Spreading Open the Letter and Peering Inside:
Gregory Nazianzen, Scriptural Pragmatism, and the Genesis of Doctrine

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Controversy has accompanied every genesis of doctrine[1] within the Christian church. Some doctrines, which are accepted as faithful to the Christian tradition, become dogma, while others are eschewed as non-binding theologoumena at best or heresies at worst. From the earliest disagreement among Christians over the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church up until the contemporary debates over the licitness of homosexual behavior, Christians have sought to properly negotiate new problems in a way that is faithful to the various logics embodied within Christian tradition. An example of such a "genesis" of doctrine is the Trinity, which, like other doctrines, is purportedly accepted because it is part and parcel of the Christian faith as it has always been handed down, even if the Trinity had never been explicitly formulated prior to its actual exposition in the fourth century.[2]

I propose to study the logic of the genesis of doctrine within the church by means of an investigation of Gregory of Nazianzus' theological orations. I will specifically analyze his contribution to the deity of the Spirit found in Orat. 31 in light of the methodological manifesto he develops in Orat. 27.[3] By doing so, I hope to begin to address the practical problem of how the faithfulness of new doctrine to the Christian tradition may be adjudicated.[4] I choose these works by this author because of Gregory's stature and influence in the Christian community; the

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[1] Here I use McGrath's definition, wherein doctrine is viewed as that which: a) demarcates different social groups; b) is generated from Scripture and then serves to interpret Scripture; c) gives structure to experience; and d) references that which is a true locution about Christ (Alister McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* [Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1997], 37ff).

[2] As an example of a lack of systematic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, Origen is unsure of how to speak of the Holy Spirit even as he urges further investigation on the issue in *de Principiis*: "Then, *Thirdly*, the apostles related that the Holy Spirit was associated in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son. But in His case it is not clearly distinguished whether He is to be regarded as born or innate, or also as a Son of God or not: *for these are points which have to be inquired into out of sacred Scripture according to the best of our ability, and which demand careful investigation*. And that this Spirit inspired each one of the saints, whether prophets or apostles; and that there was not one Spirit in the men of the old dispensation, and another in those who were inspired at the advent of Christ, is most clearly taught throughout the Churches" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* ed. A. Cleveland Coxe [New York: Charles Scribner and Sons], IV:240, emphasis mine).

[3] While I focus only on two of Gregory's theological orations (while briefly touching on a third), other fruitful areas of investigation exist in relation to the development of doctrine in Gregory's thought. As a counter-point to Gregory's "successful" approach, it would be of value to produce a corresponding analysis of Gregory's Pneumatomachian opponents, as well as the Eunomians, the later Arians who were ultimately rejected by the Niceno-Constantinopolitan tradition.

[4] The continuing seriousness of this problem is apparent as the genesis of new doctrines continue to cause schism in the body of Christ in debates, For example, in the debate over homosexuality within the Anglican Communion, two bishops within the Church of England have recently proposed as a means to solve the problem a peaceful "separation" within the Anglican Church between those who accept homosexuality and those who do not. (See "Bishops Ask Archbishop of Canterbury for an 'Orderly Separation," *The Telegraph,* http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2490833/Bishops-ask--Archbishop-of-Canterbury-for-an-orderly-separation.html. Further, I make this note because it is important to my approach that I am addressing a real problem and not a "paper" or speculative problem. Why this is the case will become clear in the course of the treatment.

more unsettled nature of the debate over the Spirit as compared to that of the Son at the time Gregory delivered these orations; the fact that Gregory's contention that the Spirit is one of the Trinity found acceptance in the creeds of the church; and most importantly, Gregory's attentiveness to methodological concerns in theological argumentation as demonstrated in Orat. 27. As a tentative thesis, I argue that Gregory pragmatically develops the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to the deity of the Spirit by diagramming the logic of the "plain sense"[5] of Scripture and of the life of the Christian community, and then making a type of transcendental deduction regarding the metaphysical nature of God that would legitimate the logics so diagrammed.

At this point, this thesis should be understood only as a heuristic guide—a hypothetical proposal, if you will. In fact, the entirety of the article is an exercise in the logic of abduction, as it is an instance of inferring a logic out of Gregory's methodology in articulating the doctrine of the deity of the Spirit. It then offers this abduction as a hypothesis to be tested for its fruitfulness in making intelligible other developments in doctrine that have found wide acceptance in the church, suggesting further hypotheses for investigation. To this end, I propose the following methodology. In the first section, I give "plain sense" readings of both Gregory's methodological oration and his oration on the Spirit. The second section will be dedicated to a deeper reading of the two orations in order to provide an analysis of their underlying logic—the rules by which Gregory argues from Scripture and tradition.[6] A goal of this section will be to show how the discourse of scriptural pragmatism in the Peircean tradition helps to illuminate Gregory's methodology. One way this will be accomplished is by comparing various (Peircean) pragmatic *topoi* to Gregory's approach, thereby justifying the use of pragmatic language in re-describing Gregory's methodology. Finally, based upon the analysis developed in the first two sections, I extend my thesis regarding Gregory's methodology into a general theory of how doctrine is

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[5] "[T]he 'plain sense' (*peshat*) of a text is its meaning within the *rhetorical* context of some body of received literature" (Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism and the Logic of Scripture* [Cambridge University Press, 1998], 6). Here, the rhetorical context is that of theological orations (and possibly other works of Gregory) as well as the circumstances of the historical situation. For the sake of space, the latter context will be treated sparingly. It is assumed that a "plain sense" reading (which is not to be identified with the "plain sense" of a text itself, as it involves using words not in the text to characterize the text) is a first-level interpretation and is open for debate. However, it is a debate in which it is possible to come to some level of agreement within a particular community or among related communities—at least upon a range of possible "plain sense" readings of the "plain sense" of the text.

[6] These first two steps correspond to what Ochs calls "corrective reading" in the practice of the rabbis, wherein a problem found in a text is reconciled for a particular community. Of this, Chad Pecknold writes: "Ochs likens the Peircean method of corrective reading, or rereading, to the rabbinic practice of scriptural interpretation, consisting of a plain-sense reading (*peshat*) of an explicit text and a deeper level of reading (*derash*) of the implicit text. The rabbinic scriptural pragmatist is a semiotician, a reader of signs who is always 'discovering an implicit text within the explicit text'. Such a reading, however, is only stimulated 'when something burdensome in the plain sense' calls for an interpretive reading" (Chad C. Pecknold, *Transfiguring Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism and Scripture* [London: T&T Clark International, 2005], 69.) It is exactly this method that I will be arguing that Gregory utilizes, and I will do so by correctively reading him like he correctively reads Scripture and tradition.

generated faithfully[7] with respect to the Christian tradition, and I offer this hypothesis for future testing as to its fruitfulness in guiding new doctrinal developments and making intelligible those that have already occurred.[8] I also make explicit the consequences of the logic found in my "depth" reading of Gregory.

"Plain Sense" (*Peshat*) Reading of Or. 27 and 31

Historical Context

Since history is not the focus of this article, I provide here only a brief summary of the historical situation.[9] It is well known that the fourth century was a time of conflict within the church over the deity of the Son and, later in that century, over the deity of the Spirit. The conflict in the time of the orations largely revolved around three distinct positions regarding the deity of the Son,[10] and, as we see in Gregory's orations, a number of different positions regarding the Spirit.[11] Gregory likely delivered his orations in the summer of 380 at the Chapel of the Resurrection in Constantinople. Before Gregory provisionally received the position of Bishop of

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[7] I use the word "faithful" to describe the development of doctrine because it can incorporate both the ideas of constancy and change, conservatism and progressivism. This is the case because, first, any "development" of doctrine has to be a departure from what has gone before and is thus progressive. At the same time, it is possible to conceive of such a development as being an organic outgrowth of a previously existing doctrinal vine. This certainly does not rule out the idea of completely new ideas beings grafted onto the vine, but it does serve to indicate that some type of organic, "faithful" union to what has gone before is necessary for doctrinal development to be conceived as occurring *within* a tradition and not being the beginning of a *new* tradition—a new vine, so to speak. It would be hard to see how a tradition that replaces what came before could be considered a "development" in any sense of the word rather than a supersession (in that it is a refutation and abandonment) of the previously existing tradition.

[8] Ayres' conception of "theological cultures" that impact the "life of the mind" is consonant with my thesis. What I describe is Gregory's evolving theological *habitus* that is itself situated in a larger rationality associated with the culture of the pro-Nicene party. (See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 274-8.) With Ayres, I also agree that Gregory sees doctrine as the "*elucidation* of the text of Scripture," where Scripture is "the primary and most trustworthy language for Christians" (Ibid., 277), and that Gregory seeks to appeal to a broader Christian social practice that his audience —educated and lay—may find persuasive.

[9] For more information, see: Brian E. Daly, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Gallay, P. *La Vie do Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Paris: Emm. Vitte, 1943); John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladmir's Seminary Press, 2001); Frederick Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzen* (New York: Brill, 1991); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969).

[10] These are normally referred to as the "Moderate Arian," "Semi-Arian" or *homoiousian* position that rejects the creed of Nicea and supports some type of creation for the Son; the pro-Nicene *homoousian* position that upholds the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father; and the "Moderate Nicene" position that upheld the deity of the Son and Nicea but wanted to emphasize the distinctiveness of the Son as well. Gregory, along with Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, were among the latter group. There were, of course, many shades within this typology, but it has heuristic value.

[11] It is difficult to clarify the many positions against which Gregory argues. Some deny the deity of the Spirit as a matter of principle; others because the Scripture's do not make the claim; still others accept it in some form but are ultimately agnostic about it because of Scripture's silence; others wonder if the Spirit is an accident (an activity) or a substance; yet others who publicly profess their belief in the Spirit's deity; and those who believe it but keep silent. As this article is not about untangling the web of Gregory's interlocutors, I will only note whom he is arguing against when it becomes important.

Constantinople,[12] the pro-*homoiousian* Emperor Valens had given wide support to the semi-Arians such that they dominated the theological and churchly scene in the capital city. Gregory quickly encountered opposition by the semi-Arian theological establishment, including being pelted by stones during the Easter celebrations of 380 by anti-Nicene monks,[13] after marching in the procession of the strongly pro-Nicene Emperor Theodosius when he entered Constantinople.[14] Nevertheless, it is during this period that Gregory's rhetorical skills found a strong reception in a time known for Christian rhetoric, and he used his gifts and training to forward the moderate Nicene position even in the face of strong opposition. The quality of these five theological orations earned Gregory the title of "the Theologian" that endures to this day in the East.

Oration 27—The Practice of Theology

Gregory's introductory oration focuses on theological method. While it may be possible to diagram it otherwise, I propose that it can be divided into three sections: 1) 27.1-2: opening invective; 2) 27.3-6: main argument; and 3) 27.8-10: closing confutation of opponents.

The invective style Gregory employs reflects standard rhetorical practice for the time and is quite tame in the context of the conflicts in Constantinople in 380 and compared to his invective against Emperor Julian.[15] He begins by characterizing his opponents as proud and lacking in "education, hearing, and thought" (27.1).[16] Gregory portrays them as those who focus in "'strife of words' which lead to no useful result,"[17] as useless and idle "verbal tricksters, grotesque and preposterous word-gamesters" (27.1). Such an approach of merely "setting and solving conundrums" in fact "undermine[s] every approach to true religion" (27.2). To do so is to be like a "promoter[] of wrestling-bouts in the theaters," and their verbal disputations find their way everywhere, "[e]ven [to] women in the drawing room" (27.2). Gregory finds this situation to

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[12] Gregory was never confirmed in the position due to a canon law stating that a bishop cannot be transferred from one see to another, and Gregory was already Bishop of Sasima.

[13] Some report that the incident was so severe that Gregory was wounded and another person was killed.

[14] Emperor Valens was killed fighting the Goths at Adrianople on 9 August 378 along with most of his army. The Spanish general Theodosius later defeated the Goths and was acclaimed Emperor of the East on 19 January 379. He later became Emperor of the West in 382.

[15] See Oration 4 where Gregory rails, "'HEAR me all ye nations, give ear unto me all ye dwellers upon earth,' for I am calling on you all, as it were, from a conspicuous and lofty watch-tower, with a cry both high and loud. Hear ye nations, tribes, tongues, every kind of men, and every age, as many as now are, and as many as shall be; and in order that my proclamation may be greater, every Power of heaven, all ye Angels, whose deed was the putting down of the tyrant, who have overthrown not Sihon, king of the Amorites, nor Og, king of Bashan—insignificant princes, and injuring but a small part the land of Israel—but the Dragon, the Apostate, the Great Mind, the Assyrian, the public and private enemy of all in common, him that has madly raged and threatened much upon earth, and that has spoken and meditated much unrighteousness against Heaven!" (Or. 4.1) (Gregory Nazianzen, *Julian the Emperor*, oration 4, trans. C.W. King [London: George Bell and Sons, 1888], accessed at http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/gregory_nazianzen_2_oration4.htm.)

[16] Unless noted otherwise, quotations are from Lionel Wickham's and Frederick Williams' translation found in Norris, *Fullness*.

[17] Gregory's emphasis upon the usefulness of discourse should be noted.

be "unchecked and intolerable," and he requests that "these spies"[18] listen closely because his speeches will not be what they expect.

Turning to his main argument, Gregory lays out a vision of how theology should be properly performed. Beginning with the shocking statement, "Not for everyone, O people, is loving the wisdom surrounding God; no, not for everyone" (27.3),[19] he discusses the rhetorical *topoi* of the speaker, the occasion, the audience, and the speech or subject matter itself as key elements of proper theological *praxis*.[20]

For Gregory, the occasion of theology cannot be overlooked. The right time is when the theologian is able to "'be still' in order to know God" away from the "mire and noise" of the everyday (27.3). Theology is not the same as remembering God, which should be done always. As Gregory says, "it is not continual remembrance of God I seek to discourage, but continual discussion of theology," because "[f]ullness and surfeit even of honey, for all its goodness, produces vomiting" (27.4). Rather, theology has its appropriate time.

When the time is right, the audience must be of the right mind and predisposed toward understanding what is said. Theology should not be discussed "before any and every audience, heathen or Christian, friend or foe, sympathetic or hostile" (27.5). The wrong people are "like flies settling on wounds" (27.5) as they pick apart the wisdom offered. Theology is a "serious undertaking" and not for those who "chatter" about it as "one of their amusements" (27.3).

The message, too, must be appropriate for the time and for the audience. It should be within the grasp of human understanding and "only to the limit of the experience and capacity of our audience" (27.3). Audiences hostile to the subject matter or those who do not have the necessary context of understanding should not be presented with teachings they are likely to misinterpret. Someone who "fabricated his own gods only the other day" should not be taught with words like the "generation" or "creation" of God because he will surely misinterpret them (27.6). This tendency is exacerbated if "we abuse the terms ourselves," as is demonstrated in "our civil war" (27.6). The result of the inter-Christian strife being played out in front of the non-believer is that "[w]e are in the same state as madmen who set fire to their own houses" (27.6).

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[18] Because of lines like these, many commentators think that Eunomians were present in the audience taking notes of Gregory's orations so that they could be refuted later. See Norris, 86ff.

[19] My translation. Wickham and Williams reads: "Discussion of theology is not for everyone, I tell you, not for everyone" (Norris, 218). I depart from this translation to try to focus on the word φιλοσοφεῖν which, in Gregory, is a term that frequently includes both an attitude and a way of life in addition to actual discussion or analysis. I could think of no better way of translating τὸ περὶ θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν than by returning to the root meaning of the word as "loving wisdom" (stated verbally rather than nominally) and then resorting to the sense of περι as "surrounding" or "encircling." This gives a different sense from merely "discussion of theology," but rather sees such discussion as holistically involving a person in loving the wisdom surrounding God by involving a spiritual *habitus*, actions in the physical world, and the corresponding verbal descriptions of this practice in discussion and analysis. Secondarily, I also wanted to more closely follow the rhetorical flow of the Greek text.

[20] Gregory was educated in schools of rhetoric in Athens and was certainly well-versed in the rhetorical theory of Aristotle, among others. Aristotle deals with three of these commonplaces when discussing the different types of *pisteis*: "Of the *pisteis* provided through speech there are three species: for some are in the character [*ēthos*] of the speaker, and some in disposing the listener in some way, and some in the argument [*logos*] itself" (George A. Kennedy, trans., *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse* [Oxford University Press: 1991], 37). That Gregory should make use of this type of division is not surprising.

For Gregory, the character of the "lov[er of] wisdom surrounding God" is of crucial importance. He must be "tested," having a "sound footing in [contemplative] study,"[21] and "more importantly…hav[ing] undergone, or at the very least [] undergoing, purification of body and soul" (27.3). To engage in this practice, we must "smooth the theologian in us, like a statue, into beauty" (27.7). This involves self-reflection regarding our constant desire to engage in verbal competitions while leaving aside virtuous actions like extending hospitality, feeding the poor, mortifying the body, and singing psalms. It is an attempt to "subordinate the inferior element in us to the better—I mean the dust to the spirit" (27.7). Theologians must avoid engaging in sinful behaviors and also avoid giving opportunity for others to sin—something apparently allowed as long as those sinning are on "our" side. This is, in Gregory's words, giving "license in exchange for impiety" (27.7), a behavior he sees in his opponents but also more generally even in the pro-Nicene camp.

The third and final section is a series of different types of discourses (dialectic, rhetorical questions, and hortatory) intended to confute Gregory's opponents. After laying out the deictic conditions necessary for "philosophizing" or "loving the wisdom surrounding God," Gregory proceeds to a series of questions and answers that appear confused at first glance. The first series of questions regarding a mansion with many rooms is designed to elicit the admission from his opponents that there are many "ways" to live the faith, and the more ways one does so, the better. In the second series, Gregory agrees with his imaginary interlocutor that there is a single, narrow road that is difficult to tread in comparison with the multitude of wrong ways one could follow. Taken together, as Norris writes, Gregory is saying that "[t]he Eunomians reject other approaches —particularly [Gregory's]—and yet have chosen precisely the one which of necessity leads away from the goal."[22]

Changing tactics, Gregory grants the revealed knowledge to the Eunomians for the sake of argument, only to question their motives. He asks why, if they have the fullness of divine revelation, they forget the formative period necessary for true theologians and try to "mold men into holiness overnight,"[23] entangle others in "spider's webs," attack the pro-Niceans, and flatter "the most effeminate specimens of the male sex" to set up their "profanity industry" (27.9). That they would still answer is simply a continuance of the problem at the root of their theological formation: "your tongue must always rule you" (27.9).

Despairing of silencing his opponents, Gregory seeks to provide topics for their discourse that would be less damaging or perhaps even helpful. He lists a series of philosophical systems as possible candidates for their efforts, but if those are found to be too easy, he directs them to an interesting list of theological topics where "to hit the mark is not useless, to miss it is not dangerous." That he puts the resurrection, the Judgment, reward and punishment, and the

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[21] I add the word "contemplative" to the translation to indicate that θεωρία is first of all about sight. It can be used to indicate a spectator at a game or just simply for "viewing, beholding." It is from the phenomenon of sight that an idea of contemplation comes, and the result of such contemplation can indeed be a "theory," the way the word has been taken into English. I agree with Wickham and Williams in their choice of "study" as indicating that such a practice in Gregory's usage does have content, but it is as much about memorizing ideas or forms as it is about inwardly appropriating them—an idea that "contemplative study" foregrounds.

[22] Norris, 96.

[23] This is an important phrase because it displays Gregory's goal of theology even as he accuses others of attempting to shortcut the process.

sufferings of Christ in this category speaks to the primary importance of the doctrine of God for Gregory over historical or soteriological concerns.[24]

To summarize this "plain sense" reading, Gregory views theology as first and foremost a deictic *praxis* of "loving the wisdom surrounding God" (τὸ περὶ θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν) that arises when one tested and grounded in "contemplative study" (θεωρία) engages an audience with a timely word that is "useful" (χρήσῐμος) for "the molding of others into holiness" (τοὺς ἄλλους [...] πλάττεις ἁγίους).

Oration 31—On the Holy Spirit

Taking for granted that deictic propriety has been established over the course of his first four orations, in his final sermon Gregory launches into a rhetorical movement consisting of a proposal followed by a defense, which in turn is re-figured by an argument from Scripture. It can be divided up into five segments: 1) 31.1-6: positive arguments for the Spirit by arguing from metaphysical consequences; 2) 31.7-12: answering objections to the first section; 3) 31.13-20: answering objections to the idea of Trinity in general; 4) 31.21-30: positive argument for the Spirit from Scripture; 5) 31.31-33: illustrations from nature of the Trinity. Unlike Orat. 27, which is short and dedicated to methodology, Orat. 31 is over twice as long[25] and actually performs the method described earlier, thereby necessitating a different approach to presenting a "plain sense" reading of this oration. Therefore, I will treat sections 1-3 as instantiating a mode of positive and negative argumentation that makes an initial bid to overturn the logical underpinnings of Gregory's opponents in treating metaphysical and practical problems, while section 4 (and to a lesser extent, section 5) introduces most clearly a reparative logic grounded in the logic he finds in Scripture.

In the first section (31.1-20), Gregory presents one form of his argument for the deity of the Spirit and then defends it against his opponents, both those who disagree with the deity of the Spirit in particular and those who dispute the notion of the Trinity in general. His positive argument can be graphed as follows. First, against those who disagree with the deity of the Spirit in principle, he identifies a basic deficiency in their approach when they "very eager[ly] to defend the letter" (31.3) in order to deny the Spirit's deity. In the face of this misguided desire, Gregory boldly applies a biblical expression indicating deity to all three persons, "He was the true light that lightens every man coming into the world," by adding "yes, the Father," "yes, the Son," and "yes, the Comforter" to the same expression in three repeated sentences.[26] He takes this proclamation of the Trinity as the meaning of Psalm 36: "In thy light we shall see light," where "[w]e receive the Son's light from the Father's light in the light of the Spirit" (31.3).

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[24] Norris takes this as a sign of a basic difference in theological orientation between East and West: "If nothing else, this present list—coupled with his concerns for the nature of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—points up a major difference between his assessment of the theologian's task and that of many Western theologians. Interest in the sufferings of Christ, in how reward and punishment as well as judgment form the coherent structure of Christian faith, is marked in the Latin West, but the Greek East has often not viewed them as central issues. Part of the reason for those differences may be Nazianzen's place as the Theologian, one of the three Hierarchs of Eastern Orthodoxy. As this section indicates he did not share Western concerns" (Ibid., 103).

[25] In *Sources Chrétiennes*, Orat. 31 takes up 66 pages while Orat. 27 comprises 28 pages.

[26] 31.3-4; cf. John 1:9.

Continuing his offensive, Gregory argues that if there was a time the Father did not exist, the same would be true for the Son and the Spirit who could not exist without the Father, for incomplete deity is not deity. Conversely, if the Spirit is not divine, then neither the Son nor the Father is divine. This premise firmly in place, he posits that God's holiness (which Gregory identifies with the person of the Holy Spirit) must have also always existed. Further, since it is the Spirit who is God's Holiness and He is the One who "makes me God" (ἐμὲ ποιεῖ Θεόν), such an activity of divinization can only occur if he "ranks" with God (31.4).

Gregory then turns his attention to two different groups of opponents: those who remain agnostic concerning the Spirit because Scripture "has given no clear revelation either way," and those who are "expert at measuring out Godhead" as they ascribe degrees of divinity to the Father, Son and Spirit (31.5). Gregory finds the former view "thoroughly pitiful" and the latter arrogant. Since the root of this confusion is a lack of being able to conceptualize the Spirit, Gregory adopts the standard binary Aristotelian substance/accident ontology in order to help clarify what the Spirit is for his audience. Against those who consider the Spirit to be an "activity" (ἐνέργεια), he says that an "activity" must be "put in operation," and the Scripture talks of the Spirit as an agent and not only as something acted upon (31.6). This leaves "substance" (οὐσία) as the only other option, of which there are two types: God or creature. Given that we "believe in him" and are "baptized in him," Gregory argues that He must be God (31.6).

Having finished the first stage of his affirmative case for the Spirit, Gregory refutes objections to his project based upon metaphysics and praxis. Given that there are at least ten different objections (depending on how they are counted) divided over two loose groupings of topics, for the sake of space I will present them in a numbered list with a statement of the objection followed by a brief summary of Gregory's response. Metaphysical objections are labeled with an "M," while those based upon praxis carry a "P."

1. Objections specific to Gregory's proposal in 31.1-6

    a. *Objection (M)*: "The Holy Spirit must either be ingenerate or begotten"[27] (31.7).

        i. *Answer*: There is no need to choose between these alternatives; there is a third way. Focusing on a name to describe the type of generation is to get lost in words and disregard the reality being described (31.7).

        ii. *Answer*: Choosing a third path dissolves the objection, and this third path is "procession" (31.8).

    b. *Objection (M)*: "In what particular way…does the Spirit fall short of being the Son?" (31.9)

        i. *Answer*: There is no deficiency, only a difference in relation that preserves the distinctiveness of the persons and the unity of the Godhead (31.9).

    c. *Objection (M)*: Two Gods from the same source must be God plus God (31.10).

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[27] The objection continues to deduce the problems with either alternative: that, if ingenerate, there are two beings like the Father, and if begotten, two Sons who are brothers.

        i. *Answer*: The nature of God is such that there is no such multiplicity, and this divine nature is beyond human comprehension because it has no natural analog (31.10-11).[28]

    d. *Objection (P)*: Are there any examples of Christians praying to or worshipping the Spirit? Where does Scripture authorize such a thing? (31.12).

        i. *Answer*: "[I]t is the Spirit in whom we worship and through whom we pray…Worshipping, then, and praying in the Spirit seem to me to be simply the Spirit presenting prayer and worship to himself" (31.12).

2. Objections to the Trinity in general—the "fundamental point" of the oration (31.13)

    a. *Objection (M)*: How can the use of "God" three times not mean three Gods? (31.13)

        i. *Answer*: For those who accept the deity of the Son, any argument they might use to deny ditheism can be used to deny tritheism (31.13).

        ii. *Answer*: "The Godhead exists undivided in separate beings" (31.14).[29]

    b. *Objection (M/P)*: Non-Christians hold to a single deity but have a plurality of gods (31.15).

        i. *Answer*: Non-Christians only hold to "a unity for speculative thought,"[30] not a real one, because their gods change and are composite (31.15).

        ii. *Answer*: The pagan "gods" stand self-condemned by their character; they have nothing to do with the Christian God (31.16).

    c. *Objection (M)*: "Things of one substance…are counted together." Since the deniers of deity claim different substances for the three, they do not violate this rule (31.17).

        i. *Answer*: This surrenders the Godhead entirely (31.17).

    d. *Objection (M)*: "Things of one substance…are counted together, but things not of one substance can only be indicated singly" (31.18).

        i. *Answer*: The rule is nonsense. Numbers do not apply to things as much as to the amount of things; things of different natures are counted together (31.18).

    e. *Objection (M)*: Things of the same substance that have nouns must be counted together like "three men, three gods" (31.19).

        i. *Answer*: The rule is arbitrary and does not accord with usage (31.19).

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[28] Gregory brings in an illustrative analogy where Adam, Eve, and Seth are all of the same substance but were generated differently.   However, this illustration carries with it its own problems and forces Gregory to defend it.

[29] "ἀμέριστος ἐν μεμερισμένοις...ἡ θεότης"

[30] "τὸ ἓν ἔχει μόνον ἐπινοίᾳ θεωρητόν"

      ii. *Answer*: If it were true, it cannot account for division of a group (31.20).[31]

  f. *Objection (M/P)*: The different prepositions used of the Father, Son, and Spirit indicate differences in deity. (cf. 31.20)

      i. *Answer*: The prepositions are used jointly of all three (31.20).

When seen from a pragmatic, performative viewpoint, Gregory's method up to this point has been simple. He presents his case (amounting to little more than a creative assertion) and then defends it in such a way as to restructure the rules of the debate, thereby destabilizing his opponents while gaining credence for his own position. This opening gambit clears rhetorical space for addressing what he had initially signaled is necessary: an argument based upon clear rules of reasoning that emerges out of the scriptural texts in order to counter the objection that the Spirit's deity is "not…in the Bible" (31.21). Slighting those who read Scripture in a "frivolous, cursory way," Gregory lauds the approach pursued by "a host of people who have discussed the subject" that is an action of "spreading open the letter and peering inside."[32] He intends to "summarize their views" and persuade his audience away from a sole reliance on their words by "a brief disquisition on things and names, with special reference to biblical usage" (31.21). That is, Gregory intends to inculcate rules, by means of explicit statement and later by means of performance, for reading the scriptural text properly so that Christian piety may be increased in the hearers.

The first set of rules serve as an aid to determine the metaphysical realism of various statements in the Bible. They can be listed as follows: 1) "Some things mentioned in the Bible are not factual;" 2) "some factual things are not mentioned;" 3) "some non-factual things receive no mention there;" and 4) "some things are both factual and mentioned" (31.22). While this framework seems obvious, it is an important reading tool that allows those who consider the text of Scripture to be sacred to accept the legitimacy of extra-biblical words and descriptors or to refigure difficult passages while maintaining the truthfulness of the biblical text. The various scriptural anthropomorphisms regarding God are examples of #1, while the non-scriptural yet true terms "ingenerate," "unoriginate," and "immortal" are examples of #2. Contradictions of what we know to be true of God such as "deity is evil" fall in #3, with #4 being obvious.

Returning to his initial comments in 31.3 and 31.21, Gregory pleads for his opponents not to be "so dreadfully servile to the letter" (31.24). The slavish attachment to the "syllables" over and against the "facts" or the "matter itself" (τὰ πράγματα) is like a person who refuses to

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[31] Taking the objection at face value, Gregory makes a *reduction ad absurdum* argument that if things of the same substance are added together, then things separated out must be of different substances. If you group things of the same substance together and then separate them out, by this rule "the identical things will have to be **both** of the same substance **and** of different substances." (31.20) It seems that at this point, Gregory is playing games to mock his opponents' use of logic.

[32] My translation of "διασχόντες τὸ γράμμα καὶ εἴσω παρακύψαντες" (31.21). The Wickham and Williams translation reads, "with penetration so that they saw inside the written text to its inner meaning." This reading loses the sense of opening up the letter such that its inner parts find a public demonstration. The point is that what is actually inside the text comes to light, and it does so by a type of reaching into the text—a diagramming, perhaps—that is blessedly revelatory.

acknowledge that "twice five" is ten (31.24). While some read this paragraph as Gregory opposing the "meanings" (τὰ νοούμενα) to "what is said" (τὰ λεγόμενα) or positing some type of hard disjunction between them,[33] this would be to misunderstand his point. Gregory is not saying that the words should be put aside in favor of the meanings, but that the meanings are apprehended *through* the medium of the words. There is a type of causal relation between what is said and the meanings called forth in the mind. The latter are what is important, "for the words of the one speaking are not more than the words of the one providing the logical grounds (συναναγκάζοντος) of the sayings" (31.24).[34] So while the meanings are prioritized over the words in significance, it is the words that are the essential starting point of the action of "providing the logical grounds" or "bringing together/compressing" what is meant. Gregory continues in the same vein: "I should not have been considering the things which were said *more than* the things which are apprehended by the mind (τὰ νοούμενα)."[35] Gregory's use of the νοούμενα cannot be understood to be a practice of speculative reasoning disconnected from the text itself (something which would render his closing argument entirely specious), but rather as a reasoning *through* the text to its underlying logical structure—the things "pressed together," "compressed" from Scripture. Gregory writes, "Thus, if I find some other reality apprehended by the mind (νοουμένων) not mentioned by Scripture or not clearly from Scripture, I should have fled to the signification (ἐκφώνησιν) while not fearing your quibble of names"[36] (31.24). Again, the νοούμενα of which Gregory speaks are identified with that which is "signified" or "sounded out from" (ἐκ-φώνησις) the text's underlying logic that encompasses the words themselves. In short, Gregory does not cast adrift the νοούμενα from the text, even as he recognizes that it is that which the words call forth in the mind that is crucial to understanding.

Recognizing that this concept is hard for his hearers (and opponents) to understand, Gregory creates a narratival context to situate his point regarding the relation of τὰ νοούμενα to τὰ λεγόμενα. He hypothesizes that there are three "shakings" of the earth where there were three changes by deletion (idols, sacrifices, ceremonial laws) and three by addition (revelation of Father, then Son, then Spirit). These "piecemeal additions" or "ascents" are according to the plan of God so that "the light of the Trinity should shine upon more illustrious souls" (31.26). It is

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[33] Norris writes, "The adversaries, both Eunomians and Pneumatomachians (the former here is the focus), are like Jewish literalists because they think the letter is the most important aspect of the text. They do not grasp that the fundamental meaning of any Biblical passage is the reality about which it speaks, τὰ νοούμενα, not the actual words in which it speaks, τὰ λεγόμενα" (Norris, 205). Here, Norris draws the line too hard between the reality underlying the words and the words themselves. The words provide the entrance into a dialog with that reality, a dialog that is always mediated by words such that the words retain their importance throughout.

[34] My translation. Συναναγκάζοντος literally means "pressing together" or "compressing." In this context, it appears to refer to the action of bringing together the meanings from the sayings scattered across Scripture and implicit within the logical flow of the texts. Therefore, "logical grounds," which I borrowed from Wickham and Williams, seems an appropriate translation.

[35] My translation of τὰ λεγόμενα μᾶλλον ἐσκόπουν ἢ τὰ νοούμενα. Wickham and Williams over-emphasize the contrastive sense of μᾶλλον when they translate it as "I should be considering meanings *rather than* words." If this were the case, then the words could be construed to be superfluous to the consideration, something Gregory is certainly not saying.

[36] My translation.

under this ongoing and direct oversight of God and according to an "order" (τάξιν) that the doctrine of God emerges gradually. For Gregory, Scripture directly witnesses this process when Jesus said that "we should be taught 'all things' by the Holy Spirit" (31.27), including his Godhead. This account functions to warrant his procedure of delving into the letter beyond its "plain sense," if you will, in order to lay bare the logic underneath. Said differently, if God has given us hints of what is now happening in our (Gregory's) time, we are obligated to seek out those hints however they might be found.

Breaking into doxological language before turning to particular scriptural texts, Gregory expresses his joy at being able to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he includes an argument closer to a statement of participative praise than a form of dialectic. He describes a "golden chain of salvation," which begins from the premise that the Spirit deifies in baptism and so is to be worshipped; and if worshipped, adored; and if adored, God, for "from the Spirit comes our rebirth, from rebirth comes a new creating, from new creating a recognition of him who effected it" (31.28). What is important to note here is that this "golden chain" only works in light of Orat. 27 where the audience, or the one "thinking-with" Gregory, is able to apprehend these matters because they are already participants in them. Without the deictic particularity of actual participation, Gregory's argument could not be fully appreciated.

Finally, Gregory turns to direct texts of Scripture—a "swarm of witnesses"[37]—to justify his claim. First, Gregory adduces the activity of the Spirit relative to the life of Christ as proof that the Spirit performs divine functions. Second, he appeals to the Spirit's titles used throughout Scripture as descriptive of what He effects as being solely in the provenance of the divine. Third, he applies descriptors such as "good" and "righteous" to the Spirit's nature rather than His function. Singling out the Spirit being fire (Acts 2:3-4; cf. Dt. 4:24), he claims this is proof of his "consubstantiality" (τοῦ ὁμουσίου) with God. The Spirit's utter and godly Holiness is witnessed by Ananias and Sapphira, as well as the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against Him. Working only with brief allusions, Gregory writes, "Yes, the titles are so many and so striking, what need have you of texts in full quotation?" (31.30). Yet all these "witnesses" to the Spirit's deity need to be understood within a Trinitarian framework, since "[i]t is equally irreligious to make [the Trinity] a combined personality, like Sabellius, as to disconnect them like the Arians" (31.30).

Before finishing his sermon, Gregory offers a series of illustrations, all of which fall short of adequately describing the Trinity. Anything else would be blasphemous because God is beyond our comprehension. Gregory closes with a recognition of his attempts to "express the reality" as being done with "images and shadows" (31.33). These point to but do not encompass what can be said of God, the reality which, once revealed, can only truly be safeguarded by accompanying the Spirit in walking through the world.[38]

I offer the following as a summary of this "plain sense" reading of Orat. 31: Assuming that the deictic conditions for theology laid out in Orat. 27 have been met, Gregory embarks on a project of defending the hypothesis of the deity of the Spirit by refiguring metaphysical and

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[37] My translation.

[38] "I resolved to keep close to the more truly religious view and rest content with few words, taking the Spirit as my guide and, in his company and in partnership with him, safeguarding to the end the genuine illumination I had received from him, as I strike out a path through this world" (31.33).

practical discourses through a logic attained by "spreading open the letter [of the scriptural texts] and peering inside" (διασχόντες τὸ γράμμα καὶ εἴσω παρακύψαντες). This procedure focuses upon the "things apprehended by the mind" (τὰ νοούμενα) through the "things which are said" (τὰ λεγόμενα), avoiding "speculative thought" (ἐπινοίᾳ θεωρητόν) and pushing toward rules of reading capable of maintaining metaphysical claims regarding the Trinity.

Depth (*Derash*) Reading of Or. 27 and 31

While the "plain sense" reading I have offered has tried to follow the wording and the course of Gregory's argumentation as closely as possible, I now intend to, in a sense, "read behind" what Gregory says in order to exhibit the logic by which he operates. While some will think that such an approach is speculative and unwarranted, it is only in the offering of new hypotheses that new lines of investigation arise, and this procedure of characterizing an author's logic (what is called a "depth" reading similar to Rabbinic *derash*) is an extraordinarily fruitful way of opening up new approaches. In fact, as I have already stated in my "plain sense" reading, it is exactly this procedure that I attribute to Gregory. Further, I do not intend my hypotheses to be only true for me[39] or to be somehow validated *a priori*;[40] rather, I offer them up for testing to a community of investigators who have sympathy for my approach and share some of my presuppositions—a community elsewhere described as "scriptural pragmatists."[41] This is not to say that other communities or investigators not a part of the community so described may not benefit from what I write; it is to say that I am less sure in what way they might appreciate or appropriate the insights offered. By way of a final preliminary comment, it may be obvious to say that my approach is open to critique and modification. However, by explicitly taking this stance I hope to inculcate in the reader a different way of reading what I write. Instead of viewing my inquiry as creating an immaculate theoretical structure and offering such a structure as if it sprung full-formed from the head of Zeus (or from my head), I want to invite the reader to participate in the process of investigating what it means to generate Christian doctrine. Even more, critique and modification are to be expected and are characteristic of fruitful discourse, similar to the way in which a scientific theory is continually critiqued and modified in order to make it conform more and more accurately to the phenomenon being investigated. If this article opens up just such a new path of inquiry, I consider it a success.

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[39] This would be a characteristically "relativistic" approach, where "truth" can exist for an individual or for a community and have no bearing on others. While I see my offerings as allowing multiple interpretations and avenues of investigation, I do see them as corresponding to a real, existent subject matter (perhaps one could say τὰ νοούμενα in combination with τὰ πράγματα).

[40] This would be characteristic of modernity, which tends to combine private opinions with a universal structure in order to justify claims based upon that structure as having universal application. I attempt no such thing.

[41] See Ochs, 286ff. Briefly stated, "scriptural pragmatists" are a subset of "theosemioticians" who believe that the graphing taking place in the interplay between musement and logic is itself governed by a "rule of compassion" and a "rule of faith" that arises within the specific practices of a community gathered around Scripture.

Oration 27—Theology as Spiritual and Deictic Habitus*: Gregory as Pragmatist*

Based upon my "plain sense" reading, I see Gregory as being engaged in a performative task: to shape his hearers such that they might become a good audience and, by means of this activity, to create the right occasion for a speech tailored to the level of his hearers. Read this way, he does not intend to merely expound upon the question of "how" theology is done in the abstract. Such an expository activity would be to engage in the "setting and solving of conundrums" (27.2) because it would remain at the level of hearing the words but not putting them into practice. It would be, according to Gregory, an activity that yields "no useful result" (27.1). Instead, Gregory seeks to *enact* theology *among* his gathered community *so that* they might be molded into Trinitarian Christians.

On the one hand, Gregory accomplishes this transformative activity through explicit statement of the rules of theological *praxis*, and diagramming these has been the burden of the "plain sense" reading above. On the other, he leaves implicit what it is that led him to propose this methodology in the first place and why he believes such a procedure is efficacious. This indicates that Gregory is already engaged in the process of making explicit the rules of reading implicit within his thinking; otherwise, he could simply have avoided having to write a methodological oration and proceeded directly to the issues at hand. The fact that he did see fit to begin with methodological concerns centered around deixis and the character of the theologian suggests that his thought may be amenable to comparison with contemporary pragmatic reading theories. Therefore, in order to understand the logic underlying his decision to advocate for these particular deictic categories (right theologian, right time, right audience, right subject matter), chosen to accomplish his purpose (to mold Christian thinkers and so Christian behavior), I draw upon standard pragmatic *topoi* as tools for clarification. To this end, I have identified six (sometimes multifaceted) areas of overlap within this oration alone. Due to the number of categories, I will only comment briefly on each while largely taking their status as pragmatic *topoi* for granted.[42]

First, underlying Gregory's oration is a recognition that godly discussion bears fruit in the practical life of the participants. He writes against those who only deal in words without a "useful result."[43] At the same time he claims that, given good soil, he expects his words to "bear fruit."[44] The type of fruit can be found a few paragraphs later when he describes Christian virtues and practices in 27.7. Implicit within this claim that words can (and should) be useful is a second claim, one which assumes that the ultimate interpretant of words are habits: that is, that words are only properly grasped when the way in which they would impact the world is both apprehended by the mind (which already entails a change in the real world, by the same logic) and also, when ethical and appropriate, put into action by the body in a habitual manner. Besides being implicit in Gregory's discourse, this secondary claim can be seen in the "plain sense" of

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[42] The type of pragmatism I have in mind is Peircean and Ochsian.

[43] "They delight in the 'profane and vain babblings and contradictions of the Knowledge falsely so-called,' and in 'strife of words' which lead to no useful result" (27.1).

[44] "[L]isten to me. You can lose nothing by it, in any case: either I shall speak 'to them that have ears to hear,' and my words will bear fruit and you will benefit (for, while he who sows the Word sows it in every kind of mind, it is only the good and productive kind which bears fruit)" (27.2).

the text when Gregory upbraids his opponents for not displaying "comparable energy in their actions."[45]

Second, Gregory is only interested in real theological problems that arise from Christian life and belief, not "paper problems" that existentially beset no one. He derides the "complete obsession" of his opponents in "setting and solving conundrums" that "compel applause,"[46] where "the great mystery of our faith is in danger of becoming a mere social accomplishment" (27.2). If his opponents want to display their intelligence, they should avoid theology and focus on well-worn philosophical questions or other harmless endeavors.[47] This category is connected with the first because it takes the word–habit connection for granted. Solving a real, felt problem in theological discourse will alleviate somebody's real-world concern and help them to approach the world differently. On the other hand, creating problems from whole cloth in order to solve them is only good for a diversion from the real world.

Third, Gregory's explicit recommendation of deictic categories touching upon the speaker, occasion, audience and subject matter displays its own series of logics. First among these is the idea that theology is not just contextual or merely intellectual, but that it is also a spiritual and practical exercise requiring a necessary *habitus* within the theologian. It requires "contemplative study" (θεωρία) in order to "love the wisdom surrounding God" (τὸ περὶ θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν) to "smoothe the theologian in us, like a statue, into beauty" (27.7). Without this prior formation, the necessary discursive framework will not be present to permit the theologian to hear the words of God and rightly grasp their meaning; the interpretant of that meaning is a habit, and that habit has to already be formed if a theologian is to teach. This prior formation occurs by exposure to the Word of Scripture grasped through contemplative *praxis*[48] within a community.[49]

Still within this third category, theology is a practice superintended by God and so requires the conditions that God desires for its performance. It must occur "free from the mire

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[45] "These people I speak of have versatile tongues, and are resourceful in attacking doctrines nobler and worthier than their own. I only wish they would display comparable energy in their actions: then they might be something more than mere verbal tricksters, grotesque and preposterous word-gamesters—their derisory antics invite derisive description" (27.1).

[46] "But in fact they have undermined every approach to true religion by their complete obsession with setting and solving conundrums. They are like the promoters of wrestling-bouts in the theaters, and not even the sort of bouts which are conducted in accordance with the rules of the sport and lead to the victory of one of the antagonists, but the sort which are stage-managed to give the uncritical spectators visual sensations and compel their applause" (27.2).

[47] "If, however, you reject these [traditional philosophic debates] as unworthy of your intellect, being petty and often refuted, and you wish to move in your own field, and fulfill your ambitions there: here also I will provide you with broad highways. Speculate about the Universe – or Universes, about Matter, the Soul, about Natures (good and evil) endowed with reason, about the Resurrection, the Judgment, Reward and Punishment, or about the Sufferings of Christ. In these questions to hit the mark is not useless, to miss it not dangerous" (27.10).

[48] Gregory's ascetic practices are well-known (see the sources cited above), and he frequently uses the word φἰλοσοφία as a holistic descriptor inclusively of both this way of life and the contemplations that are a part of it.

[49] The communal aspect will be made clear in the third section of this third category.

and noise without" in such a way that we can "actually 'be still' in order to know God."[50] Without the proper environment, the type of contemplation required—one aspect of which I will later compare with the term "musement"— cannot find a home because it will be driven out by the practical cares of life, some of which are most likely precisely the problem from the beginning. Remaining mired in the discourses of the everyday *when it is the everyday discourse that is the problem* cannot perform the reformation necessary to repair what went wrong. Rather, a stepping back, a new perspective, is required to evaluate what went wrong in the discourse so that it can be fixed. Being embodied creatures, this requires an environment conducive to such a practice.

Also within the category of deixis, theology is, in the first place, a communal endeavor.[51] The right audience is one for whom theology "is a serious undertaking" (27.3), who will exercise certain communal standards of behavior and communal understandings so that what is sacred does not become profane.[52] This implies that theology, even performed in the quiet of the study, is for a community who knows how to interpret it. It is not a private practice nor a private good, but rather it is performed for the community and a communal good. Private intuitions of truth gain standing by means of being tested within a community of discourse and by being adopted by that community as a communal standard. *A priori* and thus unverifiable presuppositions have no relevance to a community because of their private and inaccessible nature.

The final deictic category Gregory treats is the subject matter of theology in view of the occasion and the audience. For him, vagueness is inherent within theological *praxis*. In fact, the entire logic of a deictic practice entails vagueness in the subject matter because it can conform itself to the needs of a particular community at a particular time. Theology overflows the moment because not "all its aspects [are] open to inquiry"[53] even as it instantiates itself within a given moment, community, and theologian. It is even possible that what is affirmed in one moment may be contradicted in the next because the circumstances have changed, and what was once said is no longer appropriate.[54] Understood this way, theology has a plurality of possible meanings, even as it is exacting and singular in application.

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[50] "Now, I would add, is it for every occasion… What is the right time? Whenever we are free from the mire and noise without, and our commanding faculty is not confused by illusory, wandering images, leading us, as it were, to mix fine script with ugly scrawling, or sweet-smelling scent with slime. We need to actually 'be still' in order to know God, and when we receive the opportunity, 'to judge uprightly' in theology" (27.3).

[51] This is not to say that a theologian sitting alone cannot perform theology by writing. She can, and she does. Rather, it presumes a view of the Self such that the Self is always already constituted by communal relations, and that what is written is written for a community and comprehensible (and debatable) within that community.

[52] For example: "Let us be blind to our doings no longer, and let us not neglect the proprieties in these matters. If we cannot resolve our disputes outright, let us at least make this mutual concession, to utter spiritual truths with the restraint due to them, to discuss holy things in a holy manner, and not to broadcast to profane hearing what is not to be divulged…Let even our contentiousness be governed by rules" (27.5).

[53] "[N]either are all its aspects open to inquiry. It must be reserved for certain occasions, for certain audiences, and certain limits must be observed…What aspects of theology should be investigated, and to what limit? Only aspects within our grasp, and only to the limit of the experience and capacity of our audience…we too must guard against the danger that the toughness, so to speak, of our discourses may so oppress and overtax hearers as actually to impair the powers they had before" (27.3).

[54] One way to look at this is that neither the law of non-contradiction nor the excluded middle applies to theology so described.

Fourth, prior traditions and divergent methods of approaching truth are not to be rejected; rather, when they go awry, they are to be reformed. In 27.8, Gregory engages in a dialog with an imaginary interlocutor, the point of which is that there are many ways to live out the faith by practicing theology, as long as the effort required from performing theology (as described above) is kept in mind. What disqualifies a method or "road" is if it is conceived of as being for all people at all times on all subjects. Such an approach ignores the particularity inherent in theology and misconstrues the nature of its generality.[55] Even so, it is possible to reform this errant practice (even among the Eunomians) by adopting Gregory's rules for theology so that misconceptions of universality and particularity can be reformed. This leaves open a capacious space for theological reflection in many different ways.

Fifth, language has a semiotic character. While this point becomes clearer in Gregory's performance in Orat. 31, it is appropriate to mention it here because of Gregory's deictic focus. It is the rightly formed theologian in the proper context who is able to read the signs because she has been equipped with the skills to properly interpret them. This assumption has been present throughout the preceding discussion and needs to be made explicit here.

Sixth and finally, Orat. 27 can be understood to be an example of setting the conditions necessary to engage in the *praxis* of Peircean "musement."[56] While Peircean musement as a discursive practice is not to be simply equated with the *theoria* described by Gregory, which is a way of knowing that goes beyond the bounds of (mere) discourse, the two are related in that both seek the free play of the mind as a means to apprehend what is true and can be seen as different aspects of a broader process. I am using the term "musement" to capture both aspects. Viewing and practicing theology in the way Gregory describes results in a contemplation of the connections between various aspects of the scriptural text and pre-existing Christian practice in order to arrive at new ways of conceptualizing these relations.[57] Although Peirce describes the actual practice of musement as "play" and something not serious, while Gregory calls theology an affair only for the "serious," they are not speaking of the same aspect of musement. To be sure, musement only occurs when the conditions are right for the free play of the mind, but the purpose this free play serves can be quite serious—so serious that for Peirce, it proves the

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[55] It is not that all we have is particulars without universals; rather, it is that conceiving of a universal non-vaguely gets the nature of what is universal wrong.

[56] That Oration 28 describes the state of the semiotic religious muser is no accident when Gregory writes: "I was running with a mind to see God and so it was that I ascended the mount. I penetrated the cloud, became enclosed in it, detached from matter and material things and concentrated, so far as might be, in myself. But when I directed my gaze I scarcely saw the averted figure of God, and this whilst sheltering in the rock, God the word incarnate for us. Peering in I saw not the nature prime, self-apprehended (by 'self' I mean the Trinity), the nature as it abides within the first veil and is hidden by the Cherubim, but as it reaches us at its furthest remove from God, being, so far as I can understand, the grandeur, or as divine David calls it the 'majesty' inherent in the created things he has brought forth and governs. All these indications of himself which he has left behind him are God's 'averted figure.' They are, as it were, shadowy reflections of the Sun in water, reflections which display to eyes too weak, because to important to gaze at it, the Sun overmastering perception in the purity of its light" (28.3).

[57] Peirce describes musement as just such a contemplation of the relations between things: "The particular occupation [of musement]…may take the form…of considering some wonder in one of the Universes or some connection between two of the three, with speculation concerning its cause" (*The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings,* ed. The Peirce Edition Project [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998], 2:436. Henceforth EP.)

existence of God.[58] Likewise, the result of theological musement for Gregory is proposals that serve to heal problems that afflict the Christian community. The doctrine of the Trinity is just such a healing proposal.

In sum, in many ways Gregory's logic displays what we now call pragmatic tendencies, thereby authorizing me to read him as a pragmatist. In Orat. 27, Gregory's pragmatism is on full display as he attempts to create the proper conditions for the free play of the mind that may ultimately result in musement in the Peircean sense, wherein the play of possibilities encourages the creation of abductive hypotheses, of which the deity of the Spirit and the existence of the Trinity are two. The very next oration in the series (Orat. 28) carries the momentum forward as he describes "ascend[ing] the mount" to "enter the cloud and company with God" (28.2). This suggests that musement and divine revelation are ingredients within a single process for Gregory; the muser participates in the divine revealing and (a shielded[59]) communion with God in musement. Properly formed as a theologian, he sees the signs[60] and interprets them according to his *habitus* of contemplative study so that he might, in turn, form his audience so that they too might see the "averted figure of God" (28.3) through the signs of his speech and live accordingly. Finally, the theological discussion Gregory envisions in Orat. 27 comes as a result of a type of dialog between the problems of the day, the scriptural text (along with Christian practice), and the creative play found in musement. This conversation does not come to an end prior to its presentation, but is actually performed in the community through Gregory's theological orations. In this way, Orat. 27 is both a preparation for the musement of Orat. 28 and also an overview of how this theological conversation actually functions.

Oration 31—An Appeal for the Reality of Relations:[61] Gregory as Scriptural Pragmatist

While Orat. 27 was a preparation for and an overview of theological discussion (in the deictic and enacted sense indicated above) and Orat. 28 was an "ascent up the mount" to the exercise of musement, the remaining three orations (29-31) are a return to the plain sense in order to apply the possibilities realized in the practice of musement to the issues at hand.Prior to the doctrine of the Trinity, philosophical constructs were not capable of bearing the full weight of biblical revelation regarding the Father, Son and Spirit; nor were they able to account for the role assigned to each in Christian practice such as baptism. In order to repair this practical problem of thought and *praxis*,[62] Gregory joins the party that proposes a "new" conceptuality that at one and the same time departs from tradition (and so is progressive) and fulfills the (implicit) logic of the

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[58] See Peirce's essay "The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" for more information (EP 2:434-50).

[59] Gregory writes of seeing God while "sheltering in the rock" (28.3).

[60] Gregory refers to the "averted figure of God" and describes seeing "not the nature prime, self-apprehended…the nature as it abides within the first veil and is hidden by the Cherubim, but as it reaches us at its furthest remove from God, being, so far as I can understand, the grandeur, or as divine David calls it the 'majesty' inherent *in the created things he has brought forth and governs*" (28.3; emphasis mine). This is a recognition of seeing God *only through signs*, but through signs, *really seeing God*.

[61] I could use Peirce's term "Thirdness" here and say: "An Appeal for Thirdness."

[62] This is a very practical problem in that it affects many aspects of Christian life, such as the questions of how to pray, how to administer the Sacraments, how to proclaim the Gospel, etc.

tradition (and so is conservative).[63] *Gregory achieves this feat by reading rules realistically, as if they really do denote something real.* His arguments in Orat. 31 consistently exhibit this tendency,[64] which I contend springs from his mode of reading of Scripture. Therefore, I depart from the order in which Gregory forms his argument to start with his semiotic theory and treatment of Scripture in paragraphs 21-33, only to return to the first half of the oration later.

Gregory's semiotic theory finds expression in his insistence upon getting beyond the letter of Scripture or, as he colorfully puts it, "spreading open the letter and peering inside."[65] As I said in my "plain sense" reading, this is not a procedure that favors the meaning "rather than" or "instead of" the words on the page; it is one where the meaning is apprehended precisely *through* and *by means of* the word functioning semiotically. The word is a sign of an existent reality to an audience that is itself constructed along certain lines. But it is not only the reality which really exists; the relation between the elements is also conceived realistically. Said otherwise, this triadic relation between words, reality, and the semiotician is just as real as the thing signified. It can be worked upon, manipulated, changed into different forms—all of which are warranted by its very reality. Five plus five does equal ten (to the one capable of grasping these concepts), and ten really can be seen as the composite not just of five and five but also two and eight. In this way, an assertion includes within itself a really existing web of relations that can find expression in multitudinous (but not infinite) ways, because the triadic relation between the thing signified, the sign, and the interpreter really exists. Gregory relies upon this logical conception when he insists that he can "flee to the signification" (31.24) even if the words of Scripture do not say explicitly what he wants them to say. It is the thought they cause to arise in the mind (τὰ νοούμενα), existing within the relation itself, that is to be manipulated and apprehended, a thought that is irrevocably tied to this triadic relation of sign, object and interpreter.[66] Ten is not just five and five but also the square root of 100 and the log of 10,000,000,000; all really exist *as relational rules* within the concept "ten," depending upon who is interested in the sign "ten" and why. Gregory, then, is not just a pragmatist, but a semiotician, and a triadic one at that.

Gregory's semiotic is an expression of what he sees as a necessary way to read Scripture to account for both its words (τὰ λεγόμενα) and its subject matter (τὰ πράγματα, τὰ νοούμενα) in light of Christian practice. It functions as a rule for rules. The four rules of reading he offers[67] rely upon a triadic semiotic in that the words on the page must be interpreted differently given a prior understanding of what they say; this is triadic because it brings the role of the interpreter inside the semiotic process. For example, reading anthropomorphisms about God figuratively and, at the same time, understanding this figurative reading *to be that dictated by a proper*

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[63] This gives the adjective "new" a different tonality: what is proposed is both new in that it is a development of doctrine but also old in that it makes explicit what has been implicit all along.

[64] "Consistently" does not mean "always," however. I will point out one instance where a lack of imagination (or a different leading tendency) causes him to adopt a dyadic framework.

[65] "διασχόντες τὸ γράμμα καὶ εἴσω παρακύψαντες" (31.21).

[66] That Gregory sees knowledge, at least of God, as being irrevocably tied to seeing through signs is clear in what I quoted in a footnote above from Orat. 28 where God is only mediately apprehended, His Being itself remaining shielded from view.

[67] Outlined earlier in my "plain sense" reading of this oration.

reading of the text can only be justified if the reader is acknowledged to be part of the process of the creative transmission of meaning through signs. In this way, the figurative reading of Scripture[68] necessitates a semiotic theory capable of justifying the practice, and Gregory calls this apprehending the meaning through the words. The second rule regarding factual things "not mentioned" *but still implicit within Scripture*, like God being "immortal," requires this semiotic theory, too, in that it is the subject matter perceived by an interpreter through the signs that comes to light; this is the "spreading open the letter and peering inside."

After outlining his rules and so offering his semiotic as a rule for rules, Gregory takes a step back and actually performs his reading of Scripture and Christian practice, those things which gave rise to his rule for rules (his semiotic) in the first place. The "swarm of witnesses" he musters are all to be read as instantiations of a particular logic: that of real relations between relata. Said this way, I am actually combining what should be distinguished. Stated more exactly, Gregory first perceives the relation itself as a logical necessity, and second, he posits its reality as a metaphysical conclusion. That being the case, it is the prior existence of the relation that is perceived in the first place; this makes his transcendental deduction of its metaphysical reality itself a realist claim and not one that is merely treated "as if" it were real[69] or only "real for me (or my community)" without making a claim on others and their communities.[70] So when Gregory argues that the joint activity of the Spirit with the Son in performing divine functions (see 31.29) is proof of the Spirit's deity, he can do so because, to the Christian community, only God can do these activities. That is, the semiotic process performed in a Christian interpretive framework materially determines the reality of the metaphysical claims regarding the deity of God, but it does so only because this prior relation is held to be equally real.[71] Examples can be adduced throughout the scriptural proof of Gregory, but I will only mention one more— Gregory's appeal to the Spirit's role in baptism as proof of His deity.[72] Gregory argues that, in baptism, the Spirit deifies us even as He precedes the actual deification in baptism and follows after it (31.29).[73] Again, for Gregory, because the Spirit deifies us according to the Scriptures and does so in the communal practice of baptism (even being involved before and after), within a Christian framework this is tantamount to recognizing the deity of the Spirit. This is the case because, according to the logic of the dynamic structure of a Christian semiotic framework and in its active instantiation, the metaphysically realistic claim that the Spirit is God can be made in view of the reality of the framework itself. Metaphysics rests upon logic, and not just any logic for Gregory when it comes to the things of God; it rests upon the logic of Scripture as read by the

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[68] Per Gregory's first rule that "some things mentioned in the Bible are not factual" (31.22).

[69] Some claim that Hans Frei's approach to history-like narratives and various tendencies in George Lindbeck open both of them up to the charge that they only treat the stories "as if" they were true without making a judgment as to their truth. Such an acting "as if" something were true is not going on here. For Gregory, it is not that he acts "as if" God is Trinity; God is the Trinity, and so he acts accordingly.

[70] I have already mentioned that I do not see Gregory as a type of relativist.

[71] Gregory would also see it as being superintended by God, but this begins to go further afield than I desire at this point in the discussion.

[72] I choose this example because it combines both a scriptural element and an element of Christian practice.

[73] Earlier, Gregory uses the activity of the Spirit in deifying us in baptism (see 31.4, 28).

practices (habits)[74] of the Christian community. The reality of these habits and their consequences is part and parcel of his semiotic system.

Gregory's semiotic triadicity spills over into the first section of Orat. 31. Only briefly railing against those who are "very eager to defend the letter" (31.3) in order to save this argument for later, Gregory makes a statement that can be read as programmatic for the semiotic understanding he performs later: "we receive the Son's light from the Father's light in the light of the Spirit" (31.3). This triadic relation of receiving the Son's light as a sign of the Father's in the context of the Spirit's light mirrors the sign-signified-interpreter relation described earlier. This is itself a metaphysical deduction from the logic Gregory finds in Scripture, and so it is both a realistic and an interpretive claim: *realistic* in that it is based upon something truly "out there" in the world, and *interpretive* in that its recognition depends upon the performance of a particular type of inquiry. An implication of this is that Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity (as seen through his discussion of the deity of the Spirit) is not just a realistic claim about the nature of God but also a claim about Christian reading practices. To read in a Christian manner is to read triadically—through the Trinity where both the persons themselves *and their relation* are viewed realistically[75]—thereby legitimating multitudinous reading practices, including spiritual, allegorical, analogical, and otherwise figural interpretations. Reading practices such as these, then, not only give rise to the expression of the doctrine of the Trinity but also push their warrant back into the being of God Himself. To read in this manner is to read with God, to participate in God's own creative movement toward the world. It is creative because in the opening up of new possibilities of thought, new modes of being-in-the-world find expression and so change the world itself.

The doctrine of the Trinity, read as a rule for reading Scripture and Christian life, enables Gregory to refigure his philosophical inheritance as well. In replying to the objections of his opponents, Gregory with great frequency appeals to categories not present in his contemporary discourses, thereby reforming those discourses. For example, when faced with the choice between the Spirit being "ingenerate or begotten," Gregory chooses a third way that dissolves the binary choice being foisted upon him: that of procession (31.7). Likewise, when pressed that the Spirit must therefore be deficient relative to the Son, he disputes this conclusion as unnecessary (31.9); or when confronted by the claim that this must be "God plus God," Gregory again denies such a type of multiplicity in the divine nature even if such a vision is beyond human comprehension (31.10-11). Except for one instance when Gregory decides to leave the substance/accident dualistic ontology of Aristotle in place,[76] he regularly acts like a doctor,

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[74] These can be understood to be liturgical practices but need not be so narrowly defined. Characteristic modes of interaction with the non-Christian community (including such things as service to the neighbor and peaceful yet firm confession of faith in the face of persecution) and ascetic practice could also be included among the Christian practice Gregory has in mind. In fact, Gregory's life testifies to the overlap between contemplative asceticism and theological reflection.

[75] Understanding that Gregory considers the relata and the relation itself as both equally real is crucial to understanding Gregory's semiotics. Otherwise, what we would be left with is simple arithmetic triadicity— something quite foreign to Gregory's thought.

[76] This is the inconsistency in Gregory's thought that I mentioned earlier. It could be a simple mistake in desiring to use a pre-existent mode of discourse "as is" in order to communicate with his audience, or it could be a symptom of a hitherto unidentified leading tendency. I tend toward the former, perhaps because I do not have "eyes to see and ears to hear" the latter.

healing the wounds of discourses incapable of serving the purpose for which they were intended, not killing the patient but rather restoring him to health. This health comes by a development that sees the reality of triadic relations which, in turn, extend and rejuvenate the old discourses in new directions while making sure that it is, in fact, the previous discourses that are extended and rejuvenated.

Conclusions (Or, Better, "Openings for Further Study")

In my introduction, I offered as a "tentative" and "heuristic" thesis that "Gregory pragmatically develops the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to the deity of the Spirit by diagramming the logic of the 'plain sense' of Scripture and of the life of the Christian community, and then making a type of transcendental deduction regarding the metaphysical nature of God that would legitimate the logics so diagrammed." I believe that the foregoing discussion has borne out both the substance of the thesis and its use. Substance *and* use are important here. The substance of the thesis provided a guide for me to follow in the discussion. That I offered and explicitly considered it "tentative" and "heuristic" enabled an even more important phenomenon—it functioned to open up new lines of inquiry not confined to the thesis itself. In this sense, the investigation was not principally about proving my thesis correct; it was more about following a train of thought put into motion by Gregory, and this train has proven to be quite fruitful.

First, the discussion has suggested that doctrine is generated in the Christian church in a way that respects the letter of Scripture even as it transcends it. This is to say nothing else than that advances in doctrine need to be conceived within a triadic semiotic framework. Communal practices (habits) are inherent within interpretation and perform a determinative function within the dynamic interplay of sign-object-interpretant, even as the other two poles (sign and object) function determinatively to modify those practices at one and the same time. This entails understanding that doctrinal creation addresses real-world needs of the community (interpretant) and is not about an artificial construction of self-justifying systems of thought which are ultimately useless, but which hold aesthetic appeal to those so inclined but ultimately.[77]   For doctrine to develop, there needs to be a felt need or problem, something that has gone wrong in practice or habit that calls out for repair.

Moreover, Gregory gives us guidance as to how this may take place. He engages in a type of dialog between what happens when he "ascend[s] the mount" (28.2) and then returns to the plain. There is a constant conversation between the possible and the actual, what can be envisioned and what really heals. Noting the deixis of the community and performing theology within and for that community, theology can be conceived as this dialog where revelatory free play of the mind rejuvenates the everyday by suggesting new ways of conceiving current

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[77] I take this to be the lesson of Louis Borges' 1941 short story, "The Library of Babel," especially as found in the interplay between the final two paragraphs. The appeal of creating a humanly-comprehensible and contrived "order" out of "disorder" is a constant siren song, luring theologians toward a never-realized goal in such a way that their labors remain disconnected from the life of the community. Borges well describes this in calling the library itself: "illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret" (In *Ficciones,* ed. Anthony Kerrigan [New York: Gold Press, 1994]).

communal practices. This, too, is semiotically conditioned in that, for this to be a Christian practice, the means for renewal come from a focus upon the scriptural texts and the foundational practices of the Christian community. It is by reading *through* these, by inhabiting them (not by casting them aside or seeking elsewhere for enlightenment) that the revelation to which they bear witness becomes incarnate among us in new, surprising, and faithful ways.[78] This is not to say that philosophy or theology must be set aside in favor of contemplating Scripture and practice alone. Rather, they provide the *matériel* necessary to begin the process, and it is for the sake of their reformation that the dialog between musement and everyday logics occurs. Yet, in a scriptural tradition like Christianity and exemplified in the practice of Gregory, the source of the reformation arises from the locations where God is recognized as being active: Scripture and foundational church practices.

The doctrine of the Trinity in particular, as handled by Gregory, is both a result of pragmatic development and also, by making explicit the metaphysical foundations of Christian logic regarding God, a strong warrant for the re-performance of the process in Christian thought. I say "strong" warrant because it pushes this scriptural reading practice back into the being of God Himself. It is to see God indwell His revelation and life amongst us triadically, constituted by really existent relations such that to read with the Triune God is to read these "texts" triadically—i.e., to read through them in a community in order to commune with God. The doctrine of the Trinity, so conceived, insists that to do so is to live with God and to even participate in God's act of world-creation. The result of musement upon the text in order to repair real-world problems recreates the world by fixing the problem and opening new ways of life. The doctrine of the Trinity, as a metaphysically realistic statement, implicitly contains the logic of redemption and re-creation.

As the final consequence I note here, the doctrine of the Trinity underwrites figural readings of Scripture. If the doctrine of the Trinity is produced by a triadic semiotic process of reading through the letter instead of merely remaining on the face of it (the "literal" or "plain" sense), then it authorizes readings that respect and use the "plain sense" (*peshat*) while making imaginative interpretations of it (*derash*). After the suggestions found in the previous paragraph, this may seem like a trivial observation. However, reading practices led to the statement of the doctrine itself; reading practices created a thought-world conducive to a logic of redemption and repair; and reading practices changed the way life before God is conceived and so changed the world. Authorizing (or perhaps even necessitating) a non-literal set of reading practices opens up the possibility of transcending the problems of everyday logics, allowing them to be redeemed. To be restricted to the "literal" or "plain sense" is to simply repeat the problem; to search beyond it for repair is to redeem it. And so to redeem the world.

Gregory of Nazianzus' theological orations suggest that we can read him as a scriptural pragmatist. His own enactment of doctrinal generation provides guidance for us today regarding how we can approach new theological proposals. More than this, however, I hope to have shown how reading Gregory himself pragmatically opens many avenues for thought that were not apparent before, giving insight into the nature of the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of God,

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[78] It should be noted that this "new, surprising, and faithful" incarnation of revelation speaks the divine "No!" as well as God's "Yes!" It both kills and makes alive. Better said, it kills in order to make alive; redemption comes through death.

and the nature of reading. Like I said in the introduction, this article is an exercise in the logic of abduction, where I raise hypotheses only to trace some of their consequences. Each new hypothesis requires testing, so the claims of the article are far from being verified. Without an exercise similar to this one, however, no new hypotheses would be offered, leaving nothing to test and no new directions to be mapped. That each hypothesis may (or, as is more likely, will) require modification is to be expected, for, like Gregory, I see theology as a communal endeavor that converges upon the truth of the matter. This convergence requires the input and correction of the community in order for it to occur.