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Author(s): Verna E. F. Harrison

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MALE AND FEMALE IN CAPPADOCIAN THEOLOGY¹

'Go forth daughters of Sion', the Hebrew poet sings, 'and behold king Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.'² Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on this biblical love poem, the Song of Songs, is surely among his greatest works. For him the royal bridegroom is Christ and his bride is the Christian soul growing in spiritual perfection. The poet shows the groom crowned by his mother in accordance with an ancient marriage ceremony, but in Gregory's view the inspired text is naming somebody as mother of the eternal Son of God. The *Commentary* explains this figure not as Mary but as God the Father:

No one can adequately grasp the terms pertaining to God. For example, 'mother' is mentioned in place of 'father'. Both terms mean the same, because the divine is neither male nor female (for how could such a thing be contemplated in the divinity, when it does not remain intact permanently for us human beings either? But when all shall become one in Christ, we will be divested of the signs of this distinction together with the whole of the old man). Therefore, every name found [in Scripture] is equally able to indicate the ineffable nature, since the meaning of the undefiled nature is contaminated by neither female nor male.³

Gregory argues that there is no gender in the eternal Godhead since even within the human condition gender is something temporary. Underlying this statement is his interpretation of the 'image of God' (Gen. 1: 27) as meaning that the divine and human natures have the same attributes though the substrata in which these attributes occur are radically different.⁴ Thus God and human persons are ontologically linked and their authentic properties can be correlated with each other.

Two other texts in the same commentary identify the bride's mother as the creator God, since 'all things have, as it were, one mother, the cause of their being' (μία μὲν πᾶσιν ἔστι τοῖς οὐδῶσιν οἷόν τις μήτηρ ἢ τῶν ὄντων αἰτία), elsewhere named as 'the first

¹ A shorter version of this paper was read at the Annual Convention of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago, 19–22 November, 1988. I am thankful to Karen Torjesen, Barbara Newman, J. Rebecca Lyman, and Bishop Kallistos Ware for suggestions that have improved this study; however, any errors it contains are my own.

² *Cant.* 3: 11.

³ *In Cant.* 7, Werner Jaeger, (ed.) *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (Leiden, 1960–) 6. 212–13 (henceforth cited as GNO).

⁴ *De opif. hom.*, 16, PG 44. 184D.

cause of our existence' (τὴν πρώτην τῆς συστάσεως ἡμῶν αἰτίαν).⁵ Kerstin Bjerre-Aspegren observes that this concept appears unprecedented in philosophical and gnostic sources, where the female is often equated with matter or chaos and is not the active and creative first principle. Likewise, in Greek physiology, female seed is not regarded as a source of the child's life.⁶ Bjerre-Aspegren's suggestion that Gregory's source is Isa. 49: 15 appears to look too far afield for an explanation. The more obvious interpretation is to read these texts in light of the passage cited above from the same commentary, which equates divine fatherhood with motherhood because God transcends gender.⁷

That text's assertion that gender is transitory within humanity is based on Gal. 3: 28, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' For Gregory, this state of unity in Christ, in which the distinction between male and female no longer exists, is an eschatological reality that is fully realized only after the resurrection. Scholars have discussed this aspect of Gregory's theology extensively and are in fundamental agreement regarding its essential features.⁸ However, the extent to which his views about gender are shared by his colleagues Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nazianzen and rooted within the overall context of Cappadocian theology and spirituality appears to be less well

⁵ GNO 6. 56 and 183.

⁶ Kerstin Bjerre-Aspegren, *Brautigam, Sonne und Mutter. Studien zu einigen Gottesmetaphern bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Lund, 1977), pp. 171–92. A striking contrast to the usual Greek biological understanding of female seed occurs in Gregory Nazianzen, *Carm.* 1. 2. 14, vv. 33–6, PG 37. 758, where the poet, anticipating modern scientific discoveries, identifies himself as from the seed of both his parents. See Heinz Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz* (Münster, 1972), pp. 98–9. This accords with the evidence we will study later in indicating that Nazianzen's view of women is very close to Nyssen's.

⁷ Martien Parmentier, 'St. Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', *Εκκλησιαστικός Φῶρος*, lviii (1976), 41–100, 387–444; lix (1977), 323–429; lx (1978), 697–730, argues, particularly in the last instalment, that Gregory sees the Holy Spirit as in some sense a female principle. I find this unconvincing, especially since he relies upon *In Cant.*, 7, GNO 6. 212–13, and claims that it refers to the third person of the Trinity rather than the first.

⁸ Among the more useful studies of Gregory's anthropology are Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1954), pp. 48–60; J. T. Muckle, 'The Doctrine of St. Gregory of Nyssa on Man as the Image of God', *Mediaeval Studies* vii (1945), 55–84; R. Leys, *L'image de Dieu chez saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris, 1951); G. B. Ladner, 'The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* xii (1958), 58–94; Monique Alexandre, 'Protologie et eschatologie chez Grégoire de Nysse', in U. Bianchi and H. Crouzel, (eds.), *Arche e telos* (Milan, 1981), pp. 122–69; and Paola Pisi, *Genesis e phthora* (Rome, 1981).

known. Accordingly, this paper will explore how the two other Cappadocians understand male and female and then look at how Gregory of Nyssa builds on what they say.

I. BASIL'S WOMEN TEACHERS

Two strong women were major influences in Basil's spiritual development, so that from childhood he had experience of exemplary female conduct that transcended the functions of subservient domesticity and child-rearing to which women were usually confined in his social context.⁹ The first, an influential disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus, the apostle of Cappadocia, was his grandmother, Macrina the Elder. She courageously confessed the faith in a time of persecution¹⁰ and preserved and passed on to her family the revered missionary's teachings. When Basil writes to the people of her home town, Neo-Caesarea, to defend himself against charges of heresy, he recalls her instruction as the standard to which he remains faithful:

What clearer proof of our faith could there be than that we were brought up by our grandmother, a blessed woman, who came from among you? I am speaking of the illustrious Macrina, by whom we were taught the words of the most blessed Gregory, which, having been preserved until her time by uninterrupted tradition, she also guarded, and she formed and molded me, still a child, to the doctrines of piety.¹¹

Basil saw himself as having received the orthodox faith through an apostolic succession of saints,¹² and his grandmother was the final link that connected him directly to this chain of teachers.

⁹ On the social milieu of the Cappadocian fathers, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), pp. 285–304. For an overview of Basil's life, see Paul Fedwick, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea* (Toronto, 1979).

¹⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Macrinae*, GNO 8. 1. 371.

¹¹ *Ep.* 204, Yves Courtonne (ed.), *Saint Basile. Lettres*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1957–66), 2. 178; A. C. Way (trans.), *St. Basil. Letters*, 2 vols, Fathers of the Church 13 and 28 (New York, 1951 and 1955), 2. 76.

¹² For the idea of an apostolic succession of saints, I am indebted to Kallistos Ware, 'The Spiritual Father in St. John Climacus and St. Symeon the New Theologian', *Studia Patristica*, xviii, forthcoming. He says that the continued life of the Church depends on both a visible succession of bishops who pass on authentic teaching and sacramental practice and a less visible succession of saints who pass on authentic spirituality. One implication of this concept is that all the faithful, including women like Macrina the Elder, are at least potentially involved in the process of enabling life in Christ to persist and grow throughout successive human generations. Moreover, she transmitted orthodox doctrine as well as spirituality; she was the teacher standing between two great teaching bishops, Gregory the Wonderworker and Basil of Caesarea. This illustrates one way in which the two forms of apostolic succession can be mutually dependent.

In another letter, he says he has preserved the same understanding of God he received from his mother and grandmother, not replacing one doctrine with another but completing what they passed on to him as he has matured through progressive stages. Thus he sees his knowledge as having grown like a seedling that becomes a large plant yet retains its original identity.¹³ Here again, he emphasizes Macrina the Elder's formative work in teaching him the faith and adds that his mother, Emmelia, also shared in this crucial task.

After excelling in the study of rhetoric, Basil turned away from the brilliant career awaiting him as an orator and dedicated himself to God as a monk. The decisive influence at this crucial turning point in his life came from his older sister, Macrina the Younger, who had steadfastly refused marriage and led their mother into ascetic life.¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa describes how his brother's conversion took place:

The distinguished Basil came home from school where he had had practice in rhetoric for a long time. He was excessively puffed up by his rhetorical abilities and disdainful of all great reputations, and considered himself better than the leading men in the district, but Macrina took him over and lured him so quickly to the goal of asceticism that he withdrew from the worldly show and began to look down upon acclaim through oratory and went over to this life full of labors for one's own hand to perform, providing for himself, through his complete poverty, a mode of living that would, without impediment, lead to virtue.¹⁵

A withdrawal from social and family obligations, a renunciation of fame, a deliberate choice of poverty and manual labour—here the life-style and values traditional in Basil's class are radically overturned and replaced with those of Christian asceticism, which was then becoming a large-scale movement throughout the Roman world. Fourth-century ascetics sought to create a new kind of society faithful to the Gospel teachings and anticipating as closely as possible the mode of existence expected in the Lord's coming kingdom. Basil became a leading organizer of this new society in

¹³ *Ep.* 223, Courtonne 3. 12–14.

¹⁴ On Macrina the Younger, see Patricia Wilson-Kastner, 'Macrina: Virgin and Teacher', *Andrews University Seminary Studies* xvii (1979), 105–17; Elena Gianarelli, *La tipologia femminile nella biografia e nell'autobiografia cristiana del IV secolo* (Rome, 1980), pp. 29–47; Umberto Mattioli, 'Macrina e Monica. Temi del βίος cristiano in due "vite" di donna del IV secolo', in P. Serra Zanetti (ed.), *In verbis verum amare* (Florence, 1980), pp. 165–203; and Ruth Albrecht, *Das Leben der heiligen Makrina auf dem Hintergrund der Thekla-Traditionen* (Göttingen, 1986).

¹⁵ *De vita Macrinae*, GNO 8. 1. 377; V. W. Callahan (trans.), *Saint Gregory of Nyssa. Ascetical Works*, Fathers of the Church 58 (Washington, D.C., 1967), pp. 167–8.

Cappadocia, but he was inducted into it by his sister Macrina, who thus appears to be the true founder of what is sometimes called 'Basilian' monasticism.¹⁶

The ascetic vision of human existence, values and destiny emerged as central to Basil's theology and ethics, and the two Gregories followed him in this. In the fourth-century social context, this alternative society was radical in many ways, as we have seen. Its models for communal life were the hosts of angels united in love and service to God, and Paradise before the fall, where humans lived as their Creator intended.¹⁷ These ideal points of reference enabled a searching critique of existing social norms including the contrasting patterns of life expected of males and females. Among Basil's ascetics, the activities and goals of both genders were the same, though they generally lived separately so as to guard chastity.¹⁸ The bishop of Caesarea says that as ascetics women as well as men are called to be soldiers fighting for God against evil.¹⁹ In this he echoes many other Christian writers who, beginning in the second century, depict women martyrs and ascetics as soldiers and athletes.²⁰ This dimension of Christian spirituality opened to women a self-concept and a whole range of virtues that were otherwise largely closed to them in fourth-century Graeco-Roman culture. They were enabled to emerge from their narrow 'feminine' context of domestic service and child-rearing and pursue values that characterize the human as such, including 'male' and 'military' values like courage, whose Greek name is 'manliness' (ἀνδρεία). Among the teachers and role models from whom Basil received these values, two of the most important were women, his grandmother and his sister. He says he

¹⁶ Marcella Forlin Patrucco, 'Aspetti di vita familiare nel IV secolo negli scritti dei Padri Cappadoci', in R. Cantalamessa (ed.), *Etica sessuale e matrimonio nel cristianesimo delle origini* (Milan, 1976), pp. 158–79, suggests that during the fourth century, aristocratic women in both East and West played a leading role in converting their families to Christian faith and/or asceticism. She indicates that the two Macrinas and Nazianzen's mother Nonna, discussed below, are important examples yet take part in a broader phenomenon.

¹⁷ See Suso Frank, 'ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ: *Begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum 'engelgleichen Leben' im frühen Mönchtum* (Münster, 1964) and Peter Brown, 'The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church', in B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, and J. Leclercq (eds.), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York, 1985), pp. 427–43.

¹⁸ *Ep.* 207, Courtonne 2. 185–6.

¹⁹ *Introduction to the Ascetic Life*, PG 31. 625A.

²⁰ See Giannarelli, *Tipologia femminile*, pp. 9–28, and Umberto Mattioli, 'Ἄσθεύετα ε ἀνδρεία' (Parma, 1983), pp. 87–161. Mattioli shows how the Christian concept of woman as soldier and athlete has an important precursor and parallel in the Graeco-Roman idea of woman as philosopher.

knows that both men and women have achieved spiritual perfection by the grace of Christ.²¹ Thus his belief that women and men have the same fundamental vocation and potential for human excellence is based on personal experience and acquaintance as well as theological conviction.

II. GENDER AND HUMAN ONTOLOGY

For the bishop of Caesarea, what men and women ought to do follows from what they are as human; they have the same vocation because they have the same nature. In the *Homily on the Martyr Julitta*, Basil makes this point in a particularly striking way. He begins by expressing wonder at the most manly (ἀνδρειοτάτην) struggle of this blessed woman and adds:

if indeed it is fitting to call woman one who overshadowed by the great nature of her soul the weakness of female nature (εἴπερ δὴ γυναῖκα προσαγορεύειν εὐπρεπὲς τὴν τῷ μεγαλοφουεῖ τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς γυναικειᾶς φύσεως τὴν ἀσθένειαν ἀποκρύψασαν).

He marvels that the might of the devil was defeated by the female virtue of one who was 'manlier than [her] nature' (ἀνδρειοτέραν τῆς φύσεως).²² This passage echoes the cultural stereotypes of the female as weak and virtue as male and confronts them with the counterexample of the martyr Julitta, who is evidently filled with strength, courage, and goodness.

This kind of language, which points to the idea of women being or becoming male, has a long history in Greek philosophy and in orthodox and heterodox Christian sources.²³ Moreover, the other two Cappadocians also employ such concepts on occasion. Gregory Nazianzen says that his mother Nonna displayed 'in female form the assertiveness (θυμόν) of a man'.²⁴ In a text that closely parallels Basil's homily, Gregory of Nyssa says he does not know if it is fitting to call his sister Macrina a woman, naming her for female nature when she came to be above nature (οὐκ οἶδα γὰρ εἰ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἐκ τῆς φύσεως αὐτὴν ὀνομάζειν τὴν ἄνω γενομένην τῆς φύσεως).²⁵ Elsewhere, he says we can choose between a female birth into a life of materiality and passion and a male birth into a life of virtue.²⁶ He indicates that both options are available

²¹ *Shorter Rules* 309, PG 31. 1304A.

²² PG 31. 237A-C.

²³ See Giannarelli, *Tipologia femminile*, pp. 9-28; Mattioli, 'Ἀσθένεια ε ἀνδρεία', pp. 87-161; id. 'Donna nel pensiero patristico', and especially Kari Vogt, "'Männlichwerden'"—Aspekte einer urchristlichen Anthropologie', *Concilium* (Mainz) xxi (1985), 434-42.

²⁴ *De vita sua*, l. 60, Jungck, p. 56. Cf. *De rebus suis*, *Carm.* 2. 1. 1. 119, PG 37. 979; *Carm.* 1. 2. 1, PG 37. 1469.

²⁵ *De vita Macrinae*, GNO 8. 1. 371.

²⁶ *De vita Moysis*, GNO 7. 1. 33-4.

to human beings as such, so presumably men can become 'female' just as women can become 'male'. Clearly, this gender language is not meant literally but represents aspects of the human condition that every person shares. As Kari Vogt says in an excellent article,²⁷ 'maleness' in this context is actually a stage in the growth of *human* perfection as such, as are likeness to the angels and θεώσις. It is equivalent to virtue, philosophy or dispassion, which women like Julitta can achieve and which many men fail to reach.

Moreover, Elizabeth Clark has shown how patristic language that speaks of exemplary women as somehow male needs to be understood in its social as well as its philosophical context. She suggests that in making such remarks, men are affirming the full humanity of women they admire in the best way their androcentric culture allows; they are indicating the absence of certain allegedly female vices and the presence of certain allegedly male virtues, not the dehumanizing sacrifice of specifically feminine virtues. They may also be suggesting achievements beyond the narrow womanly sphere of domesticity and child-rearing.²⁸ Thus the language of women 'becoming male' is a way of transcending culturally entrenched misogyny, not a reaffirmation of it.

We have seen how Basil calls his culture's anthropological assumptions about female 'weakness' into question by contrasting them with Julitta's strength. He goes on to propose an alternative theological anthropology, placing the answer to his implicit query in the martyr's own mouth. In this extraordinary passage, he represents some women present at her execution as encouraging her not to become soft or effeminate toward the labours on behalf of piety and not to use nature's weakness as an excuse for fleeing the struggle. Julitta replies to them as follows, explaining the ontological foundation of her own conduct:

'I am from the same lump (φυράματος)', she says, 'as men. We have been made according to the image of God, as they also are. By creation, the female, with the same honour as the male, has become capable of virtue. And for what are we of the same race (συγγενεῖς) as men in all things? For

²⁷ Art. cit.

²⁸ See Elizabeth Clark, 'Devil's Gateway and Bride of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World', in E. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1986), p. 43. Significantly, though Clark speaks only of how men saw ascetic women as transcending 'female' weaknesses and thus 'becoming male', Gregory Nazianzen, in a text cited above, applies this kind of language to a married woman, Nonna. This shows that he envisages the possibility of fully human achievements and moral stature for women within the more socially constrained context of marriage as well as in the freer alternative society of the ascetical movement. For him, the new, higher status that Clark describes is available to all Christian women, not only nuns. See below for more on his view of marriage.

not only flesh was taken for the fashioning of woman, but also bones from bones. So in solidity and tautness and ability to endure, we are equal to men, and this is owed by us to the Master'. Saying these things, she advanced toward the fire.²⁹

Notice how the second biblical account of woman's creation, Gen. 2: 21–3, is interpreted here. Basil sees her creation from man as making her not inferior to him but equal and consubstantial. Although the bishop of Caesarea does not compare this situation to the Son's relationship with the Father in the Trinity, as originating from him and therefore of the same substance, attributes and honour, such an analogy appears appropriate. Later, we will see how Gregory of Nyssa handles the exegesis of Gen. 3 in a similar way. However, it is clear from our text that Basil sees the divine image of Gen. 1: 26–7 as definitive of human nature, and he understands Gen. 2 in light of it.

One may wonder, though, whether this equality only applies to exceptional women like Julitta, who thus appears as 'manly', in contrast to ordinary 'weak' females. Our homily rules out this explanation by concluding with a moral lesson that is intended for everybody. Basil says that men should recognize women as their spiritual equals and women should follow Julitta's example: 'Men, do not accept that women be seen as inferior in regard to piety. Women, do not fall short of the pattern, but hold to piety without evasion. Accept trial by work, so that inferiority of nature in no way hinders you from good things.'³⁰ Thus, the 'manly' woman should provide the rule that other women follow and not be only an exception set apart from the weak nature of her more ordinary sisters. With this conclusion, the culture's traditional female anthropology, as described in the gender contrasts at the beginning of the homily, is definitively transcended. For the bishop of Caesarea, 'weakness of nature' has become a commonplace that fails to express what women truly are as human beings and what they are called to become.

Basil's *Homily on Psalm 1* contains an important parallel to Julitta's speech, quoted above. In the Septuagint, the first verse of the psalm says, 'Blessed is the man (ἀνὴρ) who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly.' Our homilist explains why this blessing and the moral conduct which merits it are meant for women as well:

For the virtue of man and woman is one, since also the creation is of equal honour for both, and so the reward for both is the same. Listen to Genesis. 'God', it says, 'created the human; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' And the nature (φύσις) being one, their

²⁹ PG 31. 240D–241A.

³⁰ PG 31. 241B–C.

activities (ἐνέργεια) also are the same; and the work (ἔργον) being equal, their reward also is the same.³¹

This text unequivocally affirms an ontological and moral unity and equality between male and female. In Cappadocian thought, each nature has its corresponding ἐνέργεια, a term whose meaning includes faculty of acting, mode of activity, and the action itself. It is the nature's self-manifestation through action, i.e. 'energy' as well as 'operation'.³² Basil is saying that what men and women are and also the essential way they function in life are the same, as are the works produced by their activity.

Here, as in the *Homily on the Martyr Julitta*, he indicates that he understands their nature in terms of the image of God and cites Gen. 1:27, a verse whose interpretation lies at the heart of much Greek patristic anthropology including that of the Cappadocians.³³ For him the *imago Dei* defines humanity as such. It

³¹ PG 29. 216D–217A. This text has a close parallel in a Cappadocian sermon of uncertain authorship, the *First Homily on the Origin of the Human*: 'The woman also has come into being according to the image of God, as has the man. Their natures are of the same honour, equal are their virtues, their rewards equal, their punishments alike . . . Since therefore what is according to the image of God is of the same honour, let the virtue and the manifestation of good works have the same honour.' Alexis Smets and Michel van Esbroeck (eds.), *Basile de Césarée. Sur l'origine de l'homme*, Sources chrétiennes 160 (Paris, 1970) pp. 212–14. Another critical edition, Hadwig Hörner (ed.), *Auctorum incertorum, vulgo Basilii vel Gregorii Nysseni, Sermones de creatione hominis. Sermo de paradiso*, Gregorii Nysseni Opera, Supplementum (Leiden, 1972), includes this discourse among Gregory of Nyssa's works. Different manuscripts attribute it to each of the two brothers, and scholarly opinion about its real origin remains divided. It may stem from another unknown Cappadocian of the same period or from lecture notes taken by somebody in Basil's audience. For a recent assessment of these issues, see Jean Gribomont, 'Notes biographiques sur s. Basile le Grand', in Paul Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea, Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1981), vol. 1, 21–48.

Note that this writer speaks of male and female as like and equal natures while Basil speaks of one nature in the *Homily on Psalm 1*. Are men and women ὁμοούσιος for the bishop of Caesarea but only ὁμοιούσιος for the other author? Or could the note-taker have missed this nuance?

³² On ἐνέργεια in Cappadocian ontology and epistemology, see my *Grace and Human Freedom according to St. Gregory of Nyssa* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, forthcoming), ch. 1.

³³ Some scholars such as John A. Phillips, in *Eve: The History of an Idea* (San Francisco, 1984), assert that early Christian anthropology is predominantly based on the second creation account (where woman is created after man but sins before him) rather than the first, with misogynist consequences. This claim is inaccurate, at least in the East. For the Greek fathers, the governing concept is the *imago Dei* of Gen. 1:27, as the specialist literature indicates. In addition to the works cited in n. 8 above, see Henri Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène* (Paris, 1956); R. Bernard, *L'image de Dieu d'après saint Athanase* (Paris, 1952); J. Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Leiden,

follows that everything extraneous to this image is secondary to the human condition and anything that obstructs or defaces it is a distortion of human nature that needs to be overcome. Human activity is accordingly understood primarily as *moral* activity, the exercise of virtues, which liken us to God, and vices, which do the opposite. Thus the things that Basil sees as important and definitive about the human condition, nature and moral character, are unaffected by the gender distinction, and the differences it involves are insignificant by comparison.

The bishop of Caesarea makes this point most clearly in his treatise *On Baptism*, a work similar in tone to his moral and ascetical instructions. In much of this literature, he expresses his thought through compilations of biblical texts which he applies strictly and literally to show what the life of the committed believer should be like. The section that concerns us here begins by quoting Eph. 2: 14–21, one of Basil's favourite scriptures, which speaks of unity in Christ: 'For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities of the flesh; . . . that he might make the two in himself into one new man, making peace. . . .' This has obvious moral applications for community living, but it also indicates an ontological unity joining human persons with Christ and with each other and eliminating the sources of division between them. The quotation of Col. 3: 11 which follows further emphasizes the concept of unity overcoming divisions: 'There is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor free. But Christ is all and in all.'³⁴ The Saviour's presence becomes a new human identity within the baptized, and he displaces identities based on class,³⁵ culture and race which

1968); W. J. Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Woodstock, Md., 1957); and P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ. The Nature of the Human Person*, trans. N. Russell (Crestwood, N.Y., 1987).

³⁴ Umberto Neri (ed.), *Basilio di Cesarea. Il Battesimo* (Brescia, 1976), pp. 262–4.

³⁵ The Cappadocians regarded class and economic divisions, like gender divisions, as a secondary and temporary feature of the human condition. They vigorously criticized the injustices they saw around them and engaged actively in charitable work to help the victims of these inequities. However, their primary response was to encourage the creation of an alternative just society through the ascetical movement rather than attempting a radical political restructuring of the existing social order. Thus for them slavery, like misogyny, was against nature, but they did not call for the direct abolition of the patriarchal family, the basic unit of Graeco-Roman society, in which women and slaves both had clearly defined places. On their social concerns, see Basil, *Homilia II in Psalm 114*, PG 29. 264D–280C; *In illud dictum Evangelii . . .*, PG 31. 261A–277C; *Homilia in divites*, PG 31. 277C–314C; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or. 14, De pauperum amore*, PG

polarize and fragment human community, and also gender differences, as we shall see.

Basil explains this further, using an illuminating analogy to show how it is that the baptized are clothed in Christ:

Consider, for example, a drawing tablet. . . . If it bears a drawing of the king's likeness, the difference in material—whether it be wood or gold or silver—does not affect the drawing. The accurate resemblance of the image to its model and its artistic and meticulous presentation make the difference in material pass unnoticed, however obvious this difference may be. The spectators are moved to admire the excellence of the likeness itself, and this becomes more prized than all the king's power and sovereignty. The case is the same with one who is baptized, whether he be Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, Scythian or barbarian, or anyone else bearing the name of any other race. As soon as he has put off the old man with his deeds in the blood of Christ and . . . has put on the new, created according to God in justice and holiness of truth, and is renewed unto knowledge according to the very image of the Creator, he becomes worthy to win the divine approval. . . .³⁶

This passage is dominated by the theme of the divine image given to humanity in creation, restored through baptism into union with Christ and actualized in justice, holiness, and knowledge of God. Citing Col. 3: 11 and Gal. 3: 28, it compares human persons, who differ in class, race, and gender, to various background materials on which a picture of the king is drawn. The royal form depicted there is so beautiful and impressive that it makes the differences of artistic media pale into insignificance. Similarly, human differences still exist in baptized persons who fulfil their vocation to holiness, but such factors are overwhelmed by the glory of God which they have in common. This vivid analogy shows that virtue and the *imago Dei* are much more significant than gender in Basil's anthropology.

Moreover, in the *Homily on Psalm 114*, Basil says that in the next life fleshly temptations will not exist because the gender distinction will no longer occur: 'For there is no male or female in the resurrection, but there is one certain life and it is of one kind, since those dwelling in the land of the living are well pleasing to their Master.'³⁷ Divine likeness, virtue, and unity in Christ will fully

35. 857A–909C; Gregory of Nyssa, *In Ecclesiasten 4*, GNO 5. 334–8; A. van Heck (ed.), Gregorii Nysseni. *De pauperibus amandis. Orationes duo* (Leiden, 1964); Stanislas Giet, *Les idées et l'action sociales de saint Basile le Grand* (Paris, 1941); and Charles Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching* (Maryknoll, NY, 1983), pp. 47–58, 174–7. Unfortunately, most of the relevant texts remain untranslated.

³⁶ Neri, pp. 604–6; M. M. Wagner (trans.), *Saint Basil. Ascetical Works*, Fathers of the Church 9 (New York, 1950), pp. 379–80.

³⁷ PG 29. 492c.

determine the character of eschatological human existence, and other characteristics that might interfere with these will drop away. Gender will be eliminated because it could compromise unity and virtue.

III. ETHICAL AND SOCIAL APPLICATION

For the bishop of Caesarea, moral priorities follow from these theological principles. The soul is the true self and bears the divine image, so the goods of the soul are genuine while those of the body are illusory. Thus virtues are carried over into eternity, but economic, political, and social advantages are all too temporary.³⁸ Therefore the obligation to pursue virtue and obedience to God's commandments is so urgent that it supersedes concerns to transform unjust economic, political, and social structures. Such structures distort the pattern of human existence intended by God, but they are so comparatively ephemeral that it is better to seek virtue within them (e.g. by intensive charitable work, or by doing one's job faithfully, even if one is a slave, as a form of devotion to God) or create alternative ascetical structures alongside them than to attempt their reconstruction. All of one's energy should be channelled toward the exact obedience to divine law that is required for salvation.³⁹ In this way, after a brief life here below, one quickly and surely attains the just society in heaven.

Bodily weakness, sickness, poverty, and social and political disadvantage do not hinder the quest for virtue and may actually help in attaining it.⁴⁰ So the subjection and bodily weakness of women may turn out to be blessings in disguise as well as being transitory. Accordingly, as scripture says, wives should obey their husbands and slaves their masters, and women should keep silence in church but be eager to learn at home.⁴¹ Thus, Basil's literal and rigorist interpretation of biblical precepts combines with his strong sense of the closeness of eschatological realities to prevent his drawing many social conclusions from his ontology of gender.

However, he makes an exception to his strict application of scripture and prescribes conformity to the custom of punishing

³⁸ See the homilies on *Give Heed to Yourself*, PG 31. 197C–217B, and *On Renunciation of the World*, PG 31. 625C–648C. On Basil's ethics, see David Amand, *L'ascèse monastique de Saint Basile. Essai historique* (Maredsous, 1948); and Thomas Spidlik, *La sophiologie de S. Basile*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 162 (Rome, 1961).

³⁹ See Ioannes Karayannopoulos, 'St. Basil's Social Activity: Principles and Praxis', in Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea*, vol. 1, 375–91.

⁴⁰ *Homily on 'Give heed to yourself'*.

⁴¹ *Morals* 73 and 75, PG 31. 849D–853B and 856A–D.

unfaithful wives much more severely than unfaithful husbands. 'The declaration of the Lord concerning the prohibition to depart from marriage except for the reason of fornication, consistent with the sense, applies equally to men or to women. But', he asserts, 'such is not the practice.'⁴² This is a striking exception to his teaching that to break any one biblical commandment is to break them all and merit eternal damnation.⁴³ Here the social conservative in Basil seems to have won out over the moral rigorist, and he chooses Roman law over the precept of Christ. However, he does prescribe equally severe penalties for fallen monks and fallen nuns;⁴⁴ in the new society modelled on God's kingdom, ethics follows ontology and present social arrangements imitate those of the future age as much as possible.

A modern reader would probably respond to the ambivalence in Basil's social application of his theology of gender by saying that the quest for a just society in this world and its attainment in the next are not mutually exclusive; indeed, such a quest could well require the development and exercise of those virtues which lead to salvation, though it may also entail risks and temptations. However, Basil's vision of men and women as equal, alike and united in nature, dignity and moral character remains significant. His conception of the unity of virtue is particularly important in this context.⁴⁵ Since no one virtue can be actualized unless all the others are present too, there cannot be different 'male' and 'female' forms of human excellence. Such a situation would prevent both men and women from attaining full human perfection, likeness to God and salvation. So what Basil envisages in the eschaton is not the 'androgyny' some critics of feminism fear, a diminished humanity stripped of the good qualities commonly associated with men and women, but rather a genuine wholeness, a fullness of participation in divine life, in which all the virtues come to fruition. We will see that the two Gregories share this hope as well.

IV. NAZIANZEN AND HIS MOTHER AND SISTER

Like his friend Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus had exemplary and influential women in his family who may well have influenced his

⁴² *Ep.* 188. 9, Courtonne 2. 128. Cf. *Ep.* 199. 21, Courtonne 2. 157–8.

⁴³ This principle is clearly articulated in the *Homily on the Judgment of God*, PG 31. 653A–676C. On Basil's rigorism and biblical literalism, see Amand, *Ascèse monastique*, especially pp. 152–75.

⁴⁴ *Ep.* 217. 60, Courtonne 2. 211.

⁴⁵ See *Homily on the Judgment of God* and Amand's commentary, *Ascèse monastique*, pp. 152–8.

understanding of gender.⁴⁶ His mother, Nonna, was a person of strong character and great faith who led her husband, a future bishop known as Gregory the Elder, to orthodox Christianity. Nazianzen describes her as having been obedient to him in everything except religion, an area where she used all possible means to change his mind and was eventually successful:

Though surpassing all others in endurance and fortitude, she could not brook this, the being but half united to God, because of the estrangement of him who was a part of herself, and the failure to add to the bodily union, a close connection in the spirit. On this account, she fell before God night and day, entreating for the salvation of her head with many fastings and tears, and assiduously devoting herself to her husband, and influencing him in many ways, by means of reproaches, admonitions, attentions, estrangements and above all by her own character with its fervour for piety, by which the soul is specially prevailed upon and softened, and willingly submits to virtuous pressure. The drop of water constantly striking the rock was destined to hollow it, and at length attain its longing.⁴⁷

Notice the strong conception of physical, spiritual, and ontological unity in Christian marriage expressed in the first part of this passage, an idea that Gregory shares with the other two Cappadocians.⁴⁸ Yet what is most striking here is the portrait of Nonna. Her respected place in the community indicates that she must have conformed outwardly to accepted rules of feminine behaviour, but she could hardly be called a submissive wife. Besides dominating her husband, she determined her son Gregory's future values and life-style by dedicating him to God before and after his birth.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ On Gregory's life, see E. Fleury, *Hellénisme et christianisme: Saint Grégoire de Nazianze et son temps* (Paris, 1930); Paul Gallay, *La vie de saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Lyons, 1943); and Brooks Otis, 'The Throne and the Mountain. An Essay on St. Gregory Nazianzen', *Classical Journal* lvi (1961) 146–65.

⁴⁷ *Or.* 18. 11, *PG* 35. 997C–D, C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow (trans.), 'S. Gregory Nazianzen. Select Orations and Letters', in P. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.), *S. Cyril of Jerusalem. S. Gregory Nazianzen*, LNPf, ser. 2, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1979), p. 258.

⁴⁸ See Basil, *Ep.* 301 and 302, Courtonne 3. 177 and 3. 179, and Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virg.* 3, GNO 8. 1: 262. These texts speak of 'women joined to man by God' in harmonious wedlock so that each is a mirror of the other's character; of a widow cut, as it were, in two parts, as if half her body were torn away, since she and her husband had become one flesh; and of a wife 'deprived of her head' during her husband's absence. This language shows how a strong unity between marriage partners came to be envisaged within a Late Antique social context. It emphasizes the ways in which the two are made one; it does not indicate that the wife is absorbed into her husband and loses her own identity, as the use of Pauline headship language may seem to suggest. The Cappadocian understanding of human personhood, as described in this paper, rules out such an interpretation.

⁴⁹ *Or.* 18. 11, *PG* 35. 497A–B; Christoph Jungck (ed.), *Gregor von Nazianz. De vita sua* (Heidelberg, 1974), pp. 56–8.

Gregory also had an exemplary sister, Gorgonia, whom he describes in her funeral oration. She led her husband and children to lives of devotion, herself practised intense prayer and asceticism, gave generously to the poor and the church, was educated in scripture and theology, and was a private adviser to men and women in her community though she kept silence in church and in public.⁵⁰ She 'won over her husband to her side and made of him a good fellow servant instead of an unreasonable master',⁵¹ eventually leading him to baptism before her death.

Gorgonia must have inherited some of her mother's strength. To be able to accomplish so many good works, to attain such competence and virtue, she must have been submissive in the public sphere while exercising vigorous leadership within the household. In praising his mother and sister, Gregory seems to be encouraging female achievement as far as he can within the constraints of social context and Pauline and deutero-Pauline scripture. For Nonna and Gorgonia, obedience to husband and silence in church have become formal observances expressing devotion to divine law. Yet these restrictions neither mold nor manifest their inward character, which they express by working around the rules. As Gregory presents them, they are holy because of their love and wisdom, their ascetic and charitable virtue and activity, not because of their silence, submission, and obedience. These 'feminine' qualities are presupposed but are less significant. This indicates that for him, as for Basil, the virtues of men and women are the same.⁵²

Karen Torjesen⁵³ has suggested that in the Graeco-Roman world, and for many third- and fourth-century Christian writers, there were different sets of virtues for men and women. Male virtues aimed at personal excellence and public leadership while female virtues sought to circumscribe woman's activities within the domestic sphere. While this analysis may accurately portray

⁵⁰ *Or.* 8, *PG* 35. 789A–817A.

⁵¹ *Or.* 8. 8, *PG* 35. 797B.

⁵² See also the *First Homily on the Origin of the Human*, Smets and van Esbroeck, pp. 214–16; 'You [women] have thus become like God through goodness, through longsuffering, through fellowship, through mutual love and love for the brothers, while hating evil and ruling the passions of sin, so that dominion may belong to you.' Notice how the dominion of Gen. 1: 28 is understood as governing potentially sinful drives within oneself. In contrast, Diodore of Tarsus, *Fragmenta in Genesis*, Gen. 1: 26, *PG* 33. 1564–5, interprets this dominion in a social sense and infers that since women in his culture do not exercise it, they do not bear the divine image. See Burghardt, *Image of God*, p. 139.

⁵³ 'Public Roles, Domestic Virtues: The Controversy over Women's Leadership', paper read at the Annual Convention of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 19–22 November, 1988.

the views of Tertullian and the author of the *Didaskalia Apostolorum*, who are Torjesen's main examples, it is not applicable to the Cappadocians. The social norms embodied in their ethical ideals come primarily from the ascetical movement, not the aristocratic οἶκος. These new Christian values seem to have enabled a subtle but significant shift in Gregory's understanding of the ideal of the married woman. He presents Nonna and Gorgonia as models of the strong wife in a wealthy household, perhaps like the woman described in Prov. 31, who combines wise counsel and devotion to God with active leadership in the economic and charitable spheres. Yet they also share as much as possible in the consecrated virgin's activities of prayer, asceticism, and theological study. Thus Gregory's respect for the woman ascetic enabled him to develop a renewed understanding of the married woman's virtue, freedom, and dignity as well.⁵⁴

V. GENDER, GOD, AND CHRIST

For Nazianzen, too, ethics is based on ontology. Like Gregory of Nyssa, he denies that there is gender in God. Their Arian opponents charged the Cappadocians with bringing the divine down to a human, even a fleshly level by speaking of the Son's generation from the Father. In the *Fifth Theological Oration*, Gregory counters this accusation, answering that of course he does not imagine gender in God, a concept he considers outrageous and associates with pagan and Gnostic myths:

Or maybe you [Arians] would consider our God to be male, according to the same arguments, because he is called God (Θεός) and Father, and that Deity (θεότης) is female, from the gender of the word, and Spirit (Πνεῦμα) neither, since it is not involved in generation; but if you should be childish enough to say, with the old myths and fables, that God begot the Son by a marriage with his own will, we would be introduced to a Marcionite God, both male and female, since it was he who invented these newfangled Eons.⁵⁵

Here Gregory seems to have confused Marcion with Valentinus or a similar Gnostic teacher. Notice also that by drawing absurd theological conclusions from grammatical gender, he is parodying

⁵⁴ On Nazianzen's understanding of the married woman, see Giannarelli, *Tipologia femminile*, pp. 67–86, and Claudio Moreschini, 'La donna nell'antica poesia cristiana', in R. Ugliione (ed.), *Donna nel mondo antico*, pp. 243–64. Moreschini observes that ascetical values have transformed Gregory's ideal of marriage, which for him represents a middle way between worldliness and complete renunciation.

⁵⁵ *Or. 31. 7*, Paul Gallay (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 27–31*, Sources chrétiennes 250 (Paris, 1978), p. 288.

the linguistic realism of his adversary Eunomius, who saw a close link between names and the essences of things.⁵⁶

However, what concerns us in this text is its evident presupposition that gender in the divine nature is unthinkable. For Gregory, any such idea would indicate an inadequate apprehension of divine transcendence and would be symptomatic of spiritual immaturity. He would have no sympathy with contemporary feminist theologians who envisage the divine as female or with any of their opponents who might reply that it is somehow male. He would see both as wrong in making a temporary human characteristic into a transcendent ontological principle.

If there is no gender in the Godhead, the other place where it could have fundamental theological significance is in the human nature of Christ. Patristic discussion of the meaning of the Saviour's maleness is extremely rare, but one passage of Gregory's has been understood as giving it Christological importance.⁵⁷ This text occurs in *Or. 45*, the *Second Oration on Easter*, and is part of an elaborate allegory that ascribes the characteristics of the Paschal lamb to Christ. One of these is maleness, which is explained as follows:

He is male as offered on behalf of Adam; or rather the Stronger for the strong one who first fell under sin; and especially as having nothing female, nothing unmanly, in himself; but indeed he cried out and burst the virginal and maternal bonds with much power, and a Male was brought forth by the prophetess, as Isaiah announces.⁵⁸

The very next sentence explains why Christ is said to be 1 year old like the Paschal lamb. So the language of this passage has metaphorical or symbolic meaning; it is not straightforward narrative description or doctrinal exposition.⁵⁹ Allegory is a way of making sacred texts applicable to theological and pastoral contexts that are not directly addressed by their literal sense. In early Christian exegesis, the Paschal lamb is a standard type of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7), so Gregory elaborates the parallel by trying to show how precursor and fulfilment have the same properties.

⁵⁶ On Eunomius' theology of language, see Jean Daniélou, 'Eunome l'Arien et l'exégèse neo-platonicienne du Cratyle', *Revue des études grecques* lxxix (1956), 412–32 and Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), vol. 2, 459–72.

⁵⁷ See Deborah Belonick, 'The Spirit of Female Priesthood', in Thomas Hopko (ed.), *Women and the Priesthood* (Crestwood, NY, 1983), pp. 135–68.

⁵⁸ *Or. 45. 13, PG 36. 641A.*

⁵⁹ On the diverse and nuanced meanings of gender symbols in religion and the care needed in interpreting them, see Caroline W. Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula A. Richman (eds.), *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols* (Boston, 1986), especially pp. 1–20, 196–227, and 257–88.

His exegetical task requires that he find some Christological significance in maleness—initially that of the lamb, not of Jesus himself—though this forces him to go outside a conceptual framework he shares with other Greek fathers.

Gregory attempts three explanations of Christ's maleness, which we will consider in an order opposite to that appearing in the text. The final and least problematic explanation (*a*) is that it fulfils biblical prophecy; Isa. 8: 3 speaks of a propheticess bearing a son, not a daughter. In addition (*b*), our passage says that Jesus lacks the vices ascribed to women by a misogynist culture and possesses the virtues ascribed to men. We have already seen how Gregory's anthropology transcends these stereotypes, and we will return to this point later. They are used here as items in a vocabulary of common literary images from which an allegory intelligible to the reader can be constructed.

The picture of the Christ child exhibiting male power by bursting from his mother's womb is peculiar. It hardly seems compatible with the idea of Mary's virginity *in partu*, a doctrine later accepted by both Byzantine and Roman Catholic churches.

Gregory's initial statement (*c*) that the Saviour is male because he is offered for Adam involves a more essential theological difficulty. Nazianzen's central soteriological axiom, which finds its classic formulation in *Ep.* 101, is that 'what is not assumed is not healed, but what is united to God, that also is saved'.⁶⁰ In other words, Christ brings salvation to every aspect of the human condition by uniting it to God within himself in the incarnation. It follows from this that if Christ saves *as male*, half of the human race is excluded from salvation. Thus Gregory's essential soteriological position, which many other Greek fathers share, requires that Jesus' humanity as such, not his gender, be central to his incarnate state. This is probably why his maleness never became an issue in Greek patristic Christology. Its absence may well reflect not an oversight but an important theological concern, namely the soteriological agenda that is generally recognized as having been instrumental in shaping these fathers' Christological positions.⁶¹ Thus *Or.* 45. 13 represents an exegetical oddity both for Gregory himself and for the broader tradition he represents.

⁶⁰ Paul Gallay (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres théologiques*, Sources chrétiennes 208 (Paris, 1974), p. 50.

⁶¹ See Richard A. Norris, Jr. 'The Ordination of Women and the "Maleness" of Christ', *Anglican Theological Review*, Supplemental Series 6 (June 1976), 69–80.

VI. GENDER IN THE HUMAN CONDITION

The relative unimportance of Jesus' maleness in Gregory's thought also corresponds to his belief in the secondary character of gender within human nature as such. Commenting on Gorgonia's exploits of prayer and asceticism, he makes the following rhetorical exclamation: 'O nature of woman overcoming that of man in the common struggle for salvation, and demonstrating that the distinction between male and female is one of body not of soul!'⁶² Gregory accepts the Platonic view of soul as more valuable than body. Like Basil, he also accepts the ascetical ethic with its emphasis on virtues and modes of activity that are the same for both genders. If women like Gorgonia surpass men in this regard, they have achieved greater excellence as human beings, and this shows that the difference between men and women is not one of moral or spiritual character, as a misogynist culture assumes. Indeed, says Gregory, the distinction is only a bodily one. Moreover, he states in *Or. 7. 23* that the bodily distinction, too, is ultimately temporary because it will not exist in the resurrection body:

This is the great mystery planned for us by God, who for us was made human and became poor, to resurrect the flesh and recover his image and refashion the human, that we might all become one in Christ, who became perfectly in all of us all that he himself is, that we might no longer be male and female, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free (which are identifying marks of the flesh), but might bear in ourselves only the form of God, by whom and for whom we came to be, and be shaped and imprinted by him to such an extent that we are recognized by this alone.⁶³

⁶² *Or. 8. 14, PG 35. 805B*. The *First Homily on the Origin of the Human*, Smets and van Esbroeck, p. 214, explains this further: 'The good woman has what is according to the image. Do not focus on the outward human form which is fashioned around it. The soul is located within, under the veil, the delicate body. The soul is certainly also a soul of equal honour; the difference is in the veils.'

⁶³ *PG 35. 785C*. This text has a close parallel in *Or. 30. 6*, Gally, *Discours 27-31*, p. 238: 'But it is the whole God, when we are no longer many, as we now are because of movements and passions, bearing nothing at all of God, or very little; rather, we will be wholly deiform, containing God wholly and entirely. For this is the perfection toward which we strive. This is proved by Paul himself, . . . saying, "There is no longer Jew nor Greek, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or freeman, but Christ is all and in all.'" Gender is not mentioned here because Col. 3: 11 is quoted where *Or. 7. 23* quotes Gal. 3: 28. This discrepancy may reflect the different settings of the two sermons. *Or. 30*, the *Fourth Theological Oration*, is a very public exposition of the orthodox faith in Constantinople, where Gregory is using his great rhetorical talent to refute Arianism. He may not have wanted to bring up the issue of gender, which could have distracted his audience from the case being argued. *Or. 7* is the funeral oration for his brother Caesarius, no doubt delivered in the presence of his family, including his mother and sister, who would have found encouragement in the hope of a resurrection where gender is transcended.

This passage sums up the anthropological themes we saw in Basil, namely the emphases on unity in Christ overcoming divisive human differences and on divine likeness arising from the Lord's presence within the human person and overwhelming and displacing other characteristics that could conflict with it.

Yet one may wonder what happens to the body if there is no longer male or female. Gregory goes further than Basil in explaining the body's place in the eschatological fulfilment. He says in *Or.* 7. 21 that the soul bestows on it a portion of its own joys, gathers it entirely into itself, and becomes with it unity, spirit, mind, and god, as what is mortal and mutable is swallowed up in life.⁶⁴ In other words, through the soul's mediation, the body, too, participates in God, and divine life displaces its changeable and corruptible properties. This point is clarified further in *Or.* 2. 17, where Gregory suggests a reason why God created human beings as embodied souls. He says it is so that the soul can

draw the lower nature to itself and to what is above, loosing it little by little from its grossness, so that what God is to the soul, the soul may become to the body, itself educating the matter which serves it and bringing it, as a fellow slave, near to God.⁶⁵

Thus, God and soul, soul and body are joined analogously in a hierarchical relationship. God functions as an archetype imprinting and structuring the soul after his own likeness, and the soul does the same for the body. This makes the body an image of the image of God.⁶⁶ It follows that when, in the resurrection, the body is refashioned as an appropriate vehicle for the soul's transparent self-manifestation, gender will be absent from the body as it is from the soul. Notice how this passage, which begins by subordinating body to soul, in the end envisages them together as fellow slaves of God. The soul is called to educate the body and share with it its own character so as to bring it up to the same level as itself, that is divine likeness and participation.

Thus, Gregory sees gender as a secondary and temporary feature of the human condition. In this life it characterizes the body but not the soul, and in the next life it is displaced by properties imprinted by the deiform soul in its transfigured body.

VII. EVE AND OTHER WOMEN

Some scholars have thought that Eve is central to early Christians' understanding of woman and that they blame her dispropor-

⁶⁴ *PG* 35. 784A.

⁶⁵ Jean Bernardi (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 1-3*, Sources chrétiennes 247 (Paris, 1978), p. 112.

⁶⁶ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* 12. 9, *PG* 44. 161C-D.

tionately for the fall and perceive all other women as having inherited her morally inadequate nature.⁶⁷ Basil and Gregory of Nyssa seldom mention her, which suggests that she is not important to their understanding of the human condition or of gender within it. Nazianzen often does mention her and describe her negatively, but he does not identify other women with her, nor does he assign her excessive blame for the sin in the garden. A study of the texts where he discusses her will shed further light on his attitudes toward the female.

In one important text he says, 'The woman sinned, and so did Adam. The serpent deceived them both; the one was not found to be weaker and the other stronger.'⁶⁸ Significantly, weakness is not ascribed to Eve in a special way. She and Adam are balanced against each other in neat antitheses, and guilt is affirmed equally of both. This passage is a good example of the antithetical structure which is characteristic of Gregory's language and thought. His mind is steeped through long study in the Greek rhetorical tradition, which has enabled him to take one of its most basic figures of speech, antithesis, and transform it into a conceptual structure appropriate for expressing Christian theological ideas.⁶⁹ For example, God as Trinity is both one light and three lights.⁷⁰ For Gregory, antithesis in its most essential form is a juxtaposition of two contrasting affirmations so that they balance and reinforce each other rather than contradicting. It enables him to transcend Platonic notions of hierarchy in such areas as Trinitarian doctrine and Christology,⁷¹ but also in his understanding of male and female. Thus the hierarchy between Adam and Eve is subtly transformed, through a series of balanced antithetical phrases, into an equality.

⁶⁷ See Phillips, *Eve*, and Eva C. Topping, *Holy Mothers of Orthodoxy: Women and the Church* (Minneapolis, 1987).

⁶⁸ *Or.* 37. 7, Claudio Moreschini (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 32-37*, Sources chrétiennes 318 (Paris, 1985), p. 284. On alleged feminine weakness, see also the *First Homily on the Origin of the Human*, Smets and van Esbroeck, p. 214. The text says that women cannot be excused from the demanding human vocation because of the body's weakness since men cannot equal women in ascetic exploits.

⁶⁹ See Frederick W. Norris, 'Gregory of Nazianzus' Doctrine of Jesus Christ', Dissertation, Yale University, 1970, pp. 29-42; Anna-Stina Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man* (Uppsala, 1981), pp. 85-6; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 83-4; and my 'Word as Icon in Greek Patristic Theology', *Sobornost* x (1988), 38-49.

⁷⁰ See *Or.* 39. 11, PG 36. 345C-D; *Or.* 31. 3 Galloway, *Discours 27-31*, p. 280; *Or.* 23. 11, J. Mossay (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 20-23*, Sources chrétiennes 270 (Paris, 1980), p. 302; *Or.* 40. 41, PG 36. 417B-C.

⁷¹ Gregory juxtaposes divine and human in Christ so as to affirm both fully and equally. See *Or.* 2. 23, Bernardi, p. 120; *Or.* 37. 2, Moreschini, p. 274; *Ep.* 101, Galloway, *Lettres théologiques*, pp. 44-6; and *Or.* 29. 19, Galloway, *Discours 27-31*, p. 218. On the Trinity, see texts cited in n. 70.

The text we have just considered, which balances Adam and Eve, occurs in *Or.* 37. 7 in the context of an important discussion of equality between men and women. Immediately afterward, Gregory uses antithetical language to show how Christ redeems both genders by his incarnation and death:

Christ saves both by his passion. Was he made flesh for the man? So he was also for the woman. Did he die for the man? The woman is also saved by his death. He is called of the seed of David; and so perhaps you think the man is honored. But he is born of a virgin, and this is on the woman's side. Thus the two, he says, shall be one flesh, so let the one flesh have equal honor.⁷²

This passage completes the incomplete theology of *Or.* 45. 13, discussed above, which says that Christ is male since he is offered for Adam. The humanity he assumes and thus saves is that of David but also that of Mary.

Our text from *Or.* 37. 7 goes on to interpret Eph. 5: 21 ff, which likens the husband to Christ and the wife to the Church, in a way that moves hierarchical concepts toward equality:

It is good for the wife to reverence Christ through her husband; it is also good for the husband not to dishonor the Church through his wife. Let the wife, [Paul] says, fear her husband as she does Christ; but also he bids the husband cherish his wife as Christ does the Church.

Here it is the antithetical literary form, balancing clause against clause, that brings husband and wife to the same level. Moreover, for Gregory these ideas do have social consequences. He preaches this sermon in Constantinople before the emperor Theodosius, and his argument is that husbands should have the same obligation to faithfulness in marriage as their wives. In this he sets the teaching of Christ against Jewish and Roman law, a move which we have seen that Basil was unwilling to make.⁷³ At this point, as in his open proclamation of the Holy Spirit's divinity and unity of essence with the Father, Gregory shows greater boldness than his friend in confessing what he sees as Christian truth.⁷⁴ He even provides a sociological analysis of why existing law unjustly punishes unfaithful wives more than their male counterparts: 'The legislators were men', he says, 'and therefore their legislation is

⁷² *Or.* 37. 7, Moreschini, pp. 284–6; Browne and Swallow, p. 340.

⁷³ See Claudio Moreschini, 'Introduction', in C. Moreschini (ed.), *Discours* 32–37, pp. 53 ff. For the contrast between Basil and Gregory on this point, I am indebted to Gerard Ettliger, 'Custom and Tradition in the Fourth Century: Development and Stagnation', paper read at the Annual Conference of the North American Patristic Society, Chicago, 26–8 May, 1988.

⁷⁴ Contrast Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* and Gregory's *Fifth Theological Oration*.

against women.⁷⁵ By contrast, God does not show such partiality. Later, the sermon describes the spirituality and life-style of consecrated virgins, noting that these are the same for men and women, as Basil also says, though Gregory conceptualizes them in manifestly female terms. The virgin of either gender is the bride of Christ.⁷⁶ With Gregory of Nyssa, we will see in greater detail what is involved anthropologically when gender concepts are transcended and transformed in this way.

Our analysis of *Or.* 37 has taken us a long way from Eve, but let us now return to her. In different places Nazianzen blames the sin in the garden on Adam, Eve, the serpent, sensual pleasure, and a premature desire for contemplation.⁷⁷ It is clear that there is plenty of guilt to go around, and the woman only bears part of it. In one place, Gregory condemns the mythical Pandora with traditional misogynist rhetoric and exhorts his female readers not to be like her. She was deceived by outward appearances like Adam, who was captivated by the beauty of the forbidden tree and misled by the Evil One as well as by Eve.⁷⁸ Note that the abuse is aimed at someone Gregory regards as a fictional character, not at the first mother whom he sees as a divinely revealed historical figure, and that Pandora is more directly compared with Adam than with his wife. In another place, Gregory directs the blame and the misogynist rhetoric at Eve, but then he exclaims, 'Alas for my weakness!', taking the guilt for the fall on himself as identified with Adam.⁷⁹ This last sentiment parallels the noble Christian instinct of those who hold their own sins responsible for Christ's death instead of making scapegoats of the Jews. Gregory shows that the same penitent attitude which dispels anti-Semitism can also dispel misogyny.

One important text contrasts Eve, who misled Adam, with Nonna, who led her husband to the true faith:

⁷⁵ *Or.* 37. 6, Moreschini, p. 284.

⁷⁶ *Or.* 37. 10–13, Moreschini, pp. 292–300.

⁷⁷ See Althaus, *Heilslehre*, pp. 79–122, and J. Szymusiak, 'Grégoire de Nazianze et le péché', *Studia Patristica* ix (1966), 288–305.

⁷⁸ Andreas Knecht (ed.), *Gregor von Nazianz. Gegen die Putzsucht der Frauen* (Heidelberg, 1972), p. 24. This text is quoted by Dora and Erwin Panofsky, *Pandora's Box: The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1962), p. 12, who note how several Church fathers find parallels between Pandora and Eve, but in different ways. They in turn are cited by Phillips, *Eve*, p. 22, who claims that Gregory's misogynist language about Pandora is actually a description of Eve. He concludes that Gregory, along with other early Christians, has a very low opinion of women. This illustrates how important it is to consult primary sources and pay attention to nuances of meaning in the texts.

⁷⁹ *Or.* 38. 12, *PG* 36. 324C.

She indeed who was given to Adam as a helper for him, because it was not good for man to be alone, instead of a co-worker became an enemy, and instead of a collaborator an opponent, and beguiling the man by means of pleasure, estranged him through the tree of knowledge from the tree of life. But she who was given by God to my father became not only, as is less wonderful, his co-worker, but even his leader, drawing him on by her influence in deed and word to the highest things. . . . Admirable indeed as was this conduct of hers, it was still more admirable that he should readily acquiesce in it.⁸⁰

This is one of a number of passages where Gregory contrasts Eve with other women. These texts illustrate another use of antithetical structures, which can bring pairs of things together so as to show how they are both alike and unlike. Thus Eve is like Nonna and her other female opposites in gender, but they are unlike in character and in their use of free choice. These passages are not identifying all women with Eve in a simplistic way, nor are they saying that women share a morally flawed 'nature' with their first mother, but rather the opposite. They are free to do other than she did and often exercise that freedom, providing good examples as alternatives to her bad example. For Gregory, both genders are endowed with the same human freedom and can choose whether or not to cooperate with God; they are not compelled to sin by a stained and guilty 'nature' inherited from their first ancestors as a result of the fall.

Nonna's example is particularly interesting because she is not represented as an obedient wife in contrast to insubordinate Eve. Although she assisted Gregory the Elder in secular matters, she was his leader in finding a right relation to God. The contrast is between good and bad female leadership, and Nonna's husband is praised for his acquiescence in a passive role, a behavior that Hellenistic culture generally condemned in men.⁸¹ This unusual 'liberated' attitude of his father appeared admirable to Nazianzen because it involved a humble willingness to put truth and virtue ahead of gender roles. Thus also, by implication, Eve is bad according to Gregory because of her vice and impiety, not because she exercised leadership within her marriage.

Nazianzen also contrasts Gorgonia with Eve, calling his married sister a bride of Christ and asserting that she, unlike the first mother, overcame the serpent and death. Significantly, this suggests that according to Gregory spiritual marriage is possible for

⁸⁰ *Or.* 18.8, *PG* 35.993B, Browne and Swallow, pp. 256–7. Phillips, *Eve*, p. 106, quotes the first half of this passage as evidence of Gregory's misogyny and identification of women with Eve. He appears to have overlooked the second half.

⁸¹ See Paul Veyne, 'The Roman Empire', in P. Veyne (ed.), *A History of Private Life I: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (trans.), Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), pp. 5–233.

Christians in all states of life, not only for celibate ascetics.⁸² Elsewhere he says that virgin women are unlike Eve but are like the Virgin-Mother in that they bring forth Christ for the salvation of the world. Mary herself is contrasted with the first woman in a special way, since Christ, through his birth from her, has sanctified woman, removed the sad burden of Eve and brought the laws of the flesh to a halt. Thus women are freed from Eve's destructive pattern by the Lord's redemptive work as well as by their own free choice. Gregory notes in another place that as well as bringing the Saviour into the world, women have announced his resurrection from the dead to the male disciples. Another text represents the martyr Justina as asking Mary to protect her virginity. According to Jan Szymusiak, this is the earliest patristic reference to such intercession and protection by the Mother of God.⁸³ In the last analysis it is she who is the archetype of Christian womanhood; Eve is generally a negative figure for Gregory, but women are in no way constrained to follow her example.

For Gregory of Nazianzus, gender is absent from the divine nature, and maleness plays no significant role in Jesus' mode of human existence and saving work as the Christ. The distinction between male and female is also absent from the human soul, which bears the divine image, and its occurrence in the body is temporary, since it is displaced in the resurrection by the transfiguring presence of Christ mediated by the deiform soul. Men and women have the same essential human vocation and are able and morally obliged to acquire the same virtues. These possibilities are open to persons in all states of life, but those living as ascetics manifest an ideal that others should imitate as far as their circumstances allow. Within this context, the androcentric anthropology and ethic usual in Hellenistic culture are transcended, though social and scriptural constraints limit the practical conclusions that can be drawn from these premises.

VIII. GREGORY OF NYSSA ON THE ONTOLOGY OF GENDER

These Cappadocian ideas form part of the background against which Gregory of Nyssa's speculations about male and female

⁸² *Or.* 8. 14, *PG* 35. 805c. Contrast Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 20, *GNO* 8. 1. 324–8.

⁸³ *Carm.* 2. 2. 1, *PG* 37. 1467–1470; *Carm.* 1. 2. 1, *PG* 37. 535–7; *Or.* 2. 24, Bernardi, pp. 120–2; *Or.* 24. 17, J. Mossay (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 24–26, Sources chrétiennes* 284 (Paris, 1981), p. 78; *Or.* 24. 11, Mossay, *Discours 24–26*, p. 60; Jan Szymusiak, *Éléments de théologie de l'homme selon Grégoire de Nazianze* (Rome 1963), pp. 56–8.

need to be understood.⁸⁴ They do not arise spontaneously in a vacuum but further extend the attitudes current in their author's social and intellectual environment, including the familial context which Gregory of course shares with his illustrious brother.

We saw how in Julitta's speech Basil interprets the creation of woman from man in Gen. 2 as a 'relation of origin' involving equality and consubstantiality. A curious passage in the *De tridui spatio* suggests that Gregory has a similar understanding of the origin of evil as recounted in Gen. 3. The text says that evil has a threefold genesis, beginning with the serpent and spreading from there to the woman and through her to the man. So all three of them have alike become 'receptacles of evil'. When Christ rests for three days in the tomb, the sequence is reversed, as men are first purged of the disease, women are cured and finally death and the powers of darkness (represented by the serpent) are abolished.⁸⁵ Here, the fact that Eve fell before Adam means only that they represent distinct links in the chains of sin and salvation; otherwise, they are the same. In Nazianzen's words, 'The woman sinned, and so did Adam.'⁸⁶ Gregory of Nyssa says that both alike are healed through Christ, but in contrast death and the demons are destroyed.

Later in the same homily, he remarks that a woman anticipated man in being the first witness of the resurrection, thus initiating movement toward the good so as to make amends for the fall into evil.⁸⁷ She exercises her moral and spiritual freedom and shows that the female nature is not more passive or guilty than the male. So the *De tridui spatio* offers two good illustrations of how little such stereotypes influence Gregory's thought. Another curious but very telling illustration occurs in the little treatise *On the Sixth Psalm*. The text carefully establishes a balance and equivalence between the rites of male circumcision and female purification after childbirth. Together they symbolize the way Christ purges human nature of impurity and evil.⁸⁸ This indicates that if female sexuality is impure for Gregory, male sexuality is impure to the same extent and in the same way. Both must ultimately be transcended, as indeed they are in his anthropology and eschatology.

⁸⁴ For the broader context, see Pisi, *Genesis e phthora*, and Brown, *Body and Society*, and also Ton H. C. van Eijk, 'Marriage and Virginité, Death and Immortality', in J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (eds.), *ΕΠΕΚΤΑΣΙΣ: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris, 1972), pp. 209-35; Wayne A. Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity', *History of Religions* xiii (1974), 165-208; and Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman* (Montreal and London, 1985).

⁸⁵ GNO 9. 285-6.

⁸⁷ GNO 9. 304-5.

⁸⁶ *Or.* 37. 7, cited above.

⁸⁸ GNO 5. 187-8.

The bishop of Nyssa explains his opinions about gender most fully in the famous sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of the treatise *On the Making of Humanity*. There he describes the divine image of Gen. 1: 27a as a likeness to God and participation in his attributes and contrasts this with the 'male and female' of Gen. 1: 27b. Like Nazianzen, he regards it as axiomatic that there is no gender in the divine. 'I presume every one knows', he says, 'that this is contemplated apart from the Prototype.' He cites Gal. 3: 28 in support of his assertion and goes on to repeat it twice later in the same chapter, as follows. The distinction between male and female 'is alien to our conceptions of God', and it 'has no reference to the divine archetype, but . . . is an approximation to the less rational nature', i.e. an image of the subhuman animals.⁸⁹

Thus the being whose character is defined by likeness to God also shares the likeness of the beasts. For Gregory, this second likeness includes a whole complex of non-rational and biological characteristics—gender and the corresponding mode of reproduction, childhood and old age, nutrition and elimination, passions such as desire and aggressiveness, and mortality itself. These characteristics are symbolized by the 'tunics of skin' of Gen. 3: 21 and are secondary and temporary features of the human condition, not parts of its essential and eternal and godlike nature.⁹⁰ Thus far, Gregory's thought parallels that of the other two Cappadocians but characteristically adds further nuance and systematic coherence. For all three, the axiomatic absence of gender in God and the identification of authentic and eternal humanity as a likeness to God which thus transcends gender are firm convictions, not speculations. Gregory links male and female to a larger complex of passions and biological functions including the instincts and emotions which humans share with other animals. This suggests that he may connect gender with the irrational soul as well as the body, which we saw was its exclusive locus for Nazianzen; however, he does not draw this conclusion explicitly.

The ideas Gregory of Nyssa regards as frankly speculative are his views of how male and female relate to protology and eschatology. He asks himself two questions: (a) How and why did this distinction and the other features of the 'tunics of skin' originally come to be included in the human condition alongside the *imago Dei*? And (b) what will the resurrection body be like if gender and

⁸⁹ PG 44. 181A, 181B, 185A.

⁹⁰ See literature cited in n. 8 above.

other biological organs and functions are absent from it?⁹¹ He acknowledges that he can only guess at what the answers might be.

His protological and eschatological speculations have been discussed extensively in the secondary literature, and we need not examine them in detail here. Briefly, in *De opif. hom.*, 16–17, he attempts to explain the origins of gender in humanity as follows. God foresaw that human beings, through the misuse of their own freedom, would fall by turning away from him and toward material things. They would then have to be able to function within a material and biological world that had become self-enclosed instead of mediating divine life to that world from above and raising it, with themselves, to participation in intelligible or spiritual existence, which is their authentic cosmic function within the creation.⁹² Therefore, God added gender, the passions and the whole potential for biological existence to his original creative design for humans in order to insure their self-preservation and reproduction within an animal environment and also to enable the eventual reversal of the fall as they learn from the experience of evil and are purified of it through and beyond death. Then, after a long detour, the original creative design will be fulfilled in the eschaton; it was never actualized in humanity's initial state, from which, even without sin, it could only have come about through free human cooperation and the corresponding spiritual growth.

In this large-scale cosmic process, gender plays a temporary and instrumental role. It is necessary as a component intrinsic to a broader complex of biological functions. Thus Gregory envisages the distinction between male and female specifically in terms of the biology of reproduction, not as a fundamental cosmic, ontological, or spiritual reality built into the structure of the universe, such as

⁹¹ The first question is one of the central problems addressed in the *De opificio hominis*. See Eugenio Corsini, 'Plérôme humaine et plérôme cosmique chez Grégoire de Nysse', in M. Harl (ed.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 111–26. The *De mortuis* and *De anima et resurrectione* are concerned with the second.

⁹² Such scholars as Pisi, in *Genesis e phthora*, and H. J. Oesterle, in 'Probleme der Anthropologie bei Gregor von Nyssa', *Hermes* cxiii (1985), 101–14, have argued that for Gregory humans had to fall in order to fulfil their cosmic mediating role. This interpretation pays insufficient attention to the fact that the original and eschatological humanity is embodied and thus participates in matter. As μεθόριος, the human can therefore act as priest of the material world, offering it to God and communicating divine life to it. To do this, one need not turn away from the divine toward matter so as to make it an idol; one can instead lift it upward, uniting it in oneself with the intelligible and with God. See *De Opif. Hom.* 12, PG 44. 164A-B.

yin and yang.⁹³ This is clearly stated in a passage from the oration *On Those Who Have Fallen Asleep*, which also suggests how the reproductive faculty may be transformed in the resurrection:

Since the difference between male and female has been fashioned in our nature for nothing other than procreation, it probably has some purpose related to regaining the blessing of good things promised by God. . . . The generative power of nature will be transferred to that work of giving birth in which the great Isaiah participated, saying, From your fear, Lord, we came to be with child and were in labor and gave birth; we were pregnant with the spirit of your salvation on the earth [Isa. 26: 17–18 LXX]. For if such an offspring is good and childbearing becomes a cause of salvation [1 Tim. 2: 15], as the apostle says, one will never stop bringing forth the spirit of salvation, when once through such a birth the multiplication of good things has been brought forth for one.⁹⁴

According to Gregory, when in the resurrection the body is transfigured into a translucent likeness of the deiform soul, the faculties of irrational soul and body will be fundamentally transformed and redirected toward activities appropriate to heavenly existence. For example, desire will be turned toward God and anger against evil.⁹⁵ Similarly, as our present text says, the procreative faculty will function by being impregnated with life from God and giving birth to various forms of goodness from within the self, a process that will go on forever in the eternal growth that Gregory envisages. Notice that in this spiritual generation, which will occur after the distinction between male and female has ceased to exist, the human person is portrayed in an exclusively female role while God acts as male.

In *On Virginité*, Gregory speaks in very similar terms of the ascetic's spiritual birthgiving within this life, a kind of motherhood open to women and men alike. He quotes the same verse from 1 Timothy about salvation through childbearing.⁹⁶ The author of the pastoral epistle sought to restrict women's activities to a narrow domestic sphere, but Gregory understands his words

⁹³ The thesis of Thomas Hopko, 'On the Male Character of Christian Priesthood', in T. Hopko (ed.), *Women and the Priesthood*, pp. 97–134, that there is a basis in Greek patristic theology for regarding gender as a fundamental ontological structure, is not confirmed by the Cappadocian material examined in this paper. Moreover, it appears that Maximus the Confessor follows the three Cappadocians in this regard. See Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, *Enkrateia e antropologia* (Rome, 1984), pp. 258–66, and id., 'Aspetti di "doppia creazione" nell'antropologia di Massimo il Confessore', *Studia Patristica* xviii (1985), 127–34. A detailed study of his understanding of male and female still needs to be done, yet it appears evident that these four central figures in the Byzantine theological tradition are agreed about the absence of gender in God and its secondary and temporary character within humanity.

⁹⁴ GNO 9, 63.

⁹⁵ See *De an. et res.*, PG 46, 65A–B.

⁹⁶ GNO 8, 1, 305.

to mean something quite different, a universally human spiritual potential. Indeed, Jean Daniélou has observed that Gregory often speaks of the human person generating virtues or vices.⁹⁷ In the same treatise, citing Gal. 3: 28, he says that through virginity men and women alike can attain spiritual marriage with the Bridegroom, Christ.⁹⁸ Here his thought parallels that of the other two Cappadocians, as we have seen.

This concept of spiritual procreation is linked to his understanding of the human person as a receptacle created to be filled with the life of God and in response to pour forth that life both to God and neighbour.⁹⁹ It is no accident that in his first treatise, *On Virginity*, and in one of his last, the great *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, the governing images which describe the human person are female. Although the gender distinction itself is secondary and temporary, it becomes a symbol pointing beyond itself to something truly fundamental and eternal, the human person's relationship with God.

Gregory of Nyssa agrees with Basil and Gregory Nazianzen that moral qualities are essential to permanent human identity. In *On Those Who Have Fallen Asleep*, he speculates that in the resurrection human persons will be recognized by their virtues (or vices), which will be outwardly manifest. Thus, they will be known as the wise one, the just one, the loving one, etc., or one who possesses all kinds of goodness, another adorned by only one, one with many virtues or another with fewer.¹⁰⁰ This variety of moral beauty will displace other kinds of human division, including gender, but even it will be resolved into unity in the final ἀποκατάστασις, when everyone will possess all the virtues in their fullness, as all are raised to the same godlike level in Christ:

Perhaps when the last enemy is abolished, as the apostle says, and the whole of evil is expelled from all beings, the one deiform beauty shines upon them all, for which in the beginning we were created. And this is light and purity and incorruption and life and truth and the like, . . . and light and purity and incorruption will be found to be of one kind, with neither alteration nor difference, but one grace will illumine them all, when they shall become sons of light shining as the sun, according to the Lord's voice which does not lie. But indeed all will be perfected into one according to the promise of God's word, having one and the same mind

⁹⁷ 'Le traité "Sur les enfants morts prématurément" de Grégoire de Nysse', *Vigiliae Christianae* xx (1966), 159–82.

⁹⁸ GNO 8. 1. 328.

⁹⁹ See my 'Word as Icon', my *Grace and Human Freedom*, ch. 3; and my 'Receptacle Imagery in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Anthropology', *Studia Patristica* xxii, 23–7, forthcoming.

¹⁰⁰ GNO 9. 65.

and the same grace manifested in all, as each one exchanges the same joy with his neighbor, through which each also rejoices seeing the beauty of the other, who rejoices in return that no evil changes the form into a repulsive image.¹⁰¹

Notice that this eschatological unity clearly occurs among distinct persons joyfully aware of each other, yet they are endowed equally with all the same attributes. They image the unity-in-distinction of the Holy Trinity, and Gregory affirms equality in both God and the human πλήρωμα for similar reasons. In either case, if one person lacked a good quality that another had, that absence would indicate an imperfection. This overcoming of differences in virtue and in its corresponding reward forms part of Gregory's doctrine of ἀποκατάστασις. The other two Cappadocians have similar ideas of eschatological unity in Christ but do not draw this conclusion.

All three of these fathers see redeemed humanity as one in Christ Jesus, transcending the divisions of gender, class, and race described by Paul in Gal. 3: 28 and manifesting a fullness of participation in the divine based on the *imago Dei* of Gen. 1: 27. These scriptures, and not the story of Eve, are central to their anthropology. They are surely a long way from the misogyny which is sometimes ascribed uncritically to all early Christians.

VERNA E. F. HARRISON

¹⁰¹ GNO 9, 65–6.