotten Son.

It is noted here that the Father is primarily described in terms of his relationship to the Son. The Son is then described fulsomely. This is in accordance with Gregory's approach in his *Address*, wherein he indicates that only the Son knows the Father, since the Father is beyond our understanding. However, we can know the Son:

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citing Reinhard M. Hübner, "Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. *Ep.* 38 des Basilius: Zum unterschiedlichen Verständis der οὐσία bei den kappadozichen Brüdern", in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, (1972), pp.463-490. Stead 1990, p.149, also assumed that *Letter* 38 was written by Gregory of Nyssa, on the basis of the equivalence of this text with *Ad Petrum fratem de differentia essentiae et hypostaseos.*

Εἷς κύριος, μόνος ἐκ μόνου, θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ, χαρακτὴρ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς θεότητος, λόγος ἐνεργός, σοφία τῆς τῶν ὅλων συστάσεως περιεκτική, καὶ δύναμις τῆς ὅλης κτίσεως ποιητική, υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἀληθινοῦ πατρός, ἀόρατος ἀοράτου, (καὶ) ἄφθαρτος ἀφθάρτου, (καὶ) ἀθάνατος ἀθανάτου, (καὶ) ἀΐδιος ἀϊδίου.

One Lord, only from only, God from God, impression and image of the divinity, effective *Logos*, wisdom embracing the structure of the universe, power which makes the whole creation, true Son of a true Father, invisible from an invisible one, incorruptible from an incorruptible one, immortal from an immortal one, eternal from an eternal one.

This clause echoes some of the things that Gregory said about the Saviour in his *Address*, where he was described as *Logos*, Demiurge,[23] Pilot of all things, first-begotten *Logos*.[24]

The separate person of the Holy Spirit is described here as having "his" identity directly from the Father, and also in relationship to the Son. This subject was not canvassed in Gregory's *Address* at all: he discussed the relationship between Father and the first-begotten *Logos* as if this relationship were the whole of the Godhead, although he referred he said that the Holy Spirit made it possible to understand the words of the prophets.[25] He also assigned the role of instructing the believers in the truth to angels.[26] However, as a bishop, he appears to have had a strong, but simple, doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the essence of which is captured in this rather elaborate clause.

Ἓν πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐκ θεοῦ τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἔχον, καὶ διὰ υἱοῦ πεφηνὸς,[27] εἰκὼν τοῦ υἱοῦ τελείου τελεία, ζωὴ ζώντων αἰτία, ἁγιότης ἁγιασμοῦ χορηγός, ἐν ᾧ

[23] *cf.* Plato, *Timaeus*, 29D-34A.

[24] Gregory, *Address*, 4 (35).

[25] Gregory, *Address*, 15 (175-181).

[26] As a special case for Origen himself, Gregory transferred this role to the *Logos*.

[27] Both branches of the Greek manuscript tradition include the words "namely to human beings" (δηλαδὴ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) here. However, this latter phrase did not appear in the Latin translation of Rufinus. This leads us to

φανεροῦται θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσι, καὶ θεὸς ὁ υἱός, ὁ διὰ πάντων.

One Holy Spirit, having substantial existence from God, manifested through the Son, perfect image of the perfect Son, living cause of living things, who is sanctity and provider of sanctification, in whom God the Father is manifested, who is over all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all.

The three persons are then described in the creed as a perfect Trinity, in which the doctrine of the unity of the persons of the Trinity is defined by the denial of the "division".

Τριάς τελεία, δόξῃ καὶ ἀϊδιότητι καὶ βασιλείᾳ μὴ μεριζομένη μηδὲ ἀπαλλοτριουμένη.

Perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and kingdom not divided and not alienated.

This final clause appears to have an anti-Arian sentence and an anti-*Pneumatomachian*[28] sentence attached. These two concluding sentences probably should not be dated to Gregory's time: they are generally considered to be additions to the creed made by Gregory of Nyssa, (and probably would have been understood by his audience to have been an addition):

Οὔτε οὖν κτιστόν τι ἢ δοῦλον ἐν τῇ τριάδι οὔτε ἐπείσακτον ὡς πρότερον μὲν οὐχ ὑπάρχον ὕστερον δὲ ἐπεισελθόν. οὔτε οὖν ἐνέλιπέ ποτε υἱὸς πατρί οὔτε υἱῷ πνεῦμα, ἀλλ᾽ ἄτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος ἡ αὐτὴ τριὰς ἀεί.

Therefore there is nothing created or subservient in the Trinity, nor anything introduced that did not have substantial existence before or that came later. Neither, therefore, did the Son fall short of the Father, nor the Spirit of the Son, but the same Trinity is forever unchanged and not subject to change.

According to Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric this creed had been used in Neocaesarea

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suspect that the Greek text was modified after Rufinus' translation was made. Caspari rejected these words, and Abramowski treated them as a gloss (Abramowski 1976, p.145 n.2). Since the whole creed describes the relationships within the Trinity, not the Trinity in relation to mankind, it seems like a gloss.

[28] The *Pneumatomachians* were those who fought against the doctrine of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

since the time of the great Gregory.[29] This was said in front of the people for whom the creed of Neocaesarea was their own baptismal confession. This should give us some assurance that his audience believed that his creed represented Gregory's doctrine,[30] albeit they must have known that he had modified the actual wording.

If this creed reasonably represented Gregory's creed, we can deduce from it that Gregory did not consider that it was necessary to require a catechumen to formally accept at the time of baptism the doctrine of the birth of the Son of God as a man, to say nothing of the doctrine of a miraculous virgin birth. Instead, it appears that he thought it was much more important for the new believer to accept the doctrine of the three persons and the one God, as outlined in both this creed and in *To Philagrius*. It is also interesting to note that it does not appear that were any anathemas in the original creed, even though it is likely that there were many divergent views on Christian doctrine at that time.

The fact that the Incarnation is not mentioned is a strong indication that this version of the creed was based on Gregory original model. The Incarnation is not directly mentioned in any of the works attributed to Gregory. *To Theopompus* deals with the sufferings of God in Jesus through his life on earth and in particular his death (yet without directly mentioning the events); *To Philagrius* refers to the "resplendent Jesus" being sent to us from the Father; *To Diognetus* also refers the Son being sent from the Father. On the basis of these texts, it appears that Gregory was cautious about making a strong statement on the Incarnation, despite the fact that it was a central element of Origen's doctrine and an essential element of

[29] Abramowski 1976, p.151 n.18, suggested a possible disjunction in the tradition of Neocaesarea, with other influences coming into play in that city. She referred to Basil's *Letters,* 28:1 in which Basil said that those who lived with Musonius felt that they were living in the society of those luminaries who lived 200 years again and more. However this does not mean that Musonius re-established traditions that pre-dated Gregory, just that Musonius was like the Apostles and their successors. In the same letter Basil called Gregory the founder of the church of Neocaesarea, whose orthodoxy was shared by his successors.

[30] Crouzel 1983, pp.787f

his summary of the "Rule of Faith".[31]

According to both versions of this story, Gregory omitted to teach the doctrine of the birth of the Son of God through Mary in his creedal statements, but in both he taught this doctrine through the story of the appearance of Mary in the dream or vision. This story works on a number of levels. It is possible that, even in the apostolic churches at that time, in this region, the fourth Gospel was not yet fully accepted, and if so, the *Logos* theology, so prominently portrayed in the creed could have been resisted. Similarly, the Marcionite Christians only accepted *Luke* and most of Paul's letters (albeit all these texts were adulterated by Marcion): the dream or vision story worked on the assumption that *John* should also be accepted. Furthermore, the story also provided a subtle way to teach the doctrine of the *Logos'* birth as a man through a woman. Yet in presenting it this way, the acceptance of this doctrine was not made a test of orthodoxy. Considering the great reserve that Gregory appears to have maintained on this issue, it is reasonable to assume that he thought that the doctrine of the Incarnation was a major stumbling point deterring individuals from accepting what he considered to be the life-changing message about the Saviour. Both the *Address*, and *To Diognetus* make it clear that Gregory believed that the most important aspect of Christianity was the transforming power of God working in the hearts and minds of individuals, and that he preferred to avoid endless arguments over doctrine.[32]

5.1.4 Authenticity

Abramowski argued that this creed was the invention of Gregory of Nyssa.[33] Her case

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[31] Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface, 4.

[32] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (51-53); *To Diognetus*, 7:2; Gregory, *Metaphrase*, 7:29.

[33] Abramowski's arguments were accepted by van Esbroeck 1987, pp.255f and Mitchell 1999a, p.109, cited by Slusser 1998, pp.54f n.27; they were rejected Crouzel 1983, p.788, who thought that Abramowski's argument gave rise to additional difficulties, since deception of this kind would have been very risky, given that it would have been easy to compare the creed with the testimonies to it in Neocaesarea.

was based in part upon the argument that the creed appears to draw upon Plotinus' treatise *On the Three Initial Hypostases*. Since it is highly unlikely that Gregory had access to the teaching in Plotinus' treatise, she concluded that Gregory did not write the part of the creed dealing with the Holy Spirit. Arguing the case that the creed represented Basil's theology, rather than Gregory's, and using the supporting argument that the creed includes expressions borrowed from Plotinus, she concluded that Gregory did not write any part of the creed. The fundament tenet of her proposition is that Plotinus wrote this treatise between 257 and 267, and his works were only published after his death in 270. Gregory, therefore, could only have heard of it by report, (which would make literal borrowing from it most unlikely).[34]

Plotinus described the third person in the Godhead as the "supplier of life (χορηγὸς ζωῆς), whereas in the creed the Holy Spirit was described one who is both sanctity and the provider of sanctification (ἁγιότης ἁγιασμοῦ χορηγός). Abramowski thought that Gregory would not have framed latter this wording, since using the term χορηγός for the third person of the Godhead displayed both an awareness and dependence upon Plotinus. She said that the only known uses of χορηγός (to which we add its cognates χορηγέω and χορηγία) up to this time, in relation to the third person of the Godhead were in Plotinus, in the Plotinian cento *On the Spirit*, which we will consider later, in Basil's *On the Holy Spirit*, and in the creed.

Abramowski also thought that Plotinus was the inspiration for the phrase in the creed that described the Holy Spirit as the image of the Son (εἰκὼν τοῦ υἱοῦ). Plotinus also described the third person of the Godhead in his system, the Great Soul, as an image of the second person of the Godhead, the Intellect (εἰκὼν τίς ἐστι νοῦ). This is similar to the creed's statement about the Holy Spirit, cited above.

While the timing makes is unlikely that Gregory could have known of any Plotinian expressions, we need to consider the argument that the expression ἁγιασμοῦ χορηγός was not inspired by Plotinus, but invented by Gregory himself. In this context it should be noted that

[34] Abramowski 1976, p.164, citing Plotinus, *Ennead* 5:1,2,9.

1 Peter 4:11 refers to God supplying strength (ἐξ ἰσχύος ἧς χορεηγεῖ ὁ θεός) for ministry, using the verbal form of the noun χορηγός. Furthermore, this reference can be considered to an oblique reference to the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore could have been the inspiration of this expression. Nevertheless, the context is somewhat different, and is not without significance that the simple Plotinian expression χορηγὸς ζωῆς captures two elements that are found next to each other in Gregory's creed, namely, that the Holy Spirit is the cause of life, and that the Holy Spirit is described as χορηγός. Therefore, on balance, the evidence suggests that Plotinus' treatise did influence this part of the creed.

Despite this, it is not accepted that this is sufficient corroborating evidence to demonstrate that the entire creed was a fourth century invention. Instead it is argued here that it is more likely that the form and structure of the creed as presented here was derived from a creed written by Gregory himself, and then reworked by Gregory of Nyssa to bring the terminology up to date. On this basis that the people of Neocaesarea would have had little difficulty accepting it as Gregory's creed, even though the final form was Gregory of Nyssa's. This means that the introduction of these phrases into the creed of Neocaesarea can be considered to have been made by Gregory of Nyssa, yet without accepting the argument that the whole creed was his invention.

The concluding doxology of the creed is another possible addition to the creed made by Gregory of Nyssa. An echo of this doxology is found in a sermon on the Holy Spirit, delivered in 380 or 381 by Gregory of Nazianzus, who said that he worshipped God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Three Persons, One Godhead, who are undivided in glory, honour, substance and kingdom. He said that these words were from an inspired person of a short time ago (τις τῶν μικρῷ πρόσθεν θεοφόρων) who devised them skilfully (ἐφιλοσόφησεν).[35] Since the words of this doxology were similar to those in the fourth clause of the creed, it has been argued that he derived them from Gregory's creed. The

[35] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31:28; PG 36: p.164C-D; Mitchell 1999a, pp.110f and n.46.

difficulty is that the expression, μικρῷ πρόσθεν does not naturally suggest a time span of more than 100 years, leaving open the possibility that he actually had Basil or Gregory of Nyssa in mind.

It should be observed that, in the context of the delivery of the panegyric, it would have been difficult for Gregory of Nyssa to change the underlying meaning of the clauses or even the structure of the creed of that church. Despite these additions to the creed, we are still entitled to consider that the creed in the panegyric would have had to be viewed at the time as a reasonable representation of the Neocaesarean creed.

The panegyric was delivered at a time when the church was in great flux, and allegiances were changing. It was not clear who was going to win the ensuing struggle. Gregory of Nyssa's controversial brother, Basil, had recently died, with Basil's objective (following Athanasius) of achieving unity on the basis of the Nicene Creed being far from realised. However, the political situation had changed, and it was now much more favourable for Nicene ecclesiastics. A recent Church council in Antioch had achieved a measure of unity in that city under Meletius' leadership. It seems that at the time of this council Gregory of Nyssa stood up and established himself as a leading defender of the doctrine of the Nicene Creed, and showed himself to be an accomplished ecclesiastical politician. His panegyric on Gregory was probably an important part of the process of consolidating his reputation, and of establishing the theological legitimacy of those supporting the Nicene Creed.

5.1.5 Inscription vs. Creed

It is clear from the panegyric that Gregory of Nyssa thought that the creed was much more important than the inscription. Whereas in *To the Celibates*, the inscription is presented to the reader as a doctrinal statement that came directly from God, it is presented in the panegyric as the work of Gregory's own hand. If Gregory of Nyssa knew either of *To the Celibates* or of the story of the divine handwriting of the inscription, he rejected it. He did not

believe that the inscription was the definitive theological statement written with a divine hand, like the mysterious *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin* of *Daniel* 5:25. According to Gregory of Nyssa, the true divine theological statement was the Neocaesarean creed, revealed to Gregory through a "waking vision", not through a dream while sleeping, as in *To the Celibates*.

Christian leaders did not always welcome stories of visions. In this case, someone in the party of Atarbius had claimed to have had a vision through which Basil's doctrine was traduced. Basil was furious, and said that they could not receive a true vision from God since those who were preoccupied with this life and darkened with the passions of the flesh cannot receive the rays of the Holy Spirit. He also said that the Gospels do not need dreams to increase their credit.[36] One would expect that the Neocaesarean leadership found Basil's comments offensive, and Gregory of Nyssa's endorsement of Gregory's "waking vision" possibly went some way towards placating them. Gregory of Nyssa did not share Basil's negative view of dreams, since he claimed to have had a vision that foretold the death of his sister Macrina. He said that in this vision the relics of the martyrs in his hand shone with a bright and dazzling light.[37]

It is likely that some people were advocating that the inscription was the true theological statement, and drawing theological consequences from this, including opposing Basil's three *hypostaseis* dogma. Whether or not Gregory of Nyssa knew of *To the Celibates*, it is certain that he rejected this idea, and put forward an alternative position, arguing that the baptismal creed better represented Gregory's theology even though it was not captured in a physical memorial like the inscription.

The panegyric gives a different perspective on the story of the creed and the inscription

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[36] Basil, *Letters,* 210:6. Prior to Gregory's time, Hippolytus reported on a church leader in Pontus (not necessarily Eastern Pontus) who was predicting a crisis that would happen in a year's time; Hippolytus said this church leader believed his own dreams (*Commentary in Daniel* 4:19, cited in Van Dam 1982, p.301).

[37] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 15.

from that presented by *To the Celibates*. Whereas in Gregory of Nyssa's version the wording on the inscription is not even mentioned (although the inscription itself is mentioned). *To the Celibates* alludes to the creed but gives the inscription the primary focus. In Gregory of Nyssa's account the emphasis is on the baptismal creed, handed down from the Gregory. The inscription is a side issue. The different treatment of the inscription in both versions is our strongest evidence that Gregory of Nyssa was aware of *To the Celibates*, or at least the version of the story underlying that account.

Gregory of Nyssa is said that Gregory wrote down (γράμμασιν ἐνσημήνασθαι)[38] the *mystagogia*, the statement of baptismal faith, told to him by John, as soon as possible. The ordinary meaning of *mystagogia* is an "initiation into the mysteries, mystical doctrine, divine worship". This should be compared with a *mysterion*, for which the meanings are "mystery, secret rite, secret revealed by God". Whereas *mysterion* was frequently used in the New Testament, the New Testament writers never used *mystagogia*. However, it was a word that Gregory of Nyssa used, in the sense of "what one learns about the *mysterion*." There is a sense in which *mystagogia* means an education given by God. The power is not in the actual form of the words, but in the meaning underlying the words. Similarly, Lampe explained that *mystagogia* could be used of Christianity generally, of Christian sacraments, revelation, spiritual teaching in general, veiled teaching and the mystical expression of the truth. Using examples cited by Lampe, taken from Gregory of Nyssa's use of *mystagogia*, it can be seen that he used it in at least two ways. The first usage was as a set of words used at baptism, for example, ὕδωρ ἀναγεννᾷ καὶ ἡ ἐπὶ ἐκείνῳ τελουμένη μυσταγωγία. The second usage was for the revelation of God's mysterious purpose, as in the annunciation to Mary, τῆς γενομένης τῇ παρθένῳ παρὰ τοῦ Γαβριὴλ μυσταγωγίας.[39]

[38] The underlying meaning of ἐνσημαίνω is "to indicate a signification, imply"; in the middle voice, in this context, it can mean "give notice of, intimate", whereas γράμμα, in the plural, can mean any piece of writing.

[39] Lampe, *s.v.* μυσταγωγία, citing PG 46:584C, 45:1165C.

Gregory of Nyssa appears to be saying that the people of Neocaesarea thought that their ordinary baptismal confession was Gregory's *mystagogia*. Gregory of Nyssa implied that the mystical power of this *mystagogia* was such that the people of Neocaesarea had remained unaffected by any heretical wickedness right up to his own time. As well as endorsing their baptismal creed, he was effectively saying to the Neocaesareans that he exempted them from his late brother's harsh statements about the heterodoxy of their bishop. It is possible that Atarbius was still alive at this time and present on this occasion, and if so, this would have meant that this endorsement extended to him as well.

Gregory of Nyssa also claimed that Gregory proclaimed the word in the church in accordance with that *mystagogia*, and had handed it down to the succeeding times, just as if he had left behind that God-given education as a certain inheritance. He said that, through this statement of belief, the people of that church were, and continued to be, initiated into Christ (μυσταγωγεῖται) right up to the present time. It is important to realise that Gregory of Nyssa was not referring to the words on some hidden document that he had found and was now publishing; he was talking about the very words of their initiation into the faith, which is to say, their baptismal creed.

Even though Gregory of Nyssa said that Gregory wrote down the words of the divine initiation, he does not actually say that this written record was preserved through to his time. Of course, it was not necessary for a written record to have been preserved in order for the words of the baptismal formula to be carried down to later generations. Instead, each generation would learn these words for themselves, believing them to be the words that Gregory had handed down. Also it is possible that, over the several complete generations since Gregory originally composed his μυσταγωγία, the words of the formula could have been modified to some degree without the changes being noticed by most of the people.

After giving the text of this statement of faith, Gregory of Nyssa said a little later that the inscription of that blessed hand (τὰ χαράγματα τῆς μακαρίας ἐκείνης χειρός) survived right

through to Nyssa's own time. His wording is significant. He said that anyone who wanted to be convinced about the creed (namely its authenticity) let him listen (ἀκουέτω) to the church in which he had preached this doctrine. This was the church in which his inscription had been preserved. (This was another endorsement of the orthodoxy of the Neocaesarean bishop and his congregation.) The emphasis of his exhortation was on listening to the church, not on reading the inscription. The clear meaning is that the inscription did not contain the entire contents of the creed, but rather some words that were alleged to have come from Gregory.

This public inscription appears to have been different from the document, about which Gregory of Nyssa reported, "it was said" that Gregory wrote, but which appears to have no longer existed. The word χάραγμα means any mark engraved, imprinted or branded. The meaning "inscription" applies when it is used without qualification. The lexicon cites the example χάραγμα χειρός, used for writing a letter with pen and ink,[40] to show that with χειρός it can mean "handwriting". While Gregory of Nyssa used χάραγμα χειρός, nevertheless, the wording is suggestive of an inscription, particularly since Gregory of Nyssa led on from mentioning τὰ χαράγματα to a discussion of the superiority of Gregory's vision to the stone tablets brought down from Mount Sinai by Moses.

It has generally been thought that the references to τὰ γράμματα and to τὰ χαράγματα were to a single medium, being a written version of the creed. However, if his audience knew there was a creed handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, and there was also an inscription, they would not have misunderstood his words. They would have known, what is not immediately obvious to us from the words, but can be discerned from them, that Gregory of Nyssa was referring to two mediums, and not to just one medium. The inscription survived (εἰς ἔτι καὶ νῦν διασώζεται), with the church itself, despite an

[40] Palladas, in *Anthologie Grecque, Première Partie Anthologie Palatine*, Tome 8 (Livre 9, *Épigr.* 359-827), 401.

earthquake in Neocaesarea.[41]

After saying that Gregory had written down the statement of faith, Gregory of Nyssa put forward what he purported were the words spoken by Apostle John to Gregory, which Gregory had written down. It should be noticed that Gregory of Nyssa makes no further reference to the written record of these words that Gregory was believed to have made. Instead he went back to the "spoken words" (τὰ ῥήματα) of the secret doctrine (μυσταγωγίας), expressed in the form of a credal statement.[42]

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[41] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory,* 6 (48); Heil 1990, p.28; PG 46:924B-924C. *cf.* Abramowski 1976, p.149, citing Caspari 1879, pp.27-29, who doubted that original documents could have survived from the 2nd through to the 3rd century.

[42] Basil, *Letters,* 204:6, also indicated that Gregory's teaching was handed down by word of mouth, not by a written document (Abramowski 1976, p.154).

5.2 Other Sources for Gregory's Creed

5.2.1 Prayers to God

Since *To the Celibates* was probably written by someone from the *polis* or *chora* of Neocaesarea it provides us with a way of assessing the possible form of Gregory's doctrine handed down to future generations, through the prayers found in this work. These prayers were purported to have been made by Gregory and Phaedimus of Amaseia.[43] While these prayers appear to have been invented for the purposes of the story, they represent what the writer thought that these men would have said under such circumstances, and therefore indicate one understanding of Christian doctrine before the establishment of the Neo-Nicene consensus. It is therefore possible to compare the ideas about God that are found in the creed and in this document, and to assess the Neocaesareans' understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity before Gregory of Nyssa delivered his panegyric.

Phaedimus' prayer for guidance on the appointment of a new bishop of Neocaesarea contains two elements, one a prayer of praise to "Almighty God", who is "Lord", and an element of request, addressed to "my Lord", who is Jesus Christ.

> Lord, Almighty God. Heaven and the angels in it are yours. The cherubs quake before your brightness, and the powerful seraphs fear your servants. You made the universe right from the beginning, and in it you made the worlds according to your command from which, Oh my Lord, you have already rescued your Church and purchased it through your dear blood. Choose a shepherd for your flock according to your will!

While it is not clear whether this prayer is addressed to two divine persons or to one divine person, since in another similar prayer there is only one person addressed, it seems that Christ was the object of this prayer. This is in accord with the *Dialogue with Theopompus*, where a

[43] Correcting the Syriac version of *Letter to the Celibates* by substituting Phaedimus of Amaseia for Gregory of Nazianzus, as indicated by the parallel Georgian version (see *vide* Section 4 Life of Gregory, n.171).

single person is discussed, who is called both "Almighty God" and also "blessed Jesus".[44] Thus it would appear that the writer's theology pivoted on the person of Jesus Christ.

The same idea is presented in the prayer that is attributed to Gregory, when he is asking for guidance on the appointment of a new bishop for Comana.

> Lord God, you sit on the Cherubim, before the beginning of all time you made the earth; your fingers created heaven; you don't disappear along with the generations and you neither change with time nor go away with time, but rather you are how you are before the beginnings of the worlds; heaven and earth and the depths and the air are like a hand-print for you, and like a drop from a container! Now, Oh Lord, through whose assent people come into being, choose a man who pleases you according to your will![45]

This prayer includes on allusion to *Psalm* 18, which presents to us the imagery of God being mounted on the cherubim and flying over the scene of the battle, saving David from his enemies. In this psalm, David claimed that God had chosen him because of his righteousness, so also in this prayer Gregory asked God to choose someone who pleases him (God) according to his will. In the *Address*, Gregory's described the Father as "Director and Cause" of all things, but his creative purpose is brought to fruition through the "Demiurge and Pilot", the first-begotten *Logos*.[46] This suggests that, if Gregory's theology was the inspiration for the words of this prayer, he would have thought of the *Logos* as being the active agent in this psalm. The physical imagery of this psalm is naturally concordant with the concept of the *Logos* who became incarnate.

The theology in this prayer shows signs of a reaction to the teachings of Arius, and therefore indicates that *To the Celibates* was probably written after Arius' teachings became well known (at least by the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325). The anachronistic appearance of anti-Arian polemic in this work is not surprising, given the fierce doctrinal

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[44] Gregory, *Dialogue with Theopompus*, 7, 17.

[45] *To the Celibates*, 2.

[46] Gregory, *Address*, 3 (32), 4 (35).

controversy that took place during the fourth century over the teachings of Arius and those who were thought to have followed him. One of Arius' key points was that the Only-begotten Son was begotten before eternal times, but is not eternal in a strict sense. Arius said that Christ was created apart from time, and is not eternal in the same way that God is eternal.[47] This prayer appears to try to nullify this doctrine by stating that God (meaning Christ) is eternal ("before the beginning of all time"), and remains how he is before the beginning of the worlds, in other words, he was not created for the purpose of this world as was taught by Arius.[48]

Another prayer attributed to Gregory in *To the Celibates* is placed at the time he was about to enter Neocaesarea as its new bishop. Gregory looked over the city and saw that it was devoted to idols, whereupon he prayed to God for inspiration.

> Lord God, creator and sustainer of the created things! In the past you sent the Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*, to your disciples, the Apostles, and enlightened them through your knowledge of the truth, so also now proclaim your wonders and give us a written depiction of the hidden mysteries of the faith!

Scriptures that the writer had in mind in this prayer could have been *Genesis* 14:19, *Hebrews* 1:3 and *John* 14-16. The wording "creator and sustainer" are suggestive of Almighty God (LXX: ὕψιστος) who created the heavens and the earth, and this is then linked to the one who upholds (*Hebrews* 1:3: φέρω) all things. In *John* 15:26 and 16:6 Christ said that he would send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles to lead them into all truth, so when the prayer depicted the Lord God sending the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, it appears that Christ was in mind

[47] Athanasius, *On the Synods of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 16.

[48] There does not appear to be any reference to the rejection of specifically Eunomian doctrines in the prayers in this *Letter*, which serves to confirm a dating prior to the 350s, although a later dating is still possible.

here.[49] So in this prayer, both Christ and the Holy Spirit are presented to our view.

Accordingly, the doctrine of the Father held by the writer of *To the Celibates* remains in the background of his theology. All the interaction between the divine and mankind in these prayers is perceived to happen through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This certainly agrees with Gregory's theology, at least in regard to the Father and the *Logos*, according to the depiction of that theology in his *Address*. In this work, he said that he would not directly praise the "universal king and guardian, the continual fountain of all good things", by which he meant the Father, but would transfer this obligation to the *Logos*, who "alone can send up continuous and unfailing thanksgivings to the Father".[50] The active role of the Holy Spirit appears to go beyond that found in the *Address*, which was that the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to understand the prophecies prompted by the *Logos*,[51] but reflects that which was taught in *To Philagrius*.

5.2.2 Gregory's doctrine & the Creed

The creed contains elements in each clause that accord with what we know about Gregory's doctrine. It is not possible to accept Abramowski's claim that the creed in the panegyric only borrowed its name from the great Gregory,[52] and none of its content. It did indeed contain significant elements drawn from Gregory's doctrine, in particular, his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and an important omission: it says nothing about the Incarnation. Instead of rejecting the possibility of Gregory's third century contribution to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we are challenged by this evidence to think of Gregory as a unique character in third

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[49] The relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is indicated in *John* 14:16, in which Christ said he would ask the Father to give the Apostles the *Paraclete*. In this way the Spirit is depicted as coming from the Father, yet he is sent by the Son, as explicitly stated a little later.

[50] Gregory, *Address*, 4 (35-36), tr. Slusser.

[51] Gregory, *Address*, 15 (176,179).

[52] Abramowski 1976, p.166.

century theology, with a particular view on the Holy Spirit, which appears to have influenced Basil and Gregory of Nyssa in the development of their theology.[53]

The important question is the creed's strong statement on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This has been thought to be inappropriate in a third century creed, and it is true that the *Address* does not give the strong role to the Holy Spirit found in the creed in the panegyric. However, based on *To Philagrius* we should expect a clause on the Holy Spirit that is equal in weight to the clause on the Son, since in that work both the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to proceed equally as a double flowing from the Father to us.

In comparison with the elaborate clause on the Holy Spirit in this creed, the creed of Caesarea had only "one Holy Spirit". The Nicene Creed had "the Holy Spirit". The Jerusalem creed had "one Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*, who spoke in the prophets".[54] Therefore, in these creeds there is nothing that we can compare with the third article in this creed. The statement in the creed that the Holy Spirit has substantial reality from the Father (πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐκ θεοῦ τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἔχον) is the kind of elegant and original solution to the perplexing question of the origin of the Holy Spirit that one could have expected from Gregory. The creed's statement that the origin of the Spirit is not the Son, it is the Father, is also found in *To Philagrius*. This doctrine was also found in Gregory of Nyssa, who gave scriptural support for the idea that the Spirit is from the Father, citing *John* 15:26, that the Spirit of Truth proceeds from the Father (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται).[55]

The creed said that the "Spirit is the living cause of living things" (ζωὴ ζώντων αἰτία). This suggests that the role of lifegiving was attributed to the Spirit. Neither Basil[56] nor

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[53] Gribomont 1967, p.27; Fedwick 1979, p.160; McGuckin 2004, p.133.

[54] Kelly 1972, pp.181-183.

[55] This same verb was used in the extension of the Nicene Creed, believed to have been accepted at Constantinople in 381, defining the origin of the Holy Spirit; *vide* Kelly 1972, pp.322-331.

[56] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 9 (23).

Gregory of Nyssa[57] proposed the doctrine that the Holy Spirit gives life. It is unlikely that this doctrine reflects the ideas of either Basil or Gregory of Nyssa. While they were sometimes ambiguous in their writings on this question, possibly because of the corresponding ambiguity in the use in the Scriptures of the expression "to make to live" (ζωοποιοῦν),[58] the context makes it clear that these writers meant spiritual life when they used it in this way. However, in the creed, both the Son and the Spirit were designated with a role in creation. This is in accord with Plato's *Timaeus*, which Gregory must have studied while he was with Origen, and which gave roles to both the Demiurge and the World Soul in the "creation" of this world. The role of the World Soul in the *Timaeus* was to ensoul every living being in the universe, which is to say, to give life.[59] Of course, this idea could be derived from the Plotinian expression χορηγὸς ζωῆς, previously discussed.

An emphasis on the unity of the Godhead comes out in the clause in the creed dealing with the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. We note that in *To Philagrius* "indivisible" (ἀμερής) or cognates were used six times; "united" (ἕνωσις) or cognates were used five times, in two of these it was used with ἀμερής or a cognate. Therefore, we should expect a clause with ἀμερής and ἕνωσις, or their cognates, in the creed if the same author wrote them both.

To Philagrius has the expression "for the attribution of the names will not damage the indivisible unity of the Mightier One" (τὴν γὰρ ἀμερῆ τοῦ Κρείττονος ἕνωσιν οὐ καταβλάψει τῶν ὀνομάτων ἡ θέσις). Here the positive condition, "unity" (ἕνωσις), is balanced against the negative condition, "indivisible" (ἀμερής). The creed has the negative

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[57] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 2:2.

[58] Theodorus of Mopsuestia (*Commentary on Nicene Creed*, p.110) cited the Nicene Creed as including "lifegiving" (the Syriac text has been retranslated as ζωοποιόν in Kelly 1972, p.188). He interpreted this to mean everlasting life, which is the natural reading based on *John* 6:63.

[59] *cf.* Plato, *Timaeus*, 34A-37C.

expression "in glory and eternity and kingdom not divided and not alienated" (δόξῃ καὶ ἀϊδιότητι καὶ βασιλείᾳ μὴ μεριζομένῃ μηδὲ ἀπαλλοτριουμένῃ). This is in agreement with the idea presented in *To Philagrius*, but one might have expected the positive statement, "united", instead of the negative one given here ("not divided and not alienated"), since they are not direct equivalents, even though they give expression to similar ideas.

The absence of any specific reference to the Incarnation is strong evidence that Gregory designed the structure of this creed, omitting such a clause.[60] Since, the creed found in the panegyric is substantially in agreement with Gregory's teachings, in particular, in the controversial area of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Gregory's authorship of the substantial content of the creed has to be considered as a strong possibility.

5.2.3 To the Daughters of Terentius

Basil's *Letter* 105, to the daughters of Terentius, contains a creed that bears marked similarities to Gregory of Nyssa's version of the creed of Neocaesarea.

Basil's letter was written *c.*370 and Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric was written nearly ten years later, thus giving Basil's letter chronological preference over the panegyric. Basil wrote this letter to the daughters of Terentius, the general-in-chief (*comes et dux*) of the Romans in Armenia (369-374),[61] and two letters to Terentius himself, *Letters* 99 and 214.

There remains a possibility that Terentius had some connection with Neocaesarea, since the Armenian prince, Pap, found a place of refuge in Neocaesarea. This possibly this was due to Terentius' role as Pap's protector, although the evidence is not entirely unambiguous, since

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[60] Reference to the Incarnation was also left out of the creed of Eunomius (PG 30:840C, cited in Abramowski 1976, p.146). Omission of the Incarnation virtually rules out the proposition that Gregory of Nyssa designed the structure of the creed, as his panegyric contains anti-Eunomian rhetoric, condemning those (meaning the Eunomians) who did not believe that "the Divine appear to human beings in the flesh" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory*, 5 (39); Heil 1990, p.22; PG 46:917A, tr. Slusser).

[61] Jones, Martindale and Morris 1971, *s.v. Terentius* 2.

Ammianus, who is our source, mentioned Pap being assigned a place of residence in Neocaesarea before he mentioned that Terentius was given command of the campaign to restore him.[62] Another possible argument for a Neocaesarean connection for Terentius can be sought in his relationship with Basil, although the earlier letter between them does not indicate a close relationship.[63] Nevertheless, it remains possible that Terentius was from Neocaesarea itself.

Basil's troubles with the church of Neocaesarea happened around the time that he wrote his letter to Terentius' daughters. Basil encouraged these women to remain true to the doctrinal teaching that they had received, and not to be swayed to the side of Arianism or to follow the current fad that denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Here he appears to haved cited part of a creed that is quite similar to that found in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric:

> You have professed your faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit: do not abandon this deposit.
>
> Father, who is the beginning of all things.
>
> Only-begotten Son, begotten from Him, true God, perfect from perfect, living image, showing the whole Father in himself.
>
> Holy Spirit, having substantial existence from God, the source of holiness, power that causes life, grace that makes perfect, through whom man is adopted, and the mortal made immortal; having being united to Father and Son in all things in glory and eternity, in power and dominion, in sovereignty and divinity.

Basil's citation of this creed would not have served any purpose if it were his own recent invention. It would only have worked if it truly represented the creed under which the women had been baptised. Basil would not have invented such a creed, adding to the plethora of creeds already introduced by the Arians and those associated with bishops like Silvanus.[64] Even before he became a bishop he wrote to a certain Maximus to say that he had already

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[62] Ammianus Marcellinus, 27:12.

[63] Basil, *Letters,* 99, 214:1.

[64] Basil, *Letters,* 243.

decided not to publish his views. He said that he preferred to discuss his opinions person to person (although he did explain in this letter his preference for *homoousios* over other possible words and expressions).[65] Sometime after this, when a certain Magnenianus demanded that he write plainly about the faith, he refused to comply, since he believed that such a document would be misrepresented and used against him. Instead he urged that Christians should be content with their own baptismal confession, doxology and the divine names received from the Holy Scripture.[66]

Even though Basil appears to be citing an existing creed, he was doing it somewhat imperfectly from memory, as the clauses seem out of balance, with a longer clause for the Holy Spirit than for the Son. This emphasis on the Spirit is unusual, particularly for Basil, who resisted making a strong statement on the Holy Spirit, and avoided dogmatically stating that the Holy Spirit is God in his treatise on this subject. When Epiphanius proposed that additions be made to the Nicene Creed, Basil only agreed to include the addition of a clause to ascribe glory to the Holy Spirit. He argued that this was permitted because he thought that the Nicene Fathers had not given the doctrine of the Holy Spirit full weight, there being no dispute at that time over the doctrine of the third person of the Trinity. He refused to agree to the more elaborate creed proposed by Epiphanius, because he considered that such additions would be likely to stir up more controversies.[67] This comment puts into stark relief the elaborate clause on the Holy Spirit in the creed cited in this letter. While Basil possibly expanded on the creed from which he was citing when he wrote this clause, the original creed must have had much more on the Holy Spirit than was generally included in creeds.

Just as Gregory of Nyssa would have been constrained in his recasting of the creed of Neocaesarea in the panegyric by his auditors, so also Basil would have been constrained when

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[65] Basil, *Letters,* 9:3.

[66] Basil, *Letters,* 175; dated by Fedwick 1981, p.16, to 374.

[67] Basil, *Letters,* 258:2.

writing the creed in this letter, since the creed he gave would have served his purposes better if it reflected the creed in which they had been baptized, whether it was the creed of Neocaesarea or of the church in an Armenian town. Both creeds are similar in structure and in wording, particularly in regard to the Holy Spirit. There is the same listing of the persons of the godhead with a listing of the characteristics of each one, and the same emphasis on the unity of the persons. The Father also receives only a minimal mention: "Father, the beginning of all things". There is no mention of the Incarnation. However, there are also some striking differences. The creed of *Letter* 105, to the daughters of Terentius, has no enumeration of each person by number, not even by definite article. There is no mention of the Trinity by name.

Whereas the linchpin of the creed in the panegyric is the enumeration of the persons by number (one Father, one Son, one Holy Spirit, three perfect), the linchpin of the creed of *Letter* 105 is the unity of the persons, culminating in the expression that the Holy Spirit is united with Father and Son, and in the following doxology. This emphasis on the unity of the persons reflects what we know about Gregory's theology, since it emphasises the one divine nature, while giving proper recognition to the persons. The same idea was outlined in *To Philagrius*.[68]

In regard to the relationship between the Father and the Son, the expression in *Letter* 105, that the Son is the living image of the Father, completely showing the Father in himself (ὅλον δεικνύντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν πατέρα), is probably closer to the original terminology than that in the panegyric. It could be taken in an Origenistic sense to mean that the Son is the radiance of the Father,[69] and also is consistent with the doctrine in the *Address*, that the Son is the focus

[68] *vide* Section *2.5.2* Doctrine of God.

[69] There is a possibility that this was included to reject the teaching attributed to Arius, that the Son does not perfectly know the Father, and that the Son sees the Father in the way that is lawful for him and in his own measure ("Encyclical of Alexander of Alexandria", Socrates, *EH*, 1:6:11, and Athanasius, *On the Synods*, 15).

of our attention, since he reflects the Father to us. The equivalent, found in the creed in the panegyric, is the line that says that the Son is the impression and image of the Godhead (χαρακτὴρ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς θεότητος). This appears to have been based on *Hebrews* 1:3, and was probably an "improvement" made by Gregory of Nyssa on the less Biblical terminology in the existing Neocaesarean creed.

The similarities between the creed in the *Letter* and that in the panegyric are striking, particularly in the clauses relating to the Holy Spirit. In both versions the expression "the Holy Spirit has substantial reality from the Father" is literally the same; both refer to the Holy Spirit being the cause of life; both refer to the Holy Spirit as the source of holiness (or chorus leader of sanctification). The doxology in both versions is almost identical. For the reasons already cited, the similarities cannot be explained as being a result of their origin from Basil's creative pen.[70] Instead, in these clauses in particular, we are encouraged to trace the theology expressed directly back to Gregory himself.

5.2.4 Dialogue with Aelian

In the fragments of the *Dialogue with Aelian*,[71] attributed to Gregory by both Basil and Atarbius, it is said that while the Father and Son are two in thought (ἐπίνοια), they are one in *hypostasis*. It embarrassed Basil that Gregory's writings and authority could be used to support his opponent's position. His opponents claimed that this document was an "exposition of the faith" (ἔκθεσις τῆς πίστεως), but Basil rejected this assertion, responding that this

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However, Basil's main opponents, the followers of Eunomius, rejected Arius' doctrine on this point, and argued that the Son knew the Father completely, as being "ungenerated".

[70] *cf.* Abramowski 1976, p.164.

[71] Basil, *Letters*, 210, referred to a letter sent by Atarbius, probably to those who disapproved of Basil and his policy of reconciliation. While some manuscripts have *Dialogue with Ailianos*, (cited in English as Aelian), the majority of the manuscripts have *Dialogue with Gelianos* (Abramowski 1976, p.159; Courtonne 1973, p.158). However, this latter name is not well attested, so the traditional name of Aelian will continue to be used here.

work was not a dogmatic treatise but rather one that arose out of a controversy with Aelian, a person outside of the Christian "nation". However, it is significant that Basil did not try to refute this claim using the doctrine in the creed. Abramowski thought that the creed would have been useful, with its enumeration of the persons, and summing up in a perfect Trinity. Therefore, she thought that his failure to cite the creed here was evidence that the creed did not exist in the form given by Gregory of Nyssa.[72]

Crouzel rejected the attribution of this document to Gregory, saying that a student of Origen would never have said that the Father and Son were one in *hypostasis*. He drew attention to the opposition in the *Dialogue with Aelian* between *epinoia* and *hypostasis*. He argued that the term *epinoia* played an important role in the theology of Origen. It meant either a human way of seeing things or different aspects of the same reality. Origen sometimes used *epinoia* to stress the artificial aspect of a particular representation; at other times he used it to represent a human and contingent attempt to grasp the truth. According to Origen, the *epinoiai* are different aspects of a unique personality, or the attributes of God, or the diverse names of Christ in the Scriptures. Origen taught that Christ is one according to substance (ὑποκείμενον), but multiple according to *epinoia*: his unique personality being manifested in various forms.[73] Therefore, Crouzel believed that to speak of the distinction by *epinoia* and not by *hypostasis* contradicted Origen.[74] Therefore, he argued, the *Dialogue with Aelian* could not be from Gregory. He suggested that it might have come from the circle of Atarbius.

Yet Basil seems to have had his own version of the *Dialogue with Aelian*, and knew that

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[72] Abramowski 1976, p.159.

[73] Crouzel 1963, pp.423f, citing Origen, *Homily on Jeremiah* 8:2, and the more extended discussion in "Théologie de l'Image de Dieu chez Origène", *Théologie*, 34 (Paris 1956), pp.98-105; *cf.* the discussion of the topic *epinoiai* in Heine 2004, pp.93-94.

[74] Crouzel 1963, p.424, citing Origen, *Against Celsus*, 8:12, *Commentary on John*, 2: 6.

parts of it were being incorrectly cited. This appears to rule out the claim that Atarbius or his party in the midst of this controversy invented the *Dialogue with Aelian*. Basil also mentioned that the *Dialogue with Aelian* included terminology that seemed to support Arian doctrine, referring to sections in the *Dialogue with Aelian* that mentioned "creature" (κτίσμα) and "thing made" (ποίημα).[75] As far as we can tell, the Neocaesareans remained consistently hostile to all forms of Arianism, and the resistance to Arianism probably lay behind the strong attachment to the idea of the unity of the Godhead exhibited by Atarbius. This gives particular force to Basil's argument that Gregory's document could be misread in an Arian way.

Gregory is not recorded as using *epinoia* in the technical sense discussed by Crouzel. In the *Address*, he used it to mean "power", as "being uttered by inspiration under a certain more divine power" (ὑπό τινι θειοτέρᾳ ἐπινοίᾳ ἀποφοιβάσαι).[76] This expression was also used to mean "thoughts" or "notions" in *To Gaian* and *To Diognetus*.[77] In *To Philagrius* it is said that while words are inadequate to describe intelligible and incorporeal things, naming is still worthwhile, since it leads the person into "understanding" (ἐπίνοια) intelligible things, namely the nature of the divinity.[78] Furthermore, *To Philagrius* also has basically the same argument about the unity of God as that put in this fragment, namely that the identification of the separate "names" of God does not mean that God is divided.

> Whoever thinks to divide the substance (οὐσία) along with the names, forms an entirely unworthy opinion in his reflexion upon divine things.[79]

This supports the argument that Gregory was the author of both *To Philagrius* and the

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[75] In the context, the reference to "creature" might have come from *Wisdom* 9:1-2, which refers to God making all things through his *logos*, and giving man dominion over "all creatures". This perhaps could have been interpreted in an Arian sense if the "man" given dominion was identified with the Incarnate Son.

[76] Gregory, *Address*, 5 (61).

[77] Gregory, *To Gaian*, 7:3; *To Diognetus*, 5:3.

[78] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 5.

[79] Gregory, *To Philagrius*, 3.

Dialogue with Aelian.

Despite their traditions, or perhaps because of them, Basil seems to have assumed that the Neocaesareans should accept his three *hypostaseis* doctrine without dispute. Not only did he want them to accept his doctrine of three *hypostaseis*, he wanted them to reject the doctrine of one *hypostasis*. This was despite the fact that the one *hypostasis* doctrine was closer to Gregory's teachings and ideas than the doctrine of three *hypostaseis*. It also ignored Athanasius' letter to the Antiocheans that directed that both those who spoke of one *hypostasis* and those who spoke of three *hypostaseis* were to be accepted into communion, provided they did not speak in a heterodox sense.[80] However, Basil did not want to establish reconciliation on this basis.

Basil would have known the creed of the Neocaesareans, but he did not invoke it in his dispute with Atarbius. This was possibly because the citation of that creed would not have resolved the question of one or three *hypostaseis*, since the word *hypostasis* was not even in Gregory of Nyssa's version of that creed, although the numbering of the persons is found in that version of the creed.

It is possible that the creed in *Letter* 105 was closer to the original Neocaesarean creed than that in Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric. The wording of the creed in *Letter* 105 was definitely in Atarbius' favour. Basil was at pains to try to nullify the arguments that could have been raised from the creed, saying, "to enumerate the differences of persons is insufficient; we must confess each person to have a natural existence in real *hypostasis*."[81] The enumeration of the differences of the persons was exactly the form of the creed in *Letter* 105. Reconciliation with Atarbius in the face of the *Letter to Aelian* could only be done through a discussion of the nuances of their respective understandings of Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity. This required two willing parties: it is unlikely that either of them would have

[80] Athanasius, *To the Antiocheans*, 6.

[81] Basil, *Letters,* 210:5, tr. Jackson (altered).

relished such a discussion, or that Basil would have convinced Atarbius.

Basil introduced one line of argument that might have been productive in this discussion, citing the word used for "substantial existence" (ὕπαρξις), which is found in both the creed in the panegyric and in *Letter* 105. He told them that using one *hypostasis* for the Trinity was equivalent to the Sabellian doctrine that denied the everlasting substantial existence of the Only Begotten (τὴν προαιώνιον τοῦ μονογένους ὕπαρξιν). His choice of ὕπαρξις in this context suggests that it was a word that they could have been willing to use to describe the existence of each person in the Trinity, and supports the argument that this word was probably found in the creed of Neocaesarea. However, the cause was virtually lost, since someone in Atarbius' retinue had discovered a text of *John* 1:18 that had "only-begotten Son" (μονογενὴς υἱός), instead of the reading "only-begotten God" (μονογενὴς θεός) (both readings are found in the modern critical text, the latter being taken as the primary reading), and they were using this text in their armoury of arguments against the doctrine of the three *hypostaseis*.[82] Atarbius was also saying that *John* 5:43, "I have come in my Father's name", meant that the Son should not be thought of as a separate person, but the name "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" should be thought of as one name.[83]

Atarbius does not appear to have contradicted the literal words of the creed that is found in *Letter* 105, and the creed in this letter did not use the disputed term *hypostasis*. Therefore, if the creed in this letter was close to the actual creed of Neocaesarea, it is likely that neither the creed of Neocaesarea, nor the inscription, could have been used to directly refute Atarbius' propositions. On this basis, it is not surprising that Basil did not use Gregory's actual "exposition of the faith" to refute his opponent. It probably did not address the question at issue. However, if the creed in the panegyric truly represented Gregory's creed, Basil might have been able to use it, with its counting of the persons in the Trinity, saying One Father,

[82] Basil, *Letters,* 210, 5. For an analysis of the issue see Abramowski 1976, pp.157f n.45.

[83] Basil, *Letters,* 210, 4.

One Son, One Holy Spirit. This suggests that the counting of the persons is unlikely to have been in the Neocaesarean creed at this time, and was probably introduced into the creed by Gregory of Nyssa.

5.3 Gregory's Creed

5.3.1 Adapting the Creed

It is possible that the creed in the panegyric is Gregory's creed expanded in accordance with Gregory of Nyssa's purposes. In this case, the expanded creed went as far as possible towards accommodation with the Eustathians. It left no scope for confusion of the subject of the relationship of the persons in the Trinity, yet accommodated as far as possible the hierarchical Trinity that had been preferred by Eustathius, while totally excluding a Eunomian interpretation. Eustathius had been a leader of the so-called *Pneumatomachians*, who appear to have thought of the Trinity in hierarchical terms, which was similar to Plotinus' doctrine of a hierarchy of the One, the Intellect and the Great Soul.[84] Therefore, it is significant that Gregory of Nyssa, in modifying the form of the existing Neocaesarean creed, used Plotinian terminology, particularly in relation to the Holy Spirit, without adopting a strict Plotinian hierarchy.

Before Gregory of Nyssa had delivered his panegyric in Neocaesarea the conflict with Atarbius appears to have been completely resolved; possibly Basil's death had reduced the tension. Despite Basil's scepticism about the quality of Gregory of Nyssa's diplomacy,[85] Gregory of Nyssa handled this task, which had been beyond Basil's skill, with consummate ease. It must be said, however, that the resolution of Meletius' position in Antioch had made this task much easier. If Gregory of Nyssa had been able to modify the Neocaesarean creed with impunity, as argued here, this suggests that the Neocaesareans had already accepted Basil's underlying theology (if not his terminology). It does not appear that Gregory of

[84] *cf.* Rist 1981, p.199, who discussed the possible influence of Eustathius in the writing of chapter 9 of Basil's *On the Holy Spirit.*

[85] Basil, *Letters,* 215.

Nyssa's changes were intended to resolve the conflict with the Neocaesareans.[86] Rather, his changes appear to have been made in a response to the teachings of Eustathius of Sebasteia, both accommodating the latter's terminology and rebutting his substantive position, in particular on the Holy Spirit.

In this region, Eustathius of Sebasteia had become the most important opponent of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is fully divine. Eustathius had been metropolitan bishop of Lesser Armenia, just as Basil had been metropolitan bishop of Cappadocia Prima; Atarbius was metropolitan bishop of Pontus Polemonianus. The leading bishop in each of these adjoining Roman provinces took a different position on how the question of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit should be handled. Although we do not have a detailed exposition of the faith from Atarbius, we can be confident that he held publicly to the doctrine of the *homoousios* of the Trinity. Basil, likewise, held to the same doctrine, but declined to publicly espouse it, for fear that the advocacy of this doctrine would spark a further division between those he considered to be orthodox.[87] Eustathius rejected this doctrine.

Gregory of Nyssa was well equipped for the task of reconciling those who had followed Eustathius. Gregory of Nyssa was the writer of the Plotinian cento, *On the Spirit*,[88] and was

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[86] Abramowski 1976, p.160, thought that the form of the creed in the panegyric would have been acceptable to those of the Marcellian remnant (probably because three *hypostaseis* was not made a test of orthodoxy, upon which Basil had insisted). However, it did not accommodate the more extreme positions of Atarbius' party, if Basil correctly summarised them in *Letter*, 210. In *Ibid.*, pp.161f, she suggested that Gregory of Nyssa was well equipped for the task of reconciling those of the Nicene party who had been estranged.

[87] Orthodox in the sense of clearly rejecting Arian, Eunomian and Sabellian doctrines.

[88] Against Dehnhard, who attributed it to Basil (Dehnhard 1964, pp.66f; rejected by Daniélou 1965, pp.158-160; *cf.* Gribomont 1965, pp.487-492, who accepted a Cappadocian milieu for this work), Rist argued that Basil did not show any interest in Plotinus before 370, and that he was hardly likely to write such a work after he became metropolitan bishop of the province of Cappadocia. However, Gregory of Nyssa would not have been similarly constrained during this period, and we know that he used *Enneads* 1:6 and 6:9 in his *On Virginity* in chapters ten

probably responsible for Basil's interest in Plotinus.[89] In writing *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil demonstrated a direct acquaintance with Plotinian ideas,[90] and also with his brother's *On the Spirit*.[91] Eustathius was philosophically inclined and appears to have been attracted to Plotinian philosophy.

Gregory of Nyssa might have borrowed from Plotinus' description of the Soul as an image of the Intellect (εἰκὼν τίς ἐστι νοῦ) as a terminological concession to the Eustathians. There is nothing like this expression in the creed of *Letter* 105, so it was possibly an addition made to the creed by Gregory of Nyssa. He described the Holy Spirit as an image of the Son (εἰκὼν τοῦ υἱοῦ). Gregory of Nyssa described this idea in more detail in *Against Eunomius*. Here he said that, according to the teachings of the Scriptures, the Son is the eternal power, wisdom, truth, light and sanctification of God the Father; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power, Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of everything else which the Son is and is called.[92] While this represented a verbal subordination of the Spirit to the Son, Gregory of Nyssa tried to counter this impression by denying the possibility that the second person was subordinate to the first and the third to the second.[93]

The creed in the panegyric demonstrated how the Plotinian doctrine on the Godhead

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and twelve, written during the period that Basil was a bishop. On this basis, Rist proposed that Gregory of Nyssa was the author and suggested that he wrote it in the period 370 to 375.

[89] Rist 1981, pp.217ff.

[90] Pruche 1964, pp.212f. In *On the Holy Spirit*, 9 (23), Basil drew on a section of Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5:1:1, which was not used in *On the Spirit* (Rist 1981, p.202).

[91] *On the Spirit* includes a section of text taken from Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5:1:3, prefixing it with two statements: the Spirit has encompassed the entire knowledge of God; and, he shines upon all the worthy ones. In *On the Holy Spirit*, 9 (23), Basil similarly prefixed the same text with the similar statements: the Spirit reveals in his image the unspeakable beauty of the archetype, and, he shines upon those who are cleansed from every spot.

[92] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 2:2.

[93] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 1:13.

could be adapted and incorporated into what Gregory of Nyssa considered was an orthodox definition of the Trinity. This was particularly significant in the circumstances: the panegyric appears to have been delivered around the time the bishops of Lesser Armenia and the surrounding provinces were in Neocaesarea. They were considering whom they would appoint as the next metropolitan bishop of Sebasteia, Eustathius (or a short lived successor) having recently died. It is, therefore, relevant that the election process resulted in Gregory of Nyssa being honoured with the bishopric of Sebasteia.[94] The panegyric on the Gregory probably played a part in this process.

His panegyric on the life of Gregory demonstrated that he could communicate with ordinary Christians, treating the oral traditions of the people with respect (which he himself shared), and putting into elegant words the old stories about Gregory.[95] Gregory of Nyssa demonstrated that a Christian could aspire to meet the highest standards of Greek rhetoric, and that an "orthodox" bishop could match the standard of learning of his "heterodox" opponents. Thus Gregory of Nyssa continued the work begun by Gregory, who, as Gregory of Nyssa said, began his intense investigation of the true doctrine, "turning over all sorts of thoughts in his mind", and ended it by giving his people a creed through which he educated them in the faith.

5.3.2 Reconstructing Gregory's Creed

If we accept that Gregory of Nyssa expanded or otherwise modified Gregory's creed, we do not have any way of exactly determining the exact text of the creed that Gregory gave to the people of his own time. However we have a number of controls that will help us to guess the likely wording of his creed, including his own teachings, the creed of *Letter* 105, and what

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[94] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letters*, 19:15, cited in Mitchell 1999a, p.114.

[95] Abramowski 1976, p.162, thought that the panegyric, and in particular the creed, demonstrated Gregory of Nyssa's effectiveness in Church politics.

we can discern from the circumstances when Gregory of Nyssa delivered his panegyric. To determine the likely form of Gregory's creed, our starting point must be the creed that Gregory of Nyssa indicated was the baptismal creed of the Neocaesareans, even though we know that he altered some parts of this. We can remove those phrases that we can be confident that were added by Gregory of Nyssa, and amend clauses based on a comparison of the two creeds that we have that appear to be similar to that of Neocaesarea. The phrases that are likely to have been in Gregory's creed, either exactly as cited or a similar form, are highlighted. Some phrases have moved from one clause to the other. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 5-1 Variations on the Creed.

The creed presented in the panegyric appears to be a composite, containing elements taken from Gregory's time, and other elements that really belong to the fourth century. Although there was also a change in emphasis, it would appear that the only changes in substance made by Gregory of Nyssa were the addition of "pious counting", and the statements that the Holy Spirit makes manifest both the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is the image of the Son.

The idea that the Father is the source of everything, and particularly of the Son is a consistent theme in all the sources. However, it is surprising that neither *Letter* 105, nor the panegyric, refer to the role of the Son as Saviour: as has been seen, the idea that the Son is the Saviour of mankind is consistently found in the writings attributed to Gregory. It would appear that the creed focussed entirely on intra-Trinitarian relationships. In regard to the Holy Spirit, Gregory appears to have believed that the Holy Spirit had an important part in the creation of life, analogous to the role of the World Soul in Plato's Timaeus. While Gregory may have been influenced by Plato, it is unlikely that he thought in terms similar to a Plotinian hierarchy, with the Son being the image of the Father, and the Spirit being the image of the Son: this seems to have been an addition made by Gregory of Nyssa.

Nevertheless, for his audience, Gregory of Nyssa's changes did not invalidate the creed

he introduced. They appear to have accepted it as representative of Gregory's creed, perhaps as a modernised version of the original. The church of Neocaesarea was naturally proud of its illustrious heritage. Its bishop in the fifth century, Euippus, in responding to the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon of 451 referred to Gregory's authority on account of the miracles that he was believed to have wrought, and of the authority of other bishops named Gregory, and Basil who was the friend of Athanasius, as joint testators to their continuing orthodoxy.[96] It is certain that Gregory's creed, as interpreted by Gregory of Nyssa, lived on in their affection; it was thought to continue to serve as a guarantee and touchstone of their orthodoxy.

[96] Schwartz 1936, p.83.

In *Address*	In *To Philagrius*	In Panegyric	In *Letter* 105	Reconstructed Creed
Father of the universe, director and **cause of all things**; universal king and guardian, the continual fountain of all good things.	**God, Father of the Saviour, source of all good things,** Lord of the truth, **first cause of life,** tree of immortality, spring of life unending	One **God**, Father of a living *Logos*, who is subsistent wisdom and power and his eternal representation, **perfect begetter of a perfect one, Father of an only-begotten Son.**	**Father, who is the beginning of all things.**	**God who is the cause of all things, Father of the Saviour.**
Our souls' champion and Saviour, **his first-begotten** Logos, Demiurge and Pilot of all things; the **truth, wisdom, power of the Father**, *Logos* of the First Mind.	Son, Saviour	One Lord, only from only, God from God, **representation and image of the divinity,** effective *Logos*, **wisdom embracing the structure of the universe, power which makes the whole creation, true Son** of a true Father, invisible of an invisible one, incorruptible of an incorruptible one, immortal of an immortal one, eternal of an eternal one.	**Only-begotten Son, begotten from Him, true Son, perfect from perfect, living image, showing the whole Father in himself.**	**Only-begotten Son, begotten from Him, true Son, perfect from perfect, living image, showing the whole Father in himself.**
Divine **Spirit.**	**Holy Spirit**	One **Holy Spirit, having substantial existence from God,** manifested through the Son, perfect image of the perfect Son, **living cause of the living, chorus leader of holiness,** by whom God the **Father** is manifested, who is over all and in all, and God the **Son,** who is through all.	**Holy Spirit, having substantial existence from God, the source of holiness, power that causes life,** grace that makes perfect, through whom man is adopted, and the mortal made immortal.	**Holy Spirit, having substantial existence from God, power that causes life, the source of holiness.**
	Son and Holy Spirit indivisibly united to the Father.	Three perfect, **in glory and eternity and kingdom not divided and not alienated.**	**[Holy Spirit] united to Father and Son in all things in glory and eternity, in power and dominion, in sovereignty and divinity.**	**[Holy Spirit] indivisibly united to Father and Son in glory and eternity and kingdom and divinity.**

Table 5-1 Variations on the Creed

6 Council of Neocaesarea

The record of the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea provides us with a memorial to the satisfactory conclusion of Gregory's missionary endeavours in Pontus. They show that the situation in the churches in Pontus had significantly changed since 255/6 when the *Canonical Letter* was written. Whereas the situation addressed by the *Canonical Letter* was the breakdown of civil order, including theft, dispossession and aiding the enemy, these canons depict a situation that was under control. They deal with the regulation of marriage, heterosexual relationships and hierarchical church organization. They reveal a church life that was settled, well run, and relatively speaking, at peace with itself. It is clear that some years had passed since the *Canonical Letter* was written, as the issues discussed here bear no resemblance to the issues raised at that time.

The most significant issue from a historical perspective considered at this council was the position and status of the country bishops. There is not definitive evidence on this point, but this office could have been established during Gregory's leadership of the Church in this region, with the office either being introduced by him, or by one of the other leading bishops in eastern Anatolia, namely Firmilian of Cappadocian Caesarea, or Helenus of Tarsus.

The last major work on the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea was that undertaken by Hefele, this being updated and translated into French by Leclerq in 1907. Since then, the canons have been translated into English and published in the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers series.[1] For the purpose of this examination, I have translated them anew. The canons of this council are considered here in order to provide a perspective on the ongoing life of the churches in Pontus at this time.

[1] NPNF2-14, pp.79-86, tr. Percival.

6.1 Date of the Council

In dating this council we must first decide whether it preceded or followed Diocletian's persecution of the Church. While the situation underlying these canons may appear to be too ordered to allow dating prior to the victory of Constantine and Licinius, yet this was exactly how Eusebius depicted this period.[2] Eusebius should have known: he was an adult during the pre-persecution period. While the weight of scholarly opinion dates this council after Diocletian's persecution, I argue that the council should be placed before the period of persecution, making the date no later than 303, rather than between the Council of Ancyra and the Council of Nicea.

The anchor point for our analysis is the Council of Ancyra. The preamble to the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea explicitly states that the council was held after the Council of Ancyra. However, that preamble is not necessarily final in establishing the sequence of the councils, since it was added by later editors, as was the list of the attendees. The definitive evidence is provided by the canons passed by the two councils. Based on this evidence, I argue that the relationship of the subject matter considered by both councils suggests that the Council of Neocaesarea pre-dated the Council of Ancyra. Whereas the Council of Ancyra seems to be concerned in the first place with issues arising out of Diocletian's persecution, the Council of Neocaesarea does not mention the persecution at all, making it somewhat problematic to date it too soon after the end of that persecution. Furthermore, the settled conditions depicted in the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea are conformable with the period of relative peace before the outbreak of Diocletian's persecution. Therefore, I argue that the traditional sequence of the councils should be reversed.

The editors of the canons of the Council of Ancyra were of the view that this council included representatives from the churches in Syria and north and central Anatolia, based on

[2] Eusebius, *EH*, 8:1.

the list of participants that they included with the publication of the canons. It is impossible to know how much weight should be put on this list, since the various lists of names of attendees are only found in later copies and not in the earlier copies.[3] However, we can date the Council of Ancyra fairly confidently from the content of its canons, because the work of the council included the restoration of the lapsed. Hefele reasonably dated this council to 314, the year after the end of the persecution under Maximinus, although his suggestion that a council was held every year was probably anachronistic. The end of the persecution marked an obvious new beginning for the Christian Church, and church councils would have been held in many places.

6.1.1 Country Bishops

The first evidence for the argument that the Council of Neocaesarea predated the Council of Ancyra relates to the office of the *chorepiscopi* (country bishops). The Council of Neocaesarea took the trouble to establish the validity of the office of country bishop, likening the office to the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus. This is the kind of formal argument in its favour that seems to be more appropriate soon after this office had been established. We know that the office was well established by the time of Council of Ancyra, and from the Council of Nicaea we know that it was widespread in eastern Anatolia and Syria, we have to conclude that it was well established before that persecution, which started in 303. This suggests that this office must have begun to be introduced at least twenty years or more before that date, given the widespread geographic distribution of the officeholders.

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[3] Hefele 1907, pp.326f, noted that the ancient Greek manuscripts indicated that the Council of Neocaesarea was after Ancyra and before Nicea. While Hefele did not dispute this claim, it seems to be no more than an opinion, albeit that of the ancient editors. Hefele noted that the purported list of names of the attending bishops for the Council of Neocaesarea carried even less weight than that for Ancyra, and that the list of names for Neocaesarea has been generally rejected. He dated the Council of Neocaesarea some years after that of Ancyra, accepting the sequence of the councils suggested in the manuscripts.

The situation considered by the Council of Neocaesarea was that the country bishops were intruding upon the celebration of the worship services in the city, and thereby upsetting the presbyters in that place. In this regard Canon 13 of the Council of Neocaesarea[4] stated:

> Country bishops are not able to offer [prayer, meaning Holy Communion] in the house of the Lord in the city, if a bishop is present or a presbyter of the city, and are not to give the bread in prayer, or the wine cup. If the bishop and presbyters are absent and the offering is celebrated in prayer, he may give [the bread and wine cup] on his own. The country bishops are like the seventy as joint performers of the liturgy according to their zeal for the poor, being honoured by those who are present.[5]

The background to this might have been that city presbyters were drawn from a higher social stratum than the country bishops, or that city presbyters were defending what they considered to be their rights and privileges.[6]

Canon 13 of the Council of Ancyra shows that the members of this council considered that country bishops were going beyond their proper authority:

> Χωρεπισκόποις μὴ ἐξεῖναι πρεσβυτέρους ἢ διακόνους χειροτονεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴν μηδὲ πρεσβυτέρους πόλεως, χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπιτραπῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου μετὰ γραμμάτων ἐν ἑτέρᾳ παροικίᾳ.

Leclerq's translation (possibly based on Hefele's German) was:

> Il n'est pas permis aux choréveques d'ordonner des prêtres et des diacres, et cela n'est pas permis non plus aux prêtres des villes dans d'autres paroisses (diocèses) sans l'autorisation écrite de l'évêque du lieu.

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[4] This was one canon in Routh 1846, p.185, but two canons in Hefele 1907, pp.333f:

[5] Van Espen (cited in NPNF2-14, in a note to Canon 10 of the Council of Antioch), claimed that the reference to the seventy disciples of Jesus indicated that the country bishops were not true bishops, since the true bishops were considered to be successors of the twelve disciples. However, the simile of the seventy, versus the twelve, probably described their position well, without extinguishing the "episcopal" functions of the office, namely to provide oversight for the work of the local congregation.

[6] *cf.* Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, pp.181-184, who thought that villages were largely self-sufficient, and did not rely upon the richer people in the cities, even having their own magistrates and village headmen.

Hefele indicated that some scholars divided the Greek sentence at the conjunction ἀλλά, so that the simple reading of the first part of this sentence appears to indicate that a country bishop was not permitted to ordain presbyters (even in his own district), whereas the second part of the sentence then seems to permit a country bishop to ordain outside his district under certain circumstances.[7] This then became the basis of Leclerq's translation, but it seems to be a misreading of the sentence.[8]

Percival left the translation in an ambiguous state by following the Greek sentence order:

> It is not lawful for Chorepiscopi to ordain presbyters or deacons, and most assuredly not presbyters of a city, without the commission of the bishop given in writing, in another district.[9]

The result of Percival's translation, in not attaching the phrase "in another district" (ἐν ἑτέρᾳ παροικίᾳ) to the verb or another phrase, is merely to demonstrate the ambiguity of the Greek, without attempting to resolve the problem.[10] An alternative is to attach this phase directly to the verb "to ordain" (χειροτονεῖν). In this case the translation can be made as follows:

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[7] Hefele 1907, p.314, translated ἐν ἑτέρᾳ παροικίᾳ as "dans d'autres paroisses (diocèses)". The difference between district and diocese does not appear to have been of critical important for Hefele or Leclerq: it was just noted that these alternatives meanings were used in different Latin versions. Rackham 1891, pp.192f, translated παροικία as "diocese". An inscription from Pergamum used the word to mean something like a village and its country lands (Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.177, n.133), but Eusebius, *EH*, 7:28, used it in the sense of city and its country lands in the phrase παροικία ἐν Ταρσῷ.

[8] Thomassin, cited in NPNF2-14, p.22, said that he thought that the Latin translation was preferable to the original Greek even though it did not correctly translate the Greek. However, this is not a satisfactory way of proceeding.

[9] NPNF2-14, p.68, tr. Percival.

[10] Rackham 1891, pp.192f, suggested that the phrase beginning ἀλλὰ μήν be treated as a parenthesis. The phrase ἀλλὰ μήν is often used to introduce a new argument, or add a new alternative (Blomqvist 1969, pp.61-65), as appears to have occurred here, rather than to insert a statement outside of the main argument. Despite this, there is a sense in which this phrase, dealing with prohibition of ordination of presbyters in the city, can be taken as a parethesis, as is seen in the translation given below.

> Country bishops are not permitted to appoint presbyters or deacons in another district, and certainly they are not permitted to appoint presbyters of the city, without written permission from the bishop.[11]

On this basis, this canon can be interpreted to mean that country bishops were already appointed to rule within a district, having full power within that district to appoint presbyters and deacons for the local church.

Possibly a better reading is to interpret this phrase as qualifying the adjacent words, so that the phrase means "[when the bishop is] in another district":

> Country bishops are not permitted to appoint presbyters or deacons, and certainly they are not permitted to appoint presbyters of the city, without written permission from the bishop when he is in another district.

On this reading, country bishops only had power to ordain, even within their own district, if they had written permission from the bishop, and only when the bishop was not within the district of the country bishop. This reading indicates that the country bishops' power to ordain was a delegated authority only, and not one based on the office itself. However, even on this reading, it remains possible that country bishops ordained within their own districts, with the sanction of their bishops.

The first specific mentions of the office of country bishop were in these canons from the councils of Ancyra and Neocaesarea,[12] and in these canons there appears to have been a progression: local irritations arising from the office, which were dealt with in Neocaesarea, followed by complaints of inappropriate ordinations in Ancyra. Relations between the other clergy and the country bishops got worse over time, as evidenced by the decision of the

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[11] This reading allows the title of country bishop to carry its natural meaning: country bishops were described as bishops because they were allowed to ordain presbyters and deacons, but only within the territory ruled by their own village. *cf.* Hefele 1907, pp.314f.

[12] References to bishops in the country, in writings dated before this (*1 Clement*, 42:4; Eusebius, *EH*, 5:16 and 7:30), appear to refer to the location of the bishop, not to a specific office.

Council of Antioch, *c*.341, which explicitly removed the right of country bishops to ordain presbyters: it decreed that country bishops could only ordain readers, sub-deacons, and exorcists.[13]

The enduring importance of the office of country bishop in the ecclesiastical hierarchy can be seen clearly through a brief examination of Basil's election in 370 as bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea. Gregory of Nazianzus said that fifty country bishops had the power to vote.[14] City bishops in Cappadocia were in much smaller numbers. Within the province of Cappadocia itself there were seven cities: Caesarea itself, Tyana, Nazianzus, Archelais, Cybistra, Nyssa and Comana.[15] The votes of the country bishops carried equal weight with those of the city bishops, so even though bishops from other provinces could and did attend this election, the weight of numbers was with the country bishops. To secure Basil's election it was necessary for his supporters to win over a large number of these voters, a feat that was accomplished by Gregory of Nazianzus the elder and Eusebius of Samosata. The presence of these two men at the vote was considered to be vital to bring about Basil's election; their social status would have added weight to Basil's cause. But the largest part of the power of decision lay in the hands of the country bishops.[16]

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[13] NPNF2-14, "Council of Antioch", Canon 10.

[14] Gregory Nazianzus, *On My Life*, v.447, PG 37:1060; McGuckin 2001, p.171. Jones 1971, p.185, thought that the reference to fifty country bishops was an exaggeration, however, Ptolemy, *Geography*, 5:6, lists forty-eight cities and villages that would have still been within the boundaries of the fourth century province of Cappadocia, from the Cappadocian prefectures of Chamanene, Sargaurasena, Garsauritis, Cilicia, Tyanitiis, Cataonia and Murimena.

[15] Jones 1971, pp.176-183. Jones also included Parnassus as a Cappadocian city, on the grounds that Basil ordained a bishop there (n.50, p.431), but he appears to have been mistaken in this, since the bishop of Parnassus would have been one of country bishops.

[16] McGuckin 2001, pp.169-176. Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus the elder forced the latter's son to accept the office of bishop of Sasima (*Ibid*, pp.181-196). There is no evidence that Sasima was a *polis*, but seems to have

6.1.2 Marriage After Ordination

The second piece of evidence for the earlier date of the Council of Neocaesarea is in relation to the rules for presbyters and deacons marrying after ordination. The Council of Neocaesarea, in Canon 1, stated:

> If a presbyter marries he is to be demoted, and if he fornicates or commits adultery he is to be forced out completely and to lead himself into repentance.

The background to this canon appears to have been that it was possible for a presbyter to be married before his ordination (as is still the case in the Orthodox churches). This canon introduced or formalized a rule that prohibited a presbyter from marrying after his ordination to the office of presbyter. This rule naturally applied also to bishops, who were also considered to be presbyters. The Council of Ancyra appears to take this a step further. Canon 10 of that council prohibited a deacon from being married after his ordination if he did not make his intentions known when he was elected:

> As many as deacons were ordained who at the time of their ordination made it known that it was necessary for them to marry, since they were not able to remain unmarried, and who married after this, shall continue in the service [of deacon], since it was permitted to them by the bishop. But if any were silent, accepting upon their election to remain unmarried, but after this entered into marriage, shall cease from the diaconate.

This canon should be understood in the light of the recognition that more was expected of those who were higher in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The canons applied stricter rules for presbyters than for deacons, since presbyters had a spiritual role amongst the people that

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been one of the many villages of Cappadocia. Therefore, he would have been a country bishop: it is not surprising that he did not think it was a real bishopric. (If the rules of the Council of Antioch had been applied he would not even have been able to appoint his own presbyters, but it is not clear that these rules were applied.) On the other hand, the disdain that Gregory of Nazianzus (the younger) felt towards inhabitants of Sasima (*Ibid*, p.197) was not an appropriate attitude for a bishop or country bishop to show towards his flock, and was not in accord with the type of leadership style envisaged by the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea, that the occupant show practical zeal for the poor.

deacons did not have.[17] Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that as time passed, the rules enforcing celibacy on holders of church offices became stricter.[18] Therefore it is difficult to accept that the rule for the deacons would have been established before the rule for presbyters. If certain deacons were to be removed from office if they married after ordination, surely there must have already been a rule for presbyters. I do not think the Council of Ancyra would have left in place the practical situation that presbyters could marry after ordination with impunity, while condemning deacons who married after ordination.

6.1.3 Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

The third piece of evidence for the earlier dating for the Council of Neocaesarea is provided by the indication in these canons that the ecclesiastical organization of these churches reflects the conditions before reforms that appear to have been indirectly initiated by Cornelius of Rome in the middle of the third century.

The leaders of the council appear to have been aware of a letter written by Cornelius, bishop of Rome, to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, cited in Eusebius, written *c*.252. The bishop of Antioch had accepted this letter. Because of its importance Firmilian of Cappadocian Caesarea, Helenus of Tarsus and Gregory would also have known it.[19] In this letter Cornelius said that there it was generally accepted that there was a rule that there was only one bishop in a "catholic" church (καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία). *Ecclesia* was used frequently in the New Testament to mean an individual congregation, so that letters were written to the church in

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[17] *vide* Council of Neocaesarea, Canon 7.

[18] *1 Timothy* 3:2 and 3:12 required that both bishops and deacons be married to only one wife, thus indicating that bigamy was discouraged amongst Christians. It also introduced the rule that the leaders of the Church be the head of their respective families. The expectation in this text, that bishops and deacons would be married, was now being changed in the opposite direction to deter the clergy from marriage after ordination.

[19] The Novatianist sect, the Church of the Pure, followers of Novatius, the subject of this letter, had a following in eastern Anatolia (*vide* Basil, *Letters,* 188, Canon 1).

such-and-such a place, or to the churches in a region. The word *ecclesia* meant an assembly of the citizens of a city, who met together to discuss matters of concern to the whole city. However, even though the citizens of the city might join in such a common assembly, Cornelius did not intend this to mean an equivalent assembly of Christians, which was unlikely ever to be held, but rather all the congregations in a single *polis*. In any event, Cornelius' meaning was that there could only be one bishop in a *polis* amongst the Christians that called themselves "catholic" or "universal". In this letter Cornelius described the organization of his church in Rome: he said that there were also forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, plus ninety-four in named minor orders,[20] which made it a very significant organization.

By the time of the Council of Neocaesarea the rule that there be a bishop, and only one bishop, in each *polis* appears to have been well established in the churches in Pontus. If the old organization of the churches had continued through to this time, it had been made redundant as a result of changes elsewhere. Any resistance that there might have been to the new model from the previously established church leaders must have been overcome. Given that this pattern appears to have been accepted, the council went on to establish the rule that there be only seven deacons.

Canon 14

> Deacons are to be seven in number according to the canon, even if the city is very large, you will be persuaded by the book of *Acts*.

The comment that "even if the city is very large" suggests that the author of the canon was aware of Cornelius' letter. There was no city that was larger than Rome, and the letter said that it had only seven deacons. Even without Cornelius' letter, the content of this canon is not unexpected, since the rule that there can be only seven deacons would have been uncontroversial: it could have been established in a Church that tried to pattern itself on the

[20] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:43.

example of the first church in the *New Testament*. In this case also, the role of deacons would have been well defined, to look after financial rather than spiritual matters. The practice of formally using the office of deacon as a stepping-stone to a higher office in the church's hierarchy does not appear to have been introduced at this time in this place.

A possible explanation for the circumstances behind this canon is that this council could have been held relatively soon after the new ecclesiastical hierarchy was established, with seven deacons initially allowed for each bishop or country bishop being allowed. On this basis, before this constraint on the number of deacons became well established in the people's minds, pressure arose to increase the number of deacons.

It is hard to imagine that the rule that there be only seven deacons could have been easily introduced in a situation where the "standard" ecclesiastical hierarchy had been established in the churches for a long time and where there were already more than seven deacons. What would have happened in those churches where there were more than seven deacons? The resolution of this hypothetical issue was not canvassed in this canon, suggesting that it was not a problem.

It appears, therefore, that the Council of Neocaesarea predated the Council of Ancyra, and thus also predated Diocletian's persecution. Unfortunately, we do not have any reliable external evidence of the council's attendees which may also help us to establish who led this council: our extant lists of bishops are so late that they can be treated as being based on the assumption that the council should be dated close to that of Nicaea.[21]

6.1.4 Author of the Canons

Given that this council was probably held before that of Ancyra, Gregory can be considered as a possible author of these canons, even though this would date the council

[21] Hefele 1907, pp.326f, noted that Tillemont "and other historians" raised doubts about the list of bishops, and observed that the Ballerini friars rejected them.

around fifty years prior to that of Ancyra.[22]

Basil indicated that Gregory was the sole lawgiver to the Neocaesarean community. He claimed that the church of Neocaesarea refused to introduce any new practices or customs that did not have Gregory's sanction:

> To this day he [Gregory] is a great object of admiration to the people of his own neighbourhood, and his memory, established in the churches ever fresh and green, is not dulled by length of time. Thus not a practice, not a word, not a mystic rite has been added to the Church besides what he has bequeathed to it. Hence truly on account of the antiquity of their institution many of their ceremonies appear to be defective. For his successors in the administration of the churches could not endure to accept any subsequent discovery in addition to what had had his sanction.[23]

Basil knew about the stubborn resistance of the Neocaesareans to any changes, since he himself faced the argument from the Neocaesareans along the lines that if Gregory did not introduce it, it was not valid. (Basil had been charged with innovation since he allowed the responsive singing of psalms.)[24] We know that Basil was exaggerating when he claimed that the Neocaesareans had not added any new practices since Gregory's time, since Basil responded to their complaints by saying that they had added litanies (collective prayers) to their worship services.[25] Nevertheless, it is clear that the Neocaesareans had the sense that Gregory was the founder and legislator of this church.

These canons were written in a style that shares some characteristics with certain works

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[22] The earliest date is around 265, which would allow time for the each of the known problems to have been resolved in turn. The troubles with the Boradi and the Goth occurred in 255/6. A different council would have been held after this. In 257 (or a little later in the provinces), persecution was renewed against the leaders of the Church. After this there was a plague, and after that, in 259, the Persians defeated the Romans and invaded their territory, to which there is no allusion in the canons.

[23] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29 (74), tr. Jackson.

[24] Basil, *Letters*, 208:2.

[25] Basil, *Letters*, 207:3-4.

attributed to Gregory. The stylometric study presented in chapter 2 indicates that Gregory should be considered as a possible author on stylistic grounds, even though certain pecularities in their style make them an outlier on Axis 2.

Meletius of Pontus is the only other known figure from Pontus in the period after Gregory and before 303, and he is also a possible author.[26] The suggestion of Meletius' name in this connection can only be put forward tentatively, as there are no other known works of Meletius with which to compare this text, and he is not mentioned in the sources in this regard. Nevertheless, the situation depicted in these canons appears to be ordered and routine, so that an author after Gregory might be indicated: Meletius appears to have the status necessary to hold such an apparently authorative council. For the remainder of the third century we know of no other Church leader in Pontus except Meletius. Unfortunately, all that can be said is that the canons were probably written after 265 and some years before 303.

6.1.5 Ancyra & Neocaesarea

The churches in Ancyra and Neocaesarea were at different stages of development at the time of their respective councils: Gregory's evangelisation of the community of Neocaesarea appears to have advanced Christianity in that place well ahead of the Christianisation of Galatia. Leaving aside the first nine canons of Ancyra, which related directly to the restoration of the lapsed, the impression from the remaining canons from Ancyra is of a church that has recently had an influx of new Christians.

The date of the Council of Ancyra is fairly certain, being placed around 314. Yet when reading the canons of this council, one is reminded of the *Canonical Letter* we examined earlier: both were probably written just after there was an influx of many new Christians. In Ancyra we find that some Christians were guilty of serious offences against fundamental

[26] Eusebius, *EH*, 7:32, said he was called "the honey of Attica," and considered him to be "the most perfect original of learned men that could be described" (tr. Cruse).

Christian values and principles, just as had been the case in Neocaesarea over fifty years earlier,[27] with adultery, fornication, abortion, murder, manslaughter and divination being addressed at the council.[28] This may reflect the situation where a large part of the community in Ancyra had just gone over to Christianity and had only recently been baptised into Christ.[29] If the Council of Neocaesarea is placed well before the Council of Ancyra, this indicates that the church in Galatia was many years behind that of Neocaesarea in gaining widespread acceptance amongst the people.

The picture that emerges from the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea, when taken together with the *Canonical Letter*, is that the situation was more ordered there than in Galatia. While this does not rule out a date after 314 for the Council of Neocaesarea, it fits quite well with a date before 303, particularly since the Council of Neocaesarea made no mention of any offences committed during a period of persecution, making a date soon after

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[27] However, they might not have been guilty of the acts of bestiality as indicated by the translation of canons 16 and 17 of the Council of Ancyra by Hefele 1907, pp.318f, and by Percival's translation in NPNF2-14, p.70. These translations were based on an interpretation of the euphemism ἀλογεύομαι, "to speak casually", to mean "to have sex with animals". This is the meaning given in Lampe, but it appears to have been based on this canon and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, not on a wider general usage, and therefore does not provide positive confirmation of the proposed translation. Therefore it is necessary to attempt to translate this word from the context. In this case, the perplexing reference to leprosy in canon 17 seems to be an allusion to Naaman's behaviour in *1 Kings* 5:18, when he asked for permission to offer sacrifice to his master's gods. Therefore, it is likely that "to speak casually" was to offer sacrifice insincerely, believing that that exonerated the sacrificer from the charge of dishonouring Christ, from Naaman's example.

[28] Canons 20-25.

[29] Christians sometimes saw themselves as a race apart, a different tribe, or beyond a tribe, with their own customs and religion, describing non-Christians as the nations (ἔθνη). The differences in customs and religion between the various tribes and nations was a topic of considerable interest to the ancients. Changing from the customs of one "tribe" to that of another was a significant undertaking, and not always easily accomplished. Converting to Christianity meant a change in values and attitude.

314 less likely. For the same reason, is unlikely that the Council was held immediately after Valerian's persecution, which ended in 260, so a date somewhere between 265 and some years prior to 303 is preferred for this council.

6.2 Canons

6.2.1 Marriage Rules

The Council of Neocaesarea laid down basic principles for regulating the sexual and marriage relationships of Christians. In this council, the matters were dealt with simply, without the meticulous references to periods of penance characteristic of the canons of the Council of Ancyra. These canons, taken together, indicate that Christians of Pontus were expected to live up to a certain standard of behaviour: this too brings to mind the high standards outlined in *1 Peter*. Those who failed were to be excluded: restoration of those who had lapsed in their behaviour was not uppermost in the minds of the participants in this council. This latter point is particularly relevant in this canon.

Canon 2

> If a woman marries two brothers, she is to be forced out until death; if she is in danger of death she can be admitted to repentance, through compassion towards her, if she promises that upon recovery she will break the marriage. If either the woman or the man die in such a marriage, repentance will be difficult for the surviving party.

In this case it appears that the marriages mentioned were successive, rather than bigamous. Undertaking such a marriage was actually demanded according to the *Pentateuch* in the situation where a brother was childless when he died, so that his name would not die out in the land.[30] Obviously, such marriages were considered to be inappropriate, although the reason is not immediately clear. It is possible that this practice was intended to preserve the bride's dowry within the husband's family, and those involved in such marriages attempted to justify them on the basis of the Old Testament, and this canon sought deny recourse to this

[30] *Deuteronomy* 25:10; see also *Genesis* 38:8. Quoted at Jesus in *Matt* 22:24; *Mark* 12:19; *Luke* 20:28. The question to Jesus appears to have been theoretical, rather than reflecting actual current practices. In any event, this requirement would have been irrelevant in the Church at this time, since in its interpretation of the Church as a continuation of Israel, the Christian inheritance from Israel was purely spiritual.

source of support for the banned practice.[31]

Alternatively, such marriages might have been prohibited because they were considered to be an unacceptable part of the cultural heritage of the religions being supplanted, which included Zoroastrianism. We have already observed that the Persians established cult centres for their religion in the Pontic cities of Amaseia and Zela. Therefore, it is possible that *khvaetvadatha*, the close next-of-kin marriages allowed amongst the Zoroastrians,[32] were in mind here. The Zoroastrians allowed the practice of a son marrying his mother, possibly only after the death of his father.[33] Perhaps marrying a deceased brother's wife was an example of *khvaetvadatha*. If such was the custom, even those who were not actively Zoroastrians might have learnt this practice from the Persians, without actually taking on the whole religion.[34]

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[31] This canon was directed at the situation where a woman successively married two brothers, which is the only situation discussed in the Old Testament. The canon did not encompass the possibility of successively marrying two sisters. The canon is unlikely to be only dealing with a single case, since the canon provided general rules, which suggests multiple occurrences of this practice.

[32] *Khvaetvadatha* marriages are mentioned in the Zoroastrian confession, although Boyce 1975, p.254 n.24, considered that it was possible that this was a later interpolation, especially since this reference was oddly placed, being at the climax of the confession. Boyce 1982, pp.75-77, 117, 196f, 220, provided examples of these kinds of marriage: Cambyses' marriage to his sister (which was not specifically sanctioned by Zoroastrian practice of the time, according to Herodotus, 3:31), Darius' marriages to his brother's daughter and to his own daughter, and Ataxerxes' marriages to two of his daughters. Other examples are noted in Boyce 1979, pp.97, 110f, 139, 174f.

[33] Boyce and Grenet 1991, p.8, referred to the example of a governor in Sogdia, who had two sons by his mother, who was his wife. See also Boyce and Grenet 1991, p.256, 520, citing Bardesanes (c.154-224), and Diogenes Laertius (3rd century AD) respectively. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 27, said that the Magi allowed sexual intercourse between a man and his mother.

[34] Such a relationship was anathema to the Greeks, as shown most clearly in the Oedipus legend. Yet even in the fourth century the Zoroastrians continued to "rave after unlawful marriages", according to Basil's casual comments (*Letters*, 258).

In the following canons it is not clear whether the practices of polygamy and bigamy were being addressed, or whether the canons were addressing the question of successive marriages, perhaps after the death of a spouse. Athenagoras, in his apology written in the second century, said that Christians hold that a man should not divorce his wife, and also should not marry again even after the death of this wife.[35] Similarly, Basil and Jerome described remarriage as bigamy.[36] However, the natural meaning of the words used suggests that bigamy was intended, rather than successive monogomous marriages.

Canon 3

> Concerning those who have been married many times, the time [of penance] is obvious, but their way of life and faith shortens the time.

Canon 7

> He who enters into two marriages is not to entertain the presbyter, since when the bigamist seeks to find repentance, who will be the presbyter to him since by accepting the entertainment he agreed with the marriages?

It is important to note here that, unlike Canon 2, the offenders were not required to put aside their multiple spouses before they could be restored to fellowship: one assumes that it would have been required at a minimum that they admit they had sinned in this regard. The time of penance was not stated, a point confirmed by Basil, who said that there was no extant canon at his time that determined the length of penance for trigamists,[37] but from his comments it

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[35] Athenagoras, *Plea Regarding Christians*, 33, tr. Richardson.

[36] Basil, *Letters*, 199, Canon 24; Jerome, *Letters*, 48. In NPNF2-14, δίγαμος was translated "digamy" rather than "bigamy", with the intention of indicating to the English reader that it meant successive marriages, rather than concurrent marriages. There seems to be some justification for this. The extension of the meaning of the word to cover successive monogomous marriages was the outcome of a device introduced independently by both Basil and Jerome, in the passages cited. Basil conflated remarriage and bigamy; Jerome called remarriage bigamy and trigamy, although he allowed it. He also called a second marriage prostitution. However, bigamy is the natural meaning, and was probably intended by the council.

[37] Basil, *Letters*, 188:4.

seems that about two years for each marriage beyond a first marriage was the normal pattern. It appears that the council intended that each man have only one wife, but it did not make the situation too difficult for those who already had more than one wife.

6.2.2 Lust

The council showed a delicate touch and a pastoral heart in the following canon, contrasting the intention with the deed.

Canon 4

> If someone indicated that he desired to have sexual intercourse with a particular woman, but did not carry out his intention, it appears that [the good result] flowed from grace.

Jesus taught that to entertain a sinful thought was to carry out the sin in the heart,[38] but the council declined to introduce a formal sanction against those who had sinned in this way. It is assumed that someone brought forward a case to the council, arguing that those who talked in a lewd way should be excluded from the Church, and forced to undergo penance. The council decided otherwise.

6.2.3 Baptism

Advancement into full church membership was supposed to be a path of steady progress, as demonstrated in the following canon.

Canon 5

> If a catechumen, going into the Lord's house and being ranked with the catechumens, falls into sin, if he is ranked with the kneelers let him become a listener. If he sins again whilst he is a listener, let him be forced out.

Since "listeners" were a lower grade than "kneelers", greater leniency was allowed to them than to "kneelers". A "kneeler" was only granted a second chance, if he or she failed again that person was removed from the list of those being instructed. This was a church community that was determined that its potential members would take seriously the commitment that they

[38] *Matthew* 5:27.

were intending to make.

Some parents wanted to ensure that their children were included in the Christian family, by having the woman carrying the child baptised while pregnant, in the hope that this would pass on the grace of baptism to the child in the womb.

Canon 6

> Concerning someone who is pregnant, she can be enlightened [baptised] whenever she wants it. The woman who begets the child does not share in her baptism with her unborn child, since it is a choice of each one to make his or her own confession of the faith.

The practice of timing the baptism of the mother so as to bring grace upon her unborn child was rejected. In this Christian community, baptism was only allowed after the individual had a made a personal choice to follow the "way". This meant that membership of the Pontic community was not synonymous with membership of the Christian community, despite the fact that these appear to be presented as synonymous in the Canonical Letter.[39]

6.2.4 Ordination

The following Neocaesarean canons held that some sins before ordination did not constitute a bar to Church office, but sexual immorality before ordination[40] created a bar.

Canon 8

> If a wife of a certain layman commits adultery and she is openly dishonoured, he is not able to go into service [elected to an office]. Alternatively, if after his election she commits adultery he must set her free, but if he lives with her he is not able to continue in the service that was taken in hand by him.

Canon 9

> If a presbyter who committed a sin in the body and had been ordained, but later confessed that he had missed the mark before his election, he must not hold out his hands [with the bread and

[39] Gregory, *Canonical Letter*, 7.

[40] Canon 12 of Ancyra held that apostasy before baptism was not a bar to ordination since baptism cleansed sins committed prior to baptism, so this probably referred to sexual sins after baptism.

wine], but he remains among the people [with his other functions] on account of his zeal. The majority made known [their opinion] that ordination removes the remaining sins. However, if such a one does not confess and he cannot be openly dishonoured, the decision depends upon himself.

Canon 10

Likewise also if ever a deacon fall into the same sin, let him hold office in the order of the attendants (ὑπηρέτης).

Strabo said that Pontic Comana was a "lesser Corinth" on account of the many prostitutes in that city devoted to the goddess Ma. There is no reason to think that this practice had totally died out by the second half of the third century. While these canons do not directly address the question of prostitution, (it would hardly have been a matter for debate), it is likely that prostitution and sexual licence would have remained an issue of concern for the Church in that community.

The following canons show that, if someone was baptised on his deathbed, he was not considered to have the commitment necessary to be a leader of the Church.

Canon 12

If ever someone was enlightened [baptised] on account of [life-threatening] sickness he is not able to become a presbyter, since he did not take up the faith according to choice, but out of necessity. An exception perhaps might be allowed on account of his zeal and faith and the need of man.

This canon was similar to a rule already established by the Roman church, and described in Cornelius' letter to Fabius of Antioch about Novatius, that anyone baptised in his sick bed by sprinkling was not to be advanced to any office of clergy (except that this rule was honoured in the breach in the case of Novatius).[41]

6.2.5 Restrictions on Taking Office

Only those who were sufficiently mature could be "elders" in the Christian community:

[41] Eusebius, *EH*, 6:43.

thirty years of age was considered to be the minimum age, reflecting the *lex Pompeia*, which decreed that no-one could hold office or belong to a council before the age of thirty, although this had been modified by Emperor Augustus, in Bithynia-Pontus at least, to allow minor posts to be held from the age of twenty-two.[42] Augustus' ruling meant that younger persons who had held the appropriate qualifying office could be automatically enrolled in the council of the city before they were thirty. We can see here that appointment as a presbyter was treated as being equivalent to election to the council of the city, but a younger appointment was not permitted.

Canon 11

> A presbyter is not to be elected before thirty years of age; even though the man may be worthy, let him wait. For the Lord Jesus Christ was enlightened [baptised] in his thirtieth year and then began to teach.

This indicates that young men found that they could exercise their skills and gifts by holding office in the Church. At least it shows that, like Gregory, young men thought that the Church was worthy of their interest and efforts on its behalf.

Canon 11, above, and Canon 14, on there being seven deacons only, show that the churches involved in this council had an abundance of candidates for church offices. In each case the rule was stated emphatically, and supported by a reference to the Scriptures: by citing the Scriptures, it appears to have been the intention of the council to remove the scope for the local ruling class to use their authority and position in the community to overrule the canon.

[42] Pliny, *Letters*, 10:79; Mitchell 1984, p.123.

6.3 Legacy of the Council

The most important legacy of the council was probably its endorsement of the office of country bishop. Under this model, while a city could have one bishop, a village could also have a its own country bishop and its own council of presbyters. This meant that power was not solely concentrated in the hands of the bishop of the city, but it was delegated as much as was possible within the rules generally accepted within the apostolic churches, following the pattern that was already in place in the villages and towns of Pontus.

The province of Pontus probably had only six cities.[43] According to Ptolemy, this region had a total of 23 named cities and villages, meaning that there could be something like six bishops and 17 country bishops in the province.[44] It was inevitable that as more of the aristocracy became Christians, the Church would have come increasingly under the influence of the aristocratic leaders of the whole community. Against this background, we must see the introduction of the office of the "country bishop" as an effort to retain the benefits deriving from a continued capacity to draw leaders from the leadership of the villages, and also to include more of the poorer and less well educated, whose lives must, often-times, have been a shining example of true Christian service and humility to their aristocratic betters. Rather than swallowing up the existing Church leadership in some kind of low-level office, we see the establishment of the office of country bishop, in which the local leader was empowered to run all the affairs of the Church within his own village, including appointing presbyters and deacons, either under his own authority, or under delegated authority from the bishop. This special office was, in terms of actual authority wielded within the Church, more powerful than the office of the city presbyter, who had no rights of ordaining, yet it remained within the

[43] The city of Amaseia was called the "plain of a thousand villages" (Strabo, 12:3:39; Mitchell 1993, Vol.1, p.178).

[44] Ptolemy, *Geography*, 5:6, but excising from Ptolemy's list the one city and five villages later moved to Lesser Armenia, including Sebasteia.

ambit of those who lived in the villages. In this way, the Church provided for itself an "officer-corps" of country bishops who could be the backbone of the Christian community.

The strategy of appointing country bishops must have made it easier for the Church to continue to expand amongst the poorer people. It would have been difficult to dislodge the loyalties of the ordinary people from their attachment to the old cults, a loyalty that stretched back into the timeless past. Equipping a task force of their peers, accompanied by the visible and strong support of the aristocratic leader of the Church, must have made the task of teaching the common people much easier. This approach probably helped Gregory to gain the reputation that "he brought the whole people alike in town and country through to the knowledge to God".

The existence of country bishops was attested at the Council of Nicaea, since a number of them signed the document attesting to the decisions of that council. The list of 194 bishops, designated by province, is the most reliable list that we have available, and it is also convenient for us since it enables us to group geographically the country bishops who attended that council.[45] There were no country bishops from either Galatia or Pontus, the provinces of the two Church councils that had previously mentioned the office. This perhaps can be explained on the grounds that the purpose of this office was the pastoral care of those who were "poor": suggesting that many country bishops would not have been comfortable or welcomed amongst the elite company present at Nicaea. Most country bishops who did attend

[45] Honigmann 1939, pp.17-76, esp. pp.44-49. Diocletian reorganized the provinces in Anatolia. The list of bishops listed for the Council of Nicaea indicate that the short-lived province of Pontus was later divided between Diospontus and Pontus Polemoniacus, with capitals in Amaseia and Neocaesarea, respectively. Bithynia-Pontus was divided between Bithynia and Paphlagonia. Cilicia, which previously had acquired Lycaonia and Isauria (Magie 1950, Vol.1, p.660), now lost these regions to the province of Isauria.

came from Isauria, formerly part of Cilicia.[46] Five out of a total of fifteen country bishops came from here; the country bishops constituted the majority of bishops and country bishops from the region.[47] This region included both Lycaonia (of Paul's first missionary journey in *Acts*), and Isauria proper. One country bishop came from the province of Cilicia. Two came from each of Cappadocia, Lesser Armenia (formerly part of Cappadocia), Syria, and Bithynia (formerly part of Bithynia-Pontus).

In provinces such as Pontus and Cappadocia, with so few cities it was probably necessary for an innovation such as the office of country bishop to be introduced to minister to the people in the rural areas, far removed from the few cities. We cannot be certain, but it is likely that the office was introduced during the period in which there were some outstanding bishops in the capitals of these provinces. Therefore, it is likely that the office of country bishop was created either on Gregory's initiative or on the initiative of one of the other metropolitan bishops in this general region.[48] At the time Gregory was bishop of Pontus, Firmilian was bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea and Helenus was bishop of Tarsus. Each one was the bishop of the capital of a province, and these three provinces covered the whole of eastern Anatolia

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[46] Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, pp.58f, made an analysis of gravestones found in the borderlands of Isauria and Lycaonia, which can be dated roughly between 220 and 310. He tentatively divided the Christian and non-Christian gravestones before 260 in the proportions 26:54 (or more conservatively 20:60), and after 260 as 35:5 (or more conservatively 30:10). This suggested that more than 80% of the population were Christian by the beginning of the fourth century. It would be interesting to know whether the empowerment of local leadership, indicated by the existence of the office of the country bishop, contributed towards the rapid expansion of the Church in this region.

[47] Ptolemy, *Geography*, 5:7 and 6, named 16 cities and villages in Rugged Cilicia (Isauria), and 7 in Lycaonia, a total of 23 cities and villages. The Isaurians spoke a language close to Luwian (Elton 2000, pp.293-295), and therefore their language is likely to have been related to Cappadocian.

[48] Firmilian's and Helenus' contacts with Syria could have led to the introduction of the office of country bishop in that province.

between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Whoever came up with the idea, it was implemented by the bishops within these provinces, and also within Galatia and Bithynia-Pontus in the period prior to 303. It is likely that the establishment of this office supported the successful advance of Christianity in Pontus and its neighbouring provinces.

This council established or confirmed rules governing aspects of the behaviour of these new church leaders. In addition, rules for baptism were officially established, with the intention of confirming that this act was a personal decision that signalled a complete change in the manner of life of the individual being baptised. In addition, and most notably given the sexual licence encouraged under the former cults of the people, in particular that of Ma, the council set down some rules governing sexual activity.[49] The attempt to raise an official sanction against lewd talk was rejected (Canon 4) since such a rule was considered to be lacking in grace. Marriage was not treated as a second-class option, but presbyters (and bishops) were expected to remain unmarried if they took up their office at a time when they were unmarried. The canons of this council were intended to operate as practical rules that could be followed by ordinary people.

[49] Athenagoras claimed that it was normal Christian practice to forego sex within marriage, save for procreation (Athenagoras, *Plea Regarding Christians*, 33). This appears to have been a matter of private conscience.

7 Conclusion

Gregory's personality and contribution to Christianity can be seen through his writings, indirectly through the *Canonical Letter*, and through the way he responded to the events around him, as can be discerned through those things written about him by a number of authors from that period.

The surviving corpus of his works is relatively small, and although the attribution to Gregory of most of these works remains somewhat controversial, there are appropriate reasons to assign some of them to Gregory. The stylometric analysis presented here adds some weight to the arguments for Gregory's authorship of certain of these works, as do the arguments from context and terminology. From these works, it appears that it was Gregory's intention to adapt his approach to his audiences in order to win as many as possible to the follow the "true philosophy" as he saw it. On this basis, these texts constitute a coherent body of work, despite their disparate nature.

Of Gregory's works, the *Address in Praise of Origen* remains the most important that has come down to us, in that it reveals the man most fully and most personally. The *Metaphrase* also reveals his ideas on the ideal Christian life, and could even be useful today as a Christian protreptic work. While Gregory's authorship of the other works attributed to him is probably not yet definitively established, the weight of all the evidence cited points towards establishing his authorship: he is certainly the most likely candidate amongst those considered. *To Gaian* is useful to us beyond its apparent testimony to Gregory's ideas, for it provides us with an insight into the ancient debate on the immortality of the soul, with this work's fairly conventional explanation of Greek ideas set against Justin Martyr's and Tatian's approaches, and Origen's efforts to resolve the controversy over the nature of the soul. *To Philagrius* seems to provide a clear account of Gregory's ideas, showing how they appear to have developed since he delivered the *Address*, helping us to understand the latter testimony

of "Gregory's creed", and aiding us in discerning the context of Basil's controversy with Atarbius. *To Theopompus* provides us with an insight into a third century theology development, namely the idea that God himself willingly suffers for us, without this causing any change in himself. Finally, if they can be securely attributed to him, the first two treatises in *To Diognetus* are probably more indicative of Gregory's activities as an evangelist in Pontus than any of the other works attributed to him. They seems to have been the kind of literary works to which Socrates Scholasticus referred, when alluding to Gregory's literary missionary activities.

Gregory was possibly active as an evangelist even from the time he was studying with Origen, as the somewhat legendary story of his encounter with the prostitute suggests, in that he stood out from his fellow students there, and provoked an expectedly hostile response. Similarly, the *Address* perhaps should not be seen as testifying to an inadequate theology, but rather as a work carefully crafted to appeal to non-Christians to consider the kind of training with Origen that he himself had undertaken.

When Gregory returned home to Neocaesarea it appears that he stood above the usual limitations upon life and social relationship, partly because he was born to a privileged position, but also because he seems to have been willing to take risks in solving problems. In this way his contemporaries saw him as a kind of philosopher-wonder-worker. The accounts of the daring confrontations with the traditional cults seem to reasonably represent the *coups de grâce* of their control over the native peoples.

The leaders of the apostolic churches in this region seem to have recognized Gregory's potential as a Christian leader and appointed him formally as the leader of the Christians in Neocaesarea. He did not disappoint them. He took on the role, already beginning to emerge elsewhere, of a metropolitan bishop. He appears to have brought all the Christians in that region into one community, apparently incorporating existing individualistic Christian communities within the one catholic and apostolic Church. His success in creating a Pontic

Church that was able to work together seems to be indicated by the settled organizational situation implied by the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea.

Before Gregory, the Christian communities in this region were possibly not united, but under Gregory a formal leadership structure appears to have been established, with individual churches formally recognizing each other. The examples of individual martyrdoms, and Gregory's ability to use their example as a rallying point for the Christians, were probably significant in building up the confidence of the Christians in the face of whatever opposition remained. Similarly, the setting up of a temple to Christ was a very public proclamation that Christianity was likely to be a permanent and public feature of ordinary life.

In the light of later theological developments, his creed was a masterpiece of clear thinking, and his understanding of the relationships within the Trinity remains attractive, even today, as a way of expressing that inexpressible concept. Despite this, his silence on the Incarnation, apparent in all of his works, stands out. The story of the dream or vision of Mary, the mother of Jesus, indicates that this silence was not on account of his own reserve on this question. It was rather a concession to his various audiences. Gregory possibly saw this doctrine as a stumbling block for some, preventing their acceptance of the doctrine of the Saviour, who he believed can and does transform the human life. Similarly, with Gregory's apparent reserve in regard to the Old Testament, it was not something he felt himself, since he alluded quite freely to those Scriptures, but held back from directly citing them, and certainly felt that they had to be interpreted in the light of the New Testament writers, as the *Metaphrase* shows.

After Gregory's death there would have had to have been some kind of corrective teaching in Pontus in regard to the Incarnation and the Old Testament to bring everyone's understanding on these subject onto a common level. This would not have been an easy task, considering the reputation that Gregory had acquired during his lifetime as the one who firmly established the Church in this region, since it would have meant clearly teachings things to

which Gregory had preferred to only allude. Meletius of Pontus might have fulfilled this role. If it were possible to attribute the third treatise in *To Diognetus* to him, this would show him carrying out this role, but corroborating evidence to support this claim does not appear to exist.

Whether as a result of Gregory's reputed miracles, his teachings, or the activities of empowered local leaders and other Christians, or more likely, all of these, it would appear that Gregory's leadership of the Church contributed to the spread of Christianity in this part of the world.[50] Gregory appears to have been successful in converting the leading citizens of Neocaesarea to Christianity. At the same time Christians continued to be drawn from the poorer members of that community, and from the indigent and the slaves. These were the natural constituency of the Church, a point made by Celsus, the second century anti-Christian polemist:

> Their injunctions are like this: "Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly." By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of the God, they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children.[51]

Despite being born and living as an aristocrat, Gregory demonstrated that he had a real heart for the poorer people, and a belief in their inherent worth.

While this account of Gregory's life presents only a positive view of his life and achievements, this reflects the sources for his life. While he must have had his opponents and difficulties, a record of these has not survived in the sources. In this presentation, most attention has been given to establishing the sources for his life, this being based upon a

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[50] Sozomen, *HE*, 6:34, reported that Galatia, Cappadocia and the neighbouring provinces zealously embraced Christianity earlier than Coele and Upper Syria (*vide* Mitchell 1993, Vol.2, p.63).

[51] Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3:44, tr. Chadwick.

consideration of his writings, outlining the background to his mission, developing a new interpretation of the biographical accounts, and reviewing the canons of the Council of Neocaesarea. More remains to be done in evaluating these sources and his life, in order to establish the impact of Gregory's unique contribution to Christian thinking on late third century and fourth century Christianity. His life could prove to be relevant as a background to a study of Christian leaders and writers in the late third century period, such as Methodius, Pamphilus, and Lucian of Antioch, and Christian leaders around the turn of the century, such as Eusebius of Palestinian Caesarea, the so-called Lucianists, and then later perhaps even upon Marcellus. The likelihood that Gregory's doctrine of the Holy Spirit influenced Basil and Gregory of Nyssa has already been mentioned.[52]

[52] *vide* Section 5.1.3 Creed n.53.

Abbreviations

ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
ANS	The American Numismatic Society
BMC Pontus	*Catalogue of Greek Coins – Pontus, Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and the Kingdom of Bosporus*
BMC Galatia	*Catalogue of Greek Coins – Galatia, Cappadocia, and Syria*
CAH	*The Cambridge Ancient History*
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CPG	*Clavis Patrum Graecorum*
DCB	*Dictionary of Christian Biography*
ECF	*Early Christian Fathers*
EDH	*Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg*
FOC	*The Fathers of the Church*
IGR	*Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*
KUB	*Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*
Lampe	G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Lexicon*
LCC	*Library of Christian Classics*
Loeb	*Loeb Classical Library*
LXX	Septuagint
MAMA	*Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*
NPNF2	*Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series 2
PG	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus Graecae*
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus Latinae*
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RE	*Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
Recueil	*Recueil général des monnaies grecques d'Asie Mineure*
Roscher ML	*Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*
RSR	*Recherches de science religeuse*

SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
Sammlung	*Sammlung von Aulock: Collection of Greek Coins from Asia Minor*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*

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