

# The Relationship Between the Holy Spirit and Human Perfection in the Baptismal Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus: Examined with Reference to Christian Arabic Literature

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## Nazianzuslu Grigorios'un Vaftiz Teolojisinde Kutsal Ruh İle İnsanın Mükemmelleşmesi Arasındaki İlişki: Hıristiyan Arap Literatürü Bağlamında Bir İnceleme

Nazianzuslu Grigorios (329-390 [?]) Hıristiyan inanç esaslarının formüle edilmesinde ve Hıristiyan teolojisinin gelişiminde etkili olmuş kilise babalarından biridir. Grigorios aynı zamanda Hıristiyan asketik yaşam düşüncesinin teorisyenlerinden ve uygulayıcılarından. İlaveten o Hıristiyan eğitimi ve kültürü üzerine fikir beyan eden ve bu alanlarda aktif rol alan bir geç antikite yazarıdır. Ancak İncilci Yuhanna'dan sonra Teolog ünvanı ile anılmayı hak eden ikinci kişi olmasında önemli bir rol oynayan *Teolojik Vaazlar*'ına ve Konstantinopolis başpiskoposluğu sırasında özellikle Aryüşçüler karşısında gösterdiği tüm çabalara rağmen Grigorios, batı Hıristiyan dünyasında, sadece Bizans edebiyat geleneğine ait bir figür olarak görülüp ihmal edilmiştir. Bu noktada X. yüzyıl Antakya Melkit kilisesinde Grigorios'u Melkit cemaate Arapça ile tanıtmaya ya da hatırlatmaya ihtiyacının ortaya çıkması dikkat çekicidir. Melkit kilisesine mensup Arapça konuşan Bizanslı Hıristiyan tercümanlar tarafından Grekçe'den Arapça'ya çevrilmek üzere seçilen eserlerin ortak yanı ahlaki ve entelektüel içerikli olmalarıdır. Bu eserlerde yansıtılan ahlak ve bilgi merkezli insanın mükemmelleşmesi ve kurtuluşu vurgusunda akla ve ruha (ve kalbe) aynı anda dikkat çekilmesi önemlidir. Theosis ya da kemal erme doktrininin fikir babası olan Grigorios Kutsal Ruh'u hem akıl hem ruh için yönlendirici hatta tecrübe edilebilir bir unsur olarak sunmaktadır. Bu makalede Grigorios'un vaazlarının –özellikle *Vaftiz Üzerine* isimli vaazının- Arapça tercümelerinin insanın mükemmelleşmesi yolunda Kutsal Ruh'a biçtiği rol Hıristiyan Arap teolojisi ve literatürü ile bağlantılı olarak ele alınmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Nazianzuslu Grigorios, theosis, Kutsal Ruh, Antakya Melkit Kilisesi

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## Introduction

This article examines the relationship between the Holy Spirit and human perfection as presented in the Arabic translation of Gregory the Theologian's sermon on baptism.<sup>1</sup> Gregory the Theologian, or Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329-390) as he is widely known, is an important figure who represents the very productive age of Christian theology (the 4<sup>th</sup> century) and contributes to the Byzantine thought which owes much to his heritage. This is also true for the evolution of the concept or the idea of *theosis*. The reason which led me to focus on one specific sermon by Gregory is that he expresses or in some cases implies elegantly and intelligibly the most important elements of his theology in this long speech on baptism. I chose its Arabic translation<sup>2</sup> for two main reasons: First, it has not been studied before. Secondly, it makes it available for us to read Gregory's theory of theosis in a totally different context, i.e. the intellectual milieu of the 10<sup>th</sup> century Islamicate world.

The main interest of this article is human perfection, or theosis, as I find it the most comprehensive element of Gregory's thought. Theosis does not only explain the connection between God and human beings but also proposes an ideal for humankind. To limit the study of Gregory's theosis theology, here I highlight the role played by the Holy Spirit in human perfection. By doing this, I concentrate on the last phase of the deification process that ultimately or idealistically is hoped to end in participation or union with God. Therefore, here, the social and educational character of this process are touched upon only as parts of the setting behind human perfection while its intellectual and spiritual nature are examined in detail. I show that as the purifying

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1 This study is based on my doctoral dissertation, presented to the Cardiff University in 2013.

2 It was translated by Ibrâhîm ibn Yûḥannâ al-Anṭākî (c. 950-1025), who worked on an earlier version conducted by another Antiochene, Anṭônios (d. after 950s). Based upon the translations of Ibrâhîm, Anṭônios and 'Abdallâh ibn al-Faḍl (d. c. 1052) of mainly Greek patristic texts into Arabic, it is possible to talk about an Antiochene Greco-Arabic translation movement which coincided with the Byzantine reconquest of Antioch (969-1085). For the history and literature of the Arab Orthodox Christianity, see Nasrallah, Joseph, *Histoire du Mouvement Littéraire dans l'Église Melchite du V<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 5 vols., Paris: Peeters, 1979-1989; Noble, Samuel and Treiger, Alexander, "Christian Arabic Theology in Byzantine Antioch: 'Abdallâh ibn al-Faḍl al-Anṭākî and his Discourse on the Holy Trinity", *Le Muséon*, 124 (2011): 371-417; Noble, Samuel and Treiger, Alexander, ed. *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World 700-1700: An Anthology of Sources*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2014; Çolak, Hasan, *The Orthodox Church in the Early Modern Middle East: Relations Between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2015; Panchenko, Constantin A., *Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans 1516-1831*, trans. Samuel Noble, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2016.

and illuminating Christian sacrament, baptism perfectly fits for the whole setting in which Gregory develops his view of the deification process from its start to end. It provides him with both literal and metaphorical devices to encourage his audience to achieve the perfect state of humankind while here on earth and in the life to come. With the help of the Arabic translation of *Eis to baptisma*, I offer a new and comparative reading of the proposed link between the Holy Spirit, baptism and deification.

Accordingly, here, I compare the Greek original of Gregory's *Oration on Baptism* with its Arabic version and reveal how the original text is transmitted in the Arabic translation in terms of the role played by the Holy Spirit in deification. It is possible to say that what I aim to do here is provide a conceptual analysis of the two texts with particular attention to human perfection and its connection with the Holy Spirit. What I mean by conceptual analysis of the two texts is my reading of theosis, with its past and future implications, in the Greek and Arabic Gregory. While interpreting Gregory's theosis<sup>3</sup> theory within the setting of his baptismal theology, I highlight concepts and terms such as *paideia*, *katharsis*, *theōria*, *noēsis*, *gnosis*, *agapē* etc. In doing so, I pay attention to how the contents and associations of the Greek concepts appear in the Arabic version. This comparative and interpretive approach is accompanied with a historical perspective which helps the reader see the picture in a wider and more concrete context.

I raise two questions here: what role does the Holy Spirit play in the process of perfection and how does the Arabic translation of his oration answer these questions. I first argue that Gregory's theosis theory is an indivisible part of his theology, i.e. according to him there is an inseparable link between theology and theosis. Consequently, human beings get the meaning of their lives and salvation through (and by) God and their knowledge of Him. Therefore, theosis is as important as the existence of God. This is where both the Greek and Arabic Gregory proves his success as a theologian who draws a close connection between theology and human beings, which is a natural link as much as a philosophical and intellectual one. Then he explains the intellectual, spiritual and experiential dimension of this connection with the contribution of the Holy Spirit to human perfection. This is where the Arabic translation of Gregory's *Eis to baptisma* makes itself particularly noticeable for its use of the intellectual discussions and terminology of the Arab writers in and before the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

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3 Throughout the article, to make the text smooth, I use theosis, human perfection and deification interchangeably.

## Gregory the Theologian and Theosis

Salvation is the second most important issue that Gregory deals with in his orations after the true doctrine of the Trinity. When elaborating his view of salvation, he formulated a philosophy of theosis or deification whose roots can be found both in ancient philosophy<sup>4</sup> and early patristic thought,<sup>5</sup> though not fully developed. Gregory seems to use the words “salvation” and “theosis” interchangeably and it is therefore not always possible to discern how or if he is using the terms differently. Therefore, the relationship between these two terms in the Gregorian vocabulary is open to interpretation. However, here I take salvation in more general terms while reading theosis as the specific and exclusive meaning of redemption. In my reading, for Gregory, theosis is both a process which takes you to the highest level of human knowledge and experience of God through external and inner perfection and to this ultimate point itself.

As the father of theosis theology, Gregory has a pivotal role in the development of this thought. He is not only responsible for coining the term “theosis”<sup>6</sup> and building a theology of deification, but also for his influence on eastern theologians such as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century), Maximus the Confessor (d. c. 662) and Gregory Palamas (d. 1359) who were the key figures in the development of the patristic doctrine of theosis<sup>7</sup> in a spiritual way. I believe studies focusing on the later interpretations of theosis,

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4 See Lenz, John R., “Deification of the Philosopher in Classical Greece”, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Jeffery A. Wittung and Michael J. Christensen, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008, 47-67.

5 See Russell, Norman, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

6 Norman Russell gives a list of the various forms of the term ‘theosis’ that are employed by Gregory and points to the dates and orations they were used in. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 214-223. For the rhetorical analysis of the words used by Gregory, see Ruether, Rosemary Radford, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, 63-83 and Kharlamov, Vladimir, “Rhetorical Application of Theosis”, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Jeffery A. Wittung and Michael J. Christensen, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008, 115-131.

7 The concept entered the Byzantine tradition as a matter of theology with Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus who adapted Gregory’s teaching, most especially his terminology. The definition of the concept itself first appeared in Pseudo-Dionysius who described it in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (1.3) as “hē de theōsis estin hē pros theon hōs epikhon aphotomiōsis te kai henōsis” (*Theōsis* is the attaining of likeness to God and union with him so far as is possible). Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 14, 248.

especially the Byzantine<sup>8</sup> and the modern Orthodox readings, will reveal to what extent Gregory's theosis theory is continued and to what degree it is transformed. Recently, there is an increasing body of literature on the interaction between the Western and Eastern Christian thought with particular interest on deification. At the centre of this interaction is the western acceptance of the value of the eastern Christian tradition which is believed to be alive and prosperous due to its focus on theosis. I find this topic important for modern believers who seem to have lost the quest for salvation and believe that it should be studied within the perspective of comparative theology. For instance, the close connections between some ideas, such as the "union in the divine energies" of the Orthodox tradition and the "union with God in His names and attributes" of the Šūfi teaching, can be a good start.<sup>9</sup>

As will be mentioned later in this text, the rendering of the term "theosis" in the Arabic translation of *Eis to baptisma* or *Al-mīmar (or maymar) al-rā'bi' yahudū al-nās 'alā taqḍīmihim ilā l-ma'mūdiyya* (The fourth oration which exhorts people to baptism) (henceforth *Maymar*) is "ta'alluh". This is one of the places where I find the language of *Maymar* most interesting and effective. Further, considering the circumstances in which *Maymar* emerged in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century Antiochene Melkite Church, I interpret this language as momentous. I read the attempts of the Antiochene translators and their sponsors as an ideal to kindle a light of an ethical renewal based on human perfection. Regardless of the words used for the concept, the history of theosis in the Arabic literature as a whole has not been studied yet. However, it is possible to say that, though only by implication, there is a recent interest in the concept. Speaking of this point, Rizvi<sup>10</sup> reminds us that, "the concept of theosis in Islamic thought still awaits a serious study". Similarly, Treiger<sup>11</sup> thinks, "the term [...] and its history in Arabic philosophy requires a separate study". Likewise, Versteegh<sup>12</sup> indicates the importance of works like *A Greek and Arabic Lexicon (GALex)*<sup>13</sup> since they include some terms such as

8 According to Christopher A. Beeley, Gregory's soteriology in general, and his theosis theology in particular, shaped and developed the Byzantine understanding of salvation for centuries, and found reflection also in the West through figures like Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 320-321.

9 For an example of this kind of work, see Cutsinger, James, *Paths to the Heart: Sufism and the Christian East*, Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2002.

10 Rizvi, "Philosophy as a Way of Life in the World of Islam", 43.

11 Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 143.

12 Versteegh, "Review of 'A Greek and Arabic Lexicon (GALex)'" , 108.

13 Endress, Gerhard and Gutas, Dimitri, *A Greek and Arabic Lexicon (GALex): Materials for a Dictionary of the Mediaeval Translations from Greek into Arabic*, 12 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1992-2015.

“muta'allih” (“deified”), which are not found in classical dictionaries. Now is the time to look at the place of Gregory in Greek and Arab Christian thought since I believe that his theosis theology must be read in the wider context of these two traditions.

### **Gregory's Place in Late Antique Greek and Medieval Christian Arabic Thought**

Considering Gregory's place in Greek patristics, I classify his contribution into two categories: his effort to explain and propagate the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and his ideal of a divine life based on a living theology which does not ignore philosophy, mysticism and ethics. Regarding the first point, Gregory is particularly known for his efforts before the council of Constantinople (381) at which the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated in its full form, at least for the persons of the Trinity and their relations to each other.<sup>14</sup> He was asked to be the official guardian of orthodoxy in the capital of the Byzantine Empire possibly because of his talent as an orator. However, the theological circumstances through the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century as vividly described by him in his orations and poems were too much to bear for a person of sensitivity such as Gregory, who later took refuge in a life of contemplation and writing.<sup>15</sup>

Being one of the three Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory seemed to provide the profile of a teacher whereas his famous friend, Basil (d. 379), was more of a leader and Gregory of Nyssa (d. c. 395) was a thinker. Despite the whole tension he had in his life between living an ascetic or a social life, he could manage to explain theological and philosophical issues with powerful images and by touching people's hearts. Keeping in mind the time period during which he lived, Gregory used his tongue and pen as weapons to fight against those whose teachings gave a lower status to the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity and thus jeopardised human perfection.

In fact, Gregory was not the first or only person who taught the Trinitarian doctrine that was accepted in the council of Constantinople. As his two native friends, he had developed his argument on the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* and the emphasis on the hypostases of the persons of the Trinity. What makes him special is that he presented theology, which Neo-Platonism and Origen (d. 253/254) had great impact upon, in a more comprehensible and affective form for his audience. To do this, he put theosis

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14 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 154.

15 Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 15-26.

at the centre of his thought.<sup>16</sup> With his creative structure, he could both explain the Trinitarian doctrine and provide a convincing soteriology. In my view, what Gregory intended to achieve was to make theology understood well and complemented in divine economy or salvation and his success in this granted him the title “the Theologian”. Neither his apophatic theology and mystical thinking nor his Greek education and Second Sophistic sensibilities weakened his theological system but rather contributed to it.

It was not only the Byzantine tradition that kept Gregory’s thought alive in later periods, but also the Syriac and Arabic speaking Christians of the East in the Middle Ages based their views on his authority. Leaving the Syriac tradition aside in this study, I will give brief information about the medieval Christian Arabic thought which *Maymar* is only a small part of. When I say medieval Christian Arabic thought, I refer to the thinking of Christian writers from different denominations who lived in the Islamicate world and wrote in Arabic on theology and philosophy starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onward. It is not possible to give a comprehensive picture of this thought, but here I shall be concerned principally with placing *Maymar* in its context. Therefore, it will suffice to give a short account of the language and themes of Christian Arabic texts. Christians living in the Medieval Middle East under Muslim rule adopted Arabic at an early age as their religious language, in some cases including the liturgy, insomuch as it took the place of Syriac to a great extent.<sup>17</sup> Christian Arabic literature, of which little has been translated or studied yet, covers a broad range of topics consisting of intra-Christian discussions, Muslim accusations against Christian faith and practices and philosophical and ethical subjects.

A very significant part of this literature is the Arabic translations of Greek and Syriac texts. *Maymar* belongs to a unique body of texts which are translations conducted by the Antiochene Melkite translators in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century with the purpose of reviving the Byzantine tradition among the Arabic speaking Orthodox Christians. It is unique because the main motive behind the Antiochene translation movement was not the Muslim initiative for a scientific renaissance but a Christian ideal to be pursued in order to

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16 For different readings of his theology, see, in addition to Beeley and Daley, Norris, Frederick W., “Gregory Nazianzen’s Doctrine of Jesus Christ” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1970); Winslow, Donald F., *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979; Ellverson, Anna-Stina, “The Dual Nature of Man: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Gregory of Nazianzus” (PhD diss., Uppsala University, 1981), and McGuckin, John A., *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001.

17 Griffith, “Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām”, 5f.

keep the orthodox theological and ethical tradition alive. From a technical perspective, the language of Christian Arabic texts, either in original writings or in translations, reasonably differs from the classical Arabic and is categorised as Middle Arabic.<sup>18</sup> However, what is important for our purposes is the fact that Christian authors writing in Arabic used the intellectual terminology of the period produced and shared by both Christians and Muslims quite effectively.

Along with the translations of his orations into Arabic, it is not surprising to find Gregory as an authority in the writings of Medieval Christian Arabic as well as Coptic and Syriac writers such as the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra (750-823), the Jacobite Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī (d. 828/9), the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Başrī (died in the first half of the ninth century) and the Coptic Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 987). These writers referred to him not only in their discussions for the true doctrine but also in their treatments of philosophical and ethical subjects. John of Damascus (d. 749), the well-known Melkite theologian, seems to be the mediator<sup>19</sup> through whom Gregory's heritage reached Arabic speaking Orthodox Christians of the Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> The explanatory titles and introductory sections added to the Arabic translations of his orations are strong evidences of the high place he holds in the Melkite tradition. Moreover, the manuscripts of these translations were copied at the Melkite monasteries in south Palestine and Sinai and did spread to Egypt where they influenced the Coptic Christianity in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Gregory's Theosis Theology: Baptism as the Setting for Human Perfection**

As mentioned before, Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity is closely connected with his anthropology. In other words, the Trinity and its components, Christology and Pneumatology, necessitate salvation or theosis and vice versa.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it is possible to find in Gregory's system the Three Persons of the Trinity and human beings as the actors of human perfection. Although not in a scholastic way, Gregory systematises the roles of these

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18 Blau, *A Handbook of Early Middle Arabic*, 14.

19 Louth, *St. John Damascene*, 22.

20 Samir, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity", 72. Griffith, "'Melkites', 'Jacobites' and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in the Third/Ninth-Century Syria", 38, 40, 43.

21 In fact, theosis was linked by Gregory and his contemporaries such as Athanasius (d. 373) to the doctrine of the Incarnation according to which God became human in order that human beings become godlike. St. Athanasius, *De inc.* 54, 3, *PG* 25.192B.



actors and the theosis process. In fact, he does not say much about its real content or meaning (what exactly happens when one attains theosis) but focuses on its significance, actors and the process of perfection itself. Under this title, I will ask and try to answer two questions: what is the setting in which theosis is placed by and how does one reach it according to the Greek and Arabic Gregory?

I set forth four categories for Gregory's theosis theology: practical/social, intellectual, spiritual and experiential. However, these categories should rather be thought as different dimensions of the process of perfection, not as a set of steps that guarantee deification for all. Another important point to be emphasised is that Gregory attributes different functions of the Godhead to the persons of the Trinity in human perfection. Accordingly, the Father seems to be the source that draws human beings to perfection and to the Godhead while the Son is the person through whom human minds communicate with the divine and the Holy Spirit is the power that bestows and confirms perfection in the sensual and spiritual human nature. Put differently, the Father starts the process with creation and divine economy, the Son actualises it with the Incarnation, and the Holy Spirit seals it with sacraments. In addition to this task sharing by the persons of the Trinity, three points particularly draw our attention in the original and Arabic version of *Eis to baptisma* in terms of the Father: the Father as the *arkhe* of the Trinity, the divine names<sup>22</sup> and an emanationist view of creation. This is where *Maymar* proves its success in introducing Gregory's text in a new garment, but this is not the place to deal with it in detail since, in the oration, much space is given to the role played by the Son and the Holy Spirit in human perfection.

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22 *Maymar* uses *al-Muḥsin* (12,1-2 for *Theos*) for God and invites its reader to imitate Him in being generous towards others (33, 13 and 16). Gregory reminds his audience on every occasion to remember and contemplate on God's names. This practice is strongly preserved in the Orthodox tradition. Gregory has a special place in the discussions of the divine essence and names of the Byzantine theologians such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor. For this discussion and its later version in the Orthodox theology in the form of divine *energeia* and Logos-*logoi* connection, see Bradshaw, David, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 153-220. Similarly, the Antiochene Melkite translator and writer 'Abdallah ibn al-Faḍl (11<sup>th</sup> c.) refers to him when dealing with the names "Theos" and "Allāh" as the burning or the perplexing source for human mind. Noble and Treiger, "Christian Arabic Theology in Byzantine Antioch", 396. For Gregory's discussion elsewhere, see Orat. 30, PG 36.128A and Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 27-31*, 262-265.

### Baptism or Putting on Christ

To give an account of the relationship between Christ as the incarnate Son and theosis in both our texts, we need to look at baptism in the context in which Gregory sets his theosis theory in the oration. Baptism is given to human beings by the Father, who first created them in his image (şurat Allāh 8,6-7;<sup>23</sup> 10,22 etc.) and then, because He is so compassionate (raḥma, shafqa, ḥubb li-l-bashar and taḥannun 9 *passim* and 36,23-24), sent His Son, whom they put on as the Incarnate Word through baptism (paras. 4, 25, 29 and 31). The clothing image is weaved into a symbolic description of theosis within the sacrament of baptism which takes place in the church. Here, the courtyard, door and apse of the church have symbolic meanings. The catechumens or *ghayr ma'mūd* is supposed to pass a *dihlīz* (*prothuros*, front door in the Greek text) to draw closer to and then enter the church with the aim of reaching the Holy of Holies. Something special happens in the middle of *dihlīz*, that is, “being born of water and the Spirit” or “putting on Christ”. Having “died and raised again with Christ” (9), the purified and illuminated member of the church is to receive “the hidden mysteries of the Trinity” (38). The second symbolism Gregory uses for baptism is marriage. Christ is the bridegroom (18) with whom both teachers and the taught ones shall meet in His bride chamber to receive His teaching that only He knows about (46). This second setting will appear again in my discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in theosis on following pages.

### Christ as the Role Model for Perfection

As the visible part of the Godhead,<sup>24</sup> Christ is the giver or transmitter of knowledge (46,25 ‘ilm and irfān) by way of baptism. Gregory’s designation

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23 The first number refers to the related paragraph in *Maymar* whereas the second number points to the line. The same applies to *Eis to baptisma*. Regarding *Maymar* and *Eis to baptisma*, all the references are from Grand’Henry, Jacques, ed., *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4) (Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 57, Corpus Nazianzenum 19)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2005 and Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41 (Sources Chretiennes 358)*, trans. Paul Gallay, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990.

24 It is interesting to note that the Melkite theologians John of Damascus and al-Majdalus (c. 10<sup>th</sup> century) describe the Son of God as “the living image of the invisible God and His unchanging likeness” and “image of his (God’s) eternity” (*şūra azaliyyatihi*) or “the Word in the image of humanity” (*al-Masiḥ kalima bi-al-şūra al-bashariyya*) respectively. Griffith, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’ and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in the Third/Ninth-Century Syria”, 29. Al-Majdalus, *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, trans. by Samuel Noble, 2009; available from [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/al-majdalus\\_01\\_translation.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/al-majdalus_01_translation.htm). (accessed 29 July 2017). These descriptions are in line with

of Christ's role in human perfection as the realising agent is related to his understanding of the Incarnation. He teaches that "what is not assumed cannot be saved"<sup>25</sup> and thus Christ must have had a human mind. Christ's having a human mind was a matter of discussion among the miaphysite and dyophysite Christians. The miaphysite party opposed this view by claiming that it causes a division between the acts of Christ and adds another element to the Trinity, whereas the Melkite theologians taught that the Word united with the universal man rather than with a particular person.<sup>26</sup> This needs to be read also in the light of intra-Trinity communication in which Christ's soteriological role is prominent. Christian Arabic writers of the Middle Ages tried to express their views on theological issues in creative ways but, for me, their most interesting contribution to the Trinitarian doctrine is the triads they developed on Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic roots to explain this communication.<sup>27</sup> Either in their rather basic or more developed versions, these triads seem to introduce the Father as the source and the Son as the person who makes the source visible and attainable to human beings. In this line, the Holy Spirit can be thought as the power by whom the source is personalised by individuals as a gift and reward from the Godhead.

Speaking of the triads, I find Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's (d. 974) al-'Aql/al-Āqil/al-Ma'qūl<sup>28</sup> and 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib's (d. 1043) al-'Ilm/al-Ālim/al-Ma'lūm<sup>29</sup> formulations helpful in explaining how the persons of the Trinity work in human perfection. By learning and imitating the Knower who has the Knowledge, human beings can personalise the Known which is nothing other than the knowledge about the God individualised in or participated by them. Or the Known is transmitted from the Knowledge through the Knower. These formulae can also be applied to baptism. When a catechumen is baptised,

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Athanasius' rendering of the Logos as "the image of the Father" and Christ's designation in the second statement of the Dedication Creed (341) as "exact image' (aparallaktos eikōn) of the Divinity, power, being, will and glory of the Father". Leemans, "God Became Human, in Order That Humans Might Become God", 211. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 18. See paragraph 10 in Orat. 40: The Word appeared in respect of the veil (10,2-3 kai gar tō Logō kai (Theō mou) ... dia to kalymma, 10,2 bi-l-kalima(t) (l-ilāhī) bi-sabab l-sutra) or He is the hidden light on account of the manifest (10,3-4 tō kryptō phōti dia to phainomenon, 10,2-3 al-ḍaw l-mastūr min ajl l-zāhir).

25 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 127.

26 Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims*, 46, 75-76. Thomas, *Early Muslim Polemics Against Christianity*, 64, 87, 93.

27 Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes*, 228-231.

28 Platti, "Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī", 412, 414.

29 Faultless, "Ibn al-Ṭayyib", 690-691.

he or she receives the Holy Spirit that the Baptised One obtained from the Father. Considering the fact that, despite its emphasis on the distinction of the persons, the Christian doctrine teaches unity of will and operation in the Trinity, these triadic schemes need not to be construed in the categorical sense, but considered as an explanation for the intra-Trinity communication. For the modern Catholic theologian Karl Barth, this communication takes place among the Revealer, the Revelation, Revealedness.<sup>30</sup> But it is definitely in the very nature of this communication to open itself to the created world and make human beings partakers of this connection. I will discuss below the real nature of humankind's share from this communion as it is described by the Greek and Arabic Gregory.

In the context of Late Antiquity, baptism, which was generally for adults, necessitated a period of preparation that took nearly three years in some cases. Gregory teaches that catechumens are supposed to learn the teaching of the church as taught by Jesus Christ before baptism and confess the true faith orally in front of a congregation during the ceremony. Similarly, they are assumed to have undergone a total change in their morals (akhlâq 32,3) by imitating Jesus Christ. Here comes the importance of the teacher and baptiser who is accused in *Maymar* of drowning (44,23 baptistên, 44,19 al-mughraq) instead of dyeing the baptised person with a distinctive colour (şibgha 2,9, 44,22) unless having the orthodox faith. The role of Christ as reformer of morals becomes much more evident in *Maymar* than *Eis to baptisma* since the Arabic text renders *paideia* and *paidagōgia* as *adab* (39,10 tēs Christou paideias, 39,7 bi-adab l-Masīh), which offers a broader range of meanings of which morals comes first.

Being morally renewed or reborn does not consist only of an inner change but also has a social dimension which is strongly advocated in *Maymar* as in the connection drawn between baptism and şalâḥ/şalât (uss l-dîn, 'imād l-dîn 3,7) and in the emphasis on the life of Jesus on earth (*adab l-Masīh*, sira, madhhab, şinā'ā and madhāhib, 'awāyid 39,7, 18,19 ve 36,15). This point is strengthened in *Maymar* in a way that I interpret as a stress on the humanity of Christ that makes itself felt throughout the oration. It is reinforced with the attention drawn towards Jesus' disciples (to become the lights of the world (37,14) and to give the miracles and healing powers of Christ to others (34,17-18)), the church (either as bī'a (39,10) or as kanīsa (21,7)) and tradition (al-idmān (36,13-14) or al-azmān (in some manuscripts) and jamā'ā (27,6, 31,23, 31,29)). Here one must recall the fact that asceticism is an important part of Gregory's thought. Although not in its literal sense, an ascetic life is part of

<sup>30</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/I, 295.

the preparation period before baptism and the lifelong practice of imitating Christ. However, it is to be complemented by a life dedicated to study and service for the church and community. Gregory does not seem to strike the necessary balance between these two types of living in his own life, whereas he teaches it reasonably well in his writings.

So far, I have pointed to the connection drawn by Gregory between the Trinity and theosis with particular attention to a kind of task sharing among the persons of the Trinity and the role of the Son without going into detail of the Father's position. I have proposed a reading of Gregory's theosis theory in four categories of which here, in line with *Maymar*, I have singled out Christ's function in the practical or social dimension of theosis as the living example of perfection. Nevertheless, as the agent that connected with humanity in his human mind or human nature, the incarnate Word also has a share in the intellectual character of theosis. Now it is the time to turn our attention to the metaphysical and experiential character of theosis in which I will discuss the position of the Gregorian Pneumatology.

### **The Relationship Between the Holy Spirit and Theosis: Gregorian Pneumatology**

Pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual aspect of human beings and their relationship with God. Gregory's Pneumatology treats these two topics around the concept of theosis. Speaking of his teaching on the Holy Spirit, four points come to the fore: the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, a progressive understanding of revelation, traditional worship of the Holy Spirit and theosis. Here, I will introduce the first three topics and leave to the following pages the discussion of the last point which is directly related to human-divine interaction and, at the same time, to the second aspect of the science of Pneumatology.

The Trinitarian doctrine of the Eastern Churches teaches that the Son is begotten by<sup>31</sup> and the Holy Spirit proceeds<sup>32</sup> from the Father, whereas Latin

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<sup>31</sup> Orat. 40, paragraph 45: gennēthenta (22) and al-mawlūd (15). Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 304. Grand'Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 185. See Ibn al-Faḍl's *Discourse on the Holy Trinity*, Chapter 12 ("On that the Hypostases are not properties") for his use of "being begotten" (al-tawallud) as "the khāṣṣa of the Son". Noble and Treiger, "Christian Arabic Theology in Byzantine Antioch," 404.

<sup>32</sup> To describe the relationship of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, Gregory used the idea or language of "procession" for the first time in patristic tradition which found its way in the formula of the council of Constantinople. Here, we should

Christianity associates the origination of the Holy Spirit not only with the Father but also with the Son. This point is related to our discussion here in terms of the Eastern Christian emphasis on the headship<sup>33</sup> of the Father in the Trinity. It can be easily identified in both versions of our text (43,1 meizō, 43,1 akbar). Moreover, hierarchy in the Trinity is a common idea that frequents in Christian Arabic literature as in ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ṭayyib’s description of paternity (of the Father) and filiation (of the Son) as the first (al-kamāl l-awwal) and the second perfectness (al-kamāl l-thānī).<sup>34</sup> More interestingly, in the Middle Ages, the discussion of the procession of the Holy Spirit was centred around an idea of effusion or emanation from the Father. Nevertheless, there were some theologians, such as the Jacobite Abū Rā’iṭa ibn al-Takrītī, who, by referring to Eve’s coming into being from Adam, explained the connection between the Father and the Holy Spirit simply as procession.<sup>35</sup> Some, like Dionysius of Antioch (d. 960), preferred both, i.e. procession and emanation.<sup>36</sup>

The procession of the Holy Spirit is explained as emanation by medieval Christian Arabic writers whose Neo-Platonic tendency is well known. The variety of the terms used by Christian Arabic writers to describe procession ranges from khārij, fā’iḍ, ṣādir to inbithāq and inbī’āth. ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl prefers inbithāq and inbī’āth<sup>37</sup> for the procession of the Holy Spirit, whereas

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remember that one of the main concerns of the Cappadocian Fathers was to fight against the Pneumatomachi (“Spirit fighters” or “Opposers of the Spirit”) or the Macedonians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 24.

33 It also invokes the idea of causation (43,8 aitian, 43,7 ‘illa), not only in terms of origination but also in connection with divine actions which makes the issue more confusing. Melkite Syriac epicleses used for baptism services include two versions of invocation in one of which the Holy Spirit is called to come down while in the other the Father is asked to send Him. Brock, “A Short Melkite Baptismal Service in Syriac”, 119, 121, 124. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 72-73.

34 *Treatise on the Hypostases and the Substance*, Vat. Ar. MS 145 in Haddad, *La Trinité divine*, 237, 243. It should not be striking to find an Aristotelian philosopher explaining the Son’s being begotten as outpouring of the first perfection since his contemporaries had also a Neo-Platonic inclination.

35 Keating, *Defending the “People of Truth”*, 112-116.

36 The copyist of this letter felt the need to remind the reader that Dionysius clearly pointed to the procession which is different from emanation. Synodical Letter, Par. Ar. MS 183, f. 288<sup>f</sup> in Haddad, *La Trinité divine*, 239.

37 Dionysius of Antioch, *Synodical Letter*, Par. Ar. MS f. 287<sup>v</sup> and 288<sup>f</sup> in Haddad, *La Trinité divine*, 240-242. Abū Qurra renders procession as inbithāq. Husseini, *Early Christian Explanations of the Trinity in Arabic in the Context of Muslim Theology*, 116.

*Maymar* employs *khārij* and *fayḍ*,<sup>38</sup> though not particularly for the procession, but for the outpouring of the Godhead:<sup>39</sup>

When God comprehends and contemplates His essence, He outpours Himself, i.e. the light known in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (5,9 *oliga tois exō cheomenon. Phōs de legō to en Patri kai Huiō kai hagiō Pneumati theōroumenon, 5,5-6 wa-yafiḍu min dhālik al-yasir ilā khārij a'anī bi-l-nūr al-ḍaw al-mafhūm fi l-Ab wa-l-Ibn wa-l-Rūh Quds*).

In Late Antique and Medieval Christian Arabic theology, the idea of the outflow of God is related to both intra-Trinity dialogue and human-divine communication. The miaphysite theologian Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī describes the Father as the Pure Intellect in the Aristotelian sense. In line with this reasoning, the Son is the Intelligiser or the Intelligising agent that human beings can get into contact with, whereas the Holy Spirit is the Intelligible<sup>40</sup> by pure human intellection. This explanation of the Trinity reminds us of the Farabian description of God as pure intellect, pure intelligible and pure intellector at the same time.<sup>41</sup> Ibn 'Adī's perfect man (*al-insān l-tāmm*) is the one who achieved connection with the Godhead in his intellect, which is created in the image of God.

As in his treatment of creation in terms of an upward movement of beings towards perfection, Gregory describes human attempts to be Godlike in an emanational language. This Neo-Platonic reading refers to the Aristotelian description of the spirit as the first perfection and assumes a hierarchy of beings whose rank in the intellectual realm is identified proportionate to the degree of their perfection. The stages assumed to be taken in the process of perfection will be discussed below. What I want to point out here is an understanding of the Godhead and creation which centres around the idea of emanation from the Father and that this notion, first and most importantly, emerges from the discussion of the mode of the Holy Spirit's existence as a person of the Trinity. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the agent with whom human beings personalise what they attain from God or partake in the divine

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38 And *inbithāq* in Orat. 41, 9 (*x syr.*). Grand'Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XI, XLI* (Arab. 8, 12), 92.

39 Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41, 204*. Grand'Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL* (Arab. 4), 17.

40 According to Ibn Zur'a and Ibn 'Adī, the Holy Spirit is called the Intelligible by analogy ('alā jihat l-tamthīl). This is in fact the translation of Aristotle's paradeigma (I Analytic, II, 24, 68, 38) by Avicenna (*al-Ishārāt* and *al-Najāt*). Haddad, *La Trinité divine*, 227.

41 Al-Fārābī, *Ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, 36, 37.

nature. This point will become clearer when I address the issue of divine love as the power that attracts human beings toward an ascension to the divine realm.

### **The Holy Spirit as the Revealer and the Object of Worship**

The second important element of Gregory's Pneumatology is his theory of revelation, which teaches a progressive unveiling of the Godhead. Gregory is the first patristic writer who states that the divinity of the Holy Spirit was revealed only when human beings were ready to receive Him. This view is in connection with his theory of divine pedagogy and his method of exegesis on the basis of a letter-spirit distinction. Accordingly, the divinity of the Holy Spirit becomes clear in a spiritual reading of the Bible.<sup>42</sup>

The third reference point of the Gregorian Pneumatology is the traditional worship of the Holy Spirit. Gregory draws attention to the fact that the Holy Spirit was worshipped by Christians. Since He is God, all divine activities from creation to general resurrection must be attributed to Him but He is particularly active in the sacrament of baptism.<sup>43</sup> According to Gregory's reasoning, the divine actor who deifies human beings by baptism must be God:

If I worshipped the creation and was baptised into a creature, then I would not be made divine (42,14-16 *Ei eti ktismati prosekynoun ē eis ktisma ebaptizomēn, ouk an etheoumēn, 42,10-11 fain ana sajadtu li-l- khalīqa wa-ustībī'tu bi-makhlūqin fa-lastu ata'allahun*).

While I either did not worship the two with whom I was baptised or I worshipped them and believed that they are both created [then, according to this view, it means that they are fellow servants] [...] (20-21 *autos ē mē proskynōn ta dyo, eis a symbebaptismasi, ē proskynōn ta homodoula [;], 14-16 idhā mā anā lam asjud li-l-ithnayn alladhīna bi-himā*

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42 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 261. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, 25f. Christopher A. Beeley states that, "In a manner not seen since Origen, Gregory's Pneumatology reflects a fundamental interconnection between dogmatic, epistemological, and hermeneutical concerns [...]". Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 165.

43 Muslim writers criticised Christians for their explanations of the doctrine of the Incarnation on the point that only the Word became incarnate but not the Father or the Spirit and this is against the unity in the Godhead. Against the accusations, Christian Arabic theologians indicated that the Incarnation took place with the divine will or with the consent of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another point taught by them is that Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Thomas, *Early Muslim Polemic Against Christianity*, 144-145.



uṣṭibighu aw an sajadtu la-humā wa-‘ataqadtu annahumā fi-l-‘ubūdiyya mushārikan fa-humā ‘abdan ‘alā hādha l-ra’y.

Even if I wanted “to prefer in honour or esteem” the Son to the Spirit, baptism, which makes me perfect through the Spirit, would not allow me to do that: 43,9-11 Thelō ton ‘Uion ptotimēsai kai ou synchōrei moi to baptisma teleioun me dia tou Pneumatos, 43,8-9 wa urīdu an uqaddima l-Ibn ‘alā l-Rūḥ wa-laysa tatrakunī l-ma‘mūdiyya wa-hiya tatmamnī bi-l-rūḥ.<sup>44</sup>

Those who want to attain perfection must follow the Holy Spirit who empowers them by baptism in the way of theosis:

[Humankind will give account to its Creator] whether it has followed the flesh alone or ascended with the Spirit: 2,9-10 eite tē sarki monon epēkolouthēsen eite tō Pneumati synanēlthe, 2,6-7 in kānat taba‘at l-jasad waḥdahu am ṣa‘adat ma‘a l-rūḥ. Baptism or illumination is the following of the Spirit: 3,8 Pneumatos akolouthēsis, 3,5 ittībā‘ l-rūḥ. The cleansing provided by baptism<sup>45</sup> is twofold, one with water and the other with the Spirit: 8,3 di’ hydatos te phēmi kai Pneumatos, 8,3 wa-humā l-mā wa-l-rūḥ.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, water and the Spirit give power to the baptised ones to defend themselves against conflicts: 10,5 Probalou to hydōr, probalou to Pneuma, 10,4 qaddama l-mā qaddama l-rūḥ. They will also be sealed both in soul and in body by the unction and the Spirit: 15,3-4 sēmeiōtheis kai psychēn kai sōma tō chrismati kai tō Pneumati, 15,2-3 wa-wasumat naf-suka wa-jismuka bi-l-masūḥ wa-l-rūḥ. The Spirit to whom the baptiser

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44 Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 296, 298. Grand’Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 173-174, 176. See also Orat. 31.28: “If [the Spirit] is not to be adored (proskynēton), how can it deify me by baptism? And if it is adored, how is it not worshipped (septon)? And if it is worshipped, how is not God (theos)? The one is linked to the other, a truly golden and saving chain.” PG 36.165A.

45 When they are baptised, infants are cleansed only by the Spirit (possibly because they do not need the cleansing of water as they are not stained with sin): 17,16 ex onychōn kathierōthētō tō Pneumati, 17,13 wa-huwa ṭiflun wa-ṭuhuruhu bi-l-rūḥ. Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 232. Grand’Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 67.

46 For another reading of baptism in Christian Arabic literature in terms of a second birth or regeneration, see also Al-Majdalus, *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, (between [150] and [152]):

The birth from the flesh decays and changes while the birth from the spirit does not decay and does not change because it is the birth of life, the birth from God to perfect the human form (al-mawlūd min Allāh li-yukammula l-ṣūrat l-insāniyya) by this second birth (al-milād l-thānī) because the Spirit of perfection (rūḥ l-kamāl) is in baptism and brings the salvation of the soul (khalāṣ l-nafs) from the darkness of the body.

lends his hands is eager to consecrate the catechumen through baptism and hastens for salvation: 44,19-21 idou kichrēmi tas cheiras tō Pneumati. Tachynōmen tēn sōtērian [...], 44,16-17 wahā yadāy a‘īruhumā li-l-rūḥ fa-hallimū nasra‘u ilā l-khalāṣ wa-nanhiḍu ilā l-ma‘mūdiyya fa-in l-rūḥ takhtaliju.<sup>47</sup>

Before proceeding with the fourth aspect of Gregory’s Pneumatology, a few words should be said about Pneumatology in general. As Christopher Beeley<sup>48</sup> notes, Gregory “devotes fewer passages to the explicit discussion of the Spirit than he does to his ascetical theory, to Christ, or to the Trinity”, but in many aspects, “it is Gregory’s Pneumatology that most distinctively characterises his theological project”. It is not possible to say that a comprehensive Pneumatology was developed in the Middle Ages apart from the discussions of the divine essence and hypostases and the procession of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, there is no specific work –at least to my knowledge– devoted to the Holy Spirit in medieval Christian Arabic literature since it rather concentrates on the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation, most particularly the relationship between the divine essence and attributes. In the same vein, the Pneumatology of the Arabic Gregory does not contribute much to our understanding of the Holy Spirit except the emphasis on His role as the personalising agent of perfection in the theosis process.

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Human Perfection**

Up to this point, I have provided the framework on which I base the role of the Holy Spirit in Gregory’s theosis theology. Now, I will discuss His place in theosis on two grounds: He completes the baptism process and opens the door of a new world to those who go further in the way of theosis. His first task includes making newly baptised individual members of the church and sons of God or brothers of Christ. Here we find an emphasis on the traditional role assigned to the Holy Spirit, which is to preserve the church and tradition. The second work is a complicated one as it incorporates the intellectual, spiritual and experiential character of theosis. I have indicated that Gregory assigned the social or visible structure of the theosis process to Christ’s life on earth, which is all the more remarkable in the Arabic version of the oration. However, the task of turning the grace or salvation offered by

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47 Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 200, 202, 212, 216, 228, 302. Grand’Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 11, 12, 27, 34, 56, 181.

48 Gregory of Nazianzus *on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 154.

the Incarnation to human beings into a personal and more intimate relationship with God and bestowing the gift of God<sup>49</sup> by baptism is attributed to the Holy Spirit. More specifically, in this level, He gives inspiration to those who have achieved inner perfection and makes them experience the divine.

Through the end of his oration, Gregory says that he will baptise the audience and make them disciples (45,9 *Baptisō se mathēteuōn*, 45,7 *fa-sa'atalmazu wa-a'maduka*) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit who have one common name, the Godhead. This sentence should be read together with the strong emphasis of the Arabic text on discipleship and tradition. Thinking of the baptised person's position in the church as a new member, it is easy to recognise that Gregory is talking about a special category given to those who imitate and follow Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection.<sup>50</sup> Baptised Christians are thought to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit as in Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan and at Pentecost.<sup>51</sup>

I find the Syriac description of the process after baptism most illuminating and helpful to understanding what sonship or discipleship means. In Syriac tradition, the Holy Spirit is thought to be active in the second part of the ritual of baptism by giving the post-baptismal anointing after the gifts of the sonship are received. These gifts entail becoming like the Second Adam or Christ having a new body which is the temple of the Spirit, (re)entering paradise and turning into kings and priests. The Holy Spirit's giving the baptised the status of sonship also refers to becoming brothers to Christ and heirs of the divine kingdom. Thus, they become worthy of calling God "Father". This is called the "uncovering of the face" or *parrhesia*. Furthermore, they are believed to be like lost sheep returning to their flocks and are accepted

49 The Biblical Paraclete whom Muslims identify with Prophet Muḥammad is thought to be the Holy Spirit Himself and sometimes His post-Easter gift in Christian tradition.

50 For the spiritual character of this mission, see *Kitāb al-burhān dīn al-naṣṣrāniyya* – a 9<sup>th</sup> century Melkite text, paragraph 274:

[The Spirit] illuminates the person immersed in [the water] by His light, and indwells his soul so that he knows spiritual matters which fleshly persons do not know [...] [A]nd his soul becomes shining and is rightly guided by that light, both in its earthly stay and sojourn in the body, and after its leaving the body.

Eutychius of Alexandria, *The Book of Demonstration (Kitāb al-burhān)*, ed. Pierre Ca-chia, I, 151. Eutychius of Alexandria, *The Book of Demonstration (Kitāb al-burhān)*, trans. William M. Watt, I, 122-123.

51 For this role of the Holy Spirit, see *Fī Tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* (paragraphs 381-388), an 8<sup>th</sup> century Christian Arabic apology: "If Christ was not truly God, the works of the Apostles would not be proven. However, He supported them by the Holy Spirit and they did all sorts of signs (*āyāt*). Their situation solidified itself all over the world, though they became strangers and poor (*ghurabā' masākīn*)."<sup>51</sup> Samir, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity", 105.

into Christ's congregation, where they become unwavering members of the church.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, *Kitāb al-burhān*<sup>53</sup> speaks about becoming son of the Father and brother of the Son through baptism or "the indwelling of the Holy Spirit":

The immersed one has become one of the children of light, whom the Holy Spirit has illumined with His light, who the Father has adopted as His own, and whom the Son, Christ, has adopted as His brother (wa-ṣāra l-maṣbūgh min banī l-nūr qad anārathu rūḥ l-Quds bi-nūrihā wa-tabnāhu l-Āb wa-tawakkhāhu l-Ibn l-Masiḥ). Thus it becomes permissible for him to call God "Father" through brotherhood with Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in himself [...].

The Arabic version of *The Legend of Bahīra*<sup>54</sup> mentions the "sons of baptism" similar to the description of Christians as "the children of holy baptism (awlād l-ma'mūdiyya l-muqaddasa)" in Gerasimus' *Kitāb al-kāfi*.<sup>55</sup> One of the issues related to the Holy Spirit in Christian Arabic literature is the connection between Him and the church. According to the writers of *Fi Tathlith*, Theodore Abū Qurra and Abū Rā'īṭa, the Holy Spirit inspires through the councils and the fathers. This is in line with Gregory's theory of divine pedagogy which also appears in Abū Rā'īṭa's writings.<sup>56</sup> The earlier Syriac texts calls the Holy Spirit the 'Mother' who is referred by Gregory of Nyssa as the "Mother of the chosen dove (the Church)" in his commentary on the Song of Songs 6:8 while discussing Christ's baptism. Syriac writers described baptism as the mother of Christians and likened the baptised to Mary due to their connections with the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

After sketching the context in which the Holy Spirit works during and after baptism, we should now go beyond the sanctuary that is called "the bride chamber of Christ" (45) by Gregory to unveil the "more mysterious reason" (29,29-30 logos ... aporrētoton, 29,24-25 kalām ukhra adiqq), since the sacrament of baptism is "greater than the visible world" (25,33-34 Meizon

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52 Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 38-41, 45-46, 50-57.

53 Cachia, I, 145-146; Watt, I, 118.

54 Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, 421, 429.

55 Bahkou, "Kitāb al-kāfi fī al-ma'nā al-ṣāfi", 321, 324.

56 Swanson, "Folly to the Ḥunafā", 247. Griffith, "Melkites, 'Jacobites' and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in the Third/Ninth-Century Syria", 42, 44. Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic*, 281, 283, 289. Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, 46, 52.

57 Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 2-4, 18, 73-74, 132.

tōn horōmenōn, 25,27 ajal min l-mubširāt). Beyond the veil that separates the visible world from the invisible, the sons of God will be called “friends of God” (16,19-20 ō anthrōpe tou Theou [man of God], 16,16 ‘abdallāh wa-šāhibahu). Thus begins the second work of the Holy Spirit in the process of theosis, namely, the spiritual and experiential perfection.

### Knowledge and Experience as Means of Perfection

In Gregory’s theosis theology, the Holy Spirit appears to be the bridge between the divine image within human beings and the Godhead. Here rises a question about the nature of this divine image. Is it the intellect or spirit or heart? The answer of this question is one of the points that *Maymar*’s terminology proves its success. Ibrāhīm uses a language which successfully renders the distinction between the intellectual faculty and mystical cognition or the experience of the divine in agreement with the terminology of his day. The Holy Spirit has a share in these three aspects of the process of perfection.

The Holy Spirit connects human beings with the heavenly world epistemologically and ontologically. This is, as Ibrāhīm puts it, *ta’alluh*, which refers both to the process and to the ultimate goal, especially to the peak point of perfection. It may sound bold to modern readers, as it sounded so to Ibn ‘Arabī<sup>58</sup> in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The idea of theosis, which embraces the full experience of the Holy Spirit by human beings as indicated by Maximus the Confessor,<sup>59</sup> has become one of the distinctive features of Orthodox Christianity. Moreover, it is the Palamite version of Byzantine theology that Western Christians are interested in today. For Gregory Palamas, theosis is an energy (*energia*) of God or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in human beings whose minds change into light or are replaced by the Spirit of God. When they pray, it is the Holy Spirit who is engaged with an endless noetic activity.<sup>60</sup>

The real nature of the divine image, or *šūra*, placed by God in human beings must be the spirit which partakes in the divine nature through the Holy Spirit. Gregory’s *eikonos* appears in *Maymar* as “the image of the soul because it has one of the images of the Creator” (32, bi l-šūrat l-nafs li’annahā ‘indahū šūra min šuwar l-Bārī). The “soul and its image” phrase (38 al-nafs

58 As Sajjad Rizvi notes, “[I]nstead of explicitly referring to *ta’alluh*, Ibn ‘Arabī prefers talking about acquiring divine virtue because becoming godlike may easily be misunderstood in a strictly monotheistic society”. Rizvi also indicates, “[For Ibn ‘Arabī] [...] [T]hat restricts the possible vice of pride that may result from *ta’alluh*”. Rizvi, “Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā”, 244, 235.

59 Plested, “The Ascetic Tradition”, 170.

60 Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 232.

wa-şūratuhā) is also used by Ibrāhīm for *psychēn*.<sup>61</sup> It is the spirit that is emphasised here. Regarding God's images, it is possible to suggest that they are *energies* or *logoi* (or the divine names and attributes) of the Byzantine theology. Through energies the invisible God can be known. These uncreated energies potentially exist in the spirit. It is these energies that act in perfect human beings or they reflect energies in their activities. There are three fundamental energies (or *proodos*) for Pseudo-Dionysius: purification, illumination and deification. This hierarchy is itself an energy.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, theosis is a part of the invisible God that we enter into contact with and make ours by way of endless imitation of God.

Gregory depicts both the period before baptism, symbolised by Christ's teaching, and the sacrament of baptism itself as the purification step. After the first level in the hierarchy he envisages comes illumination, love and union: God presents Himself to us in proportion to our purification (5,4 *hoson an kathairōmetha, phantazomenon* 5,3 *bi- ḥasb mā nataṭahharu yutaṣawwiru lanā*) and we love Him in proportion to how He is presented to us (5,4-5 *kai hoson an phantasthōmen, agapōmenon*, 5,3-4 *wa-bi-qadr mā yutaṣawwiru lanā nashtāqu*). And as we love Him (5,5 *kai hoson an agapēsōmen*, 5,4 *wa-bi-qadr mā yatāqu ilayh*), we turn to Him and comprehend Him alone (5,6 *authis nooumenon*, 5,4-5 *na'ūdu fa-na'qilu huwa waḥdahū*). What we see here is an ascension from imagination or the visible world towards rational thinking.

Ibrāhīm's terminology is impressive in that it has a wide range of words used for various activities of the mind, such as rational processes (*iḥtijāj*, *khibra*, *lubb*, *dhikr*, *tamyīz*, *nuṭq*, *ma'qūlāt*, *maḥsūsāt* etc.), discursive reasoning (*naẓara*, *bayyana*, *'aqala*, *qayasa*) and various ways of thinking (*ta'ammala*, *tafakkara*, *takhayyala*, *adraka*, *fahima*, *taṣawwara*, *qaddara*, *ḥakama*, *ẓanna*). Words like *hujja* and *khibra* denote more than one meaning, such as argumentative evidence gained through demonstrative or sophistical reasoning and knowledge obtained by experience, respectively. Even the afterlife is depicted with words related to 'aql, and "thoughts" (39,25 *ē dianoēmata*) is rendered as "qiyāsāt" (39,18). Despite the emphasis on rational thinking in the text,<sup>63</sup> we are warned against falling into "excess in syllogism and thinking" (21,17 *asullogistōs*, 21,16 *bi-ghayr ziyāda fī qiyās wa-fikr*) or being like those

61 For Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl's tripartite division of the soul, see Rached, "Les notions de rūḥ (esprit) et de nafs (âme) chez 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Ḥakīm al-Anṭākī, Théologien melchite du XIe siècle", 183, 189-193.

62 Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy", 155.

63 "Baptism is the perfection of the mind (*tamām l-'aql* 3,6-7). Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 202. Grand'Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzenii Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 13.

“whose minds suffer from blindness” (45,43 *ēgemonikon*, 45,30 *‘uqūluhum*) or those “who do not use their minds wisely” (21,13 *dianoian*, 21,12 *fikr pas-sim* or “lack of reasoning” 23,18 *anoia*, 23,16 *bi-naqṣ fi ‘uqūlihim*).

Mystical cognition and experience, however, are of great significance inasmuch as they are further steps to be taken after having a sound reasoning. Gregory uses metaphors like “Moses on the mountain”, “the light on the Mount Tabor” and “veiling”, which were handled by later Byzantine theologians in greater detail. His description of God as the “light behind the veil” appears in Christian Arabic writings in the form of the “disguised king”<sup>64</sup> and within the “veil” imagery. This is where the Holy Spirit’s role, through which human beings can internalise what they have from the visible God or Jesus Christ, comes to the fore. Without this internalising, it is not possible to draw closer to God perfectly. In this step of theosis, the knowledge needs to turn into wisdom whereas experience also must step in. The central force that manages the process of drawing closer is the love between God and His creatures.<sup>65</sup>

Ibrāhīm’s preference of words such as *ma’rifa*,<sup>66</sup> *ḥikma*, *dhikr*, *ladhdha*, *maḥabbat Allāh* (for *diabēmata/step* in 37,1-2) and *‘ishq* (for engraving in 22,20-21) is impressive in that it imposingly directs the reader to a spiritual and experiential world. Love is a personal feeling which is not taught but given. Nevertheless, our yearning or love for God depends on our knowledge of Him (5,4-5 *kai hoson an phantasthōmen*, *agapōmenon kai hoson an agapēsōmen*, *authis nooumenon*, 5,3-4 *wa-bi-qadr mā yutaṣawwuru lanā nashtāqu wa-bi-qadr mā yatāqu ilayh na’ūdu fa-na’qilu huwa waḥdahu*). Ibrāhīm emphasises this point with the addition of *maḥabba* to *al-‘aql al-mustawlī* which is the light that leads us through the way in love of God (37,2-3 *tēn tou hēgemonikou lampada*, *kateuthynon hēmin ta kata Theon diabēmata*, 37,1-2 *huwa l-‘aql l-mustawlī fi-nā wa-huwa l-ladhī yamhidu lanā*

64 Roggema, “*Ḥikāyāt amthāl wa asmār*”, 113-131.

65 God is Who shines wondrously from the everlasting mountains (36,7 “*Phōtizeis de sy thaumastōs, apo oreōn aiōniōn*”, 36,5 *fa-anta taḍā ‘ajīban min l-jibāl l-dahriyya*) and His light is too strong for the eyes (40,6). However, as David calls Him, the Lord is (his) light and salvation (36,9-10 “*Kyrios de phōtismos mou kai sōtēr mou*”, 36,7 *rabbi nūri wa-makhlāṣi*) for His creatures. Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 280. Grand’Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 152. For ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faql’s discussion of the link between the name “God” and the perplexity it causes in the human mind, see *Discourse on the Holy Trinity*, Chapter 1, “On the derivation of the term ‘God’ (allāh) and on whether it is a name or an attribute” cited and translated in Noble and Treiger, “Christian Arabic Theology in Byzantine Antioch,” 396-7, 407-408.

66 It is not possible to say that *ma’rifa* is used in *Maymar* only for the Greek words which refers to mystical or spiritual cognition though it mostly denotes this kind of intellection.

l-sabîl fî-maḥabbat Allāh). Proceeding in this way also depends on being in love (22,25-26 Toutōn de autōn beltious hoi kai geōrgountes to charisma kai hoti malista eis kallos heautous apoxeontes, 22,20-21 wa-afḍalu min hāulāihim l-ladhīna yuflihūna l-ni‘ma wa-ma‘shūq l-jamāl li-nufūsihim (wayanqishūna l-jamāl fî-nufūsihim).<sup>67</sup> Those who grow the gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit fall in love with the beauty in their own souls (ma‘shūq l-jamāl li-nufūsihim). In the hierarchy Gregory proposes for uniting with God, love is followed by becoming close to and having a different comprehension of Him. Now is the time to have a look at this experiential dimension of perfection.

### **Aims and Goals of Gregory’s Theosis Theology: What is Theosis After All?**

Gregory’s theosis theology has a twofold purpose, one of which is intended for the Christian community while the other is for individuals. I explain his concern for a perfect society in the first two categories through which I interpret his theosis theory in this paper. The practical and intellectual dimension of perfection is symbolised by the morals and teaching of Christ (*adab l-Masīḥ*). I think that this ideal of a perfect community fitted perfectly well with the Antiochene Melkite thinkers of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century in whose attempts I find a vision for an ethical and intellectual revival in the Melkite community. The time period in which these attempts emerged coincided with the Byzantine reconquest of Antioch in 969, which might have encouraged them to remember their Byzantine roots. However, the Byzantine authority was not welcomed by the Melkites of the region, who were content living under Muslim authorities. It is possible to say that they recomposed their past in their new language, Arabic.

A perfect society is composed of perfect individuals; this is the point I have touched upon in the previous section, in terms of their intellectual growth. According to Gregory, rational perception needs to be followed by intellectual and mystical cognition, and this last step leads to the experience<sup>68</sup> of the divine or the union with God. As traditionally believed to inspire individuals and make them perfect, similar to how He keeps the Church on the

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67 Manuscript group JY of *Maymar* reads in this way the last part of the sentence, which literally means in the other manuscripts “they engrave the beauty in their souls”. Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 38-41, 204, 282, 246. Grand’Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 17, 156, 91.

68 For his famous vision see, the select verses from *De Rebus Suis Carm.* 2.1.1, vv. 194-204, 210-212, PG 37.985-986 and *Carmen lugubre (Carm.* 2.1.45, vv. 191-204, 229-269, PG 37.1367).



right path, the Holy Spirit is the real actor here. What I see as the peak point of the process of perfection will — according to Gregory — be fully realised in the hereafter, although baptism projects its image (4,17-18 *touto eikōn tēs ekeithen makariotētos*, 4,13 *hadhā šūrat l-sa'āda*) while on earth. Nevertheless, human beings can obtain happiness (4,18 and 6,17 *al-sa'āda*), immortality and incorruptibility (4,5-6 and 29,8-9 *al-baqā' wa-'adam l-fasād*) here in this life. Moreover, they make the miracles of Christ their own (34,17-18) and give life to others (34,19).<sup>69</sup>

The happiness reached in this world is the world of prophetic wisdom that contains intuition, inspiration, visions and miracles. It necessitates an intellectual ascent to the First Light.<sup>70</sup> This is a matter of “being close to” (5,17 *kat mallon Theō plēsiazontes*, 5,14 *fa-hum ilā Allāh ashaddu qarbuḥā*) or “being away from” (22,9-10 *hoi men pantelōs ēsan allotrioi tou Theou*, 22,7-8 *gharīban min Allāh*) God. Or, as in Oration 24, “being away from God” means “being alienated from the heavenly beings” (2 *wa-kunnā min l-samāyiyāt ghurban*).<sup>71</sup> It is possible to find similar language in some Christian Arabic writings, such as *Fī Tathlīth* and Paul of Antioch’s letters that use Qur’ānic terminology (2:186, 11:61) in their expressions. These include, “You are near (*qarībun*) to the one who draws near to you”, “nearness to God” (*qurbahu ilā Allāh*) and “being away from God” (*al-ba'du min Allāh*).<sup>72</sup>

Gregory encourages his audience to “enlighten (their) eyes” and sets a goal for them “to be able to look at *istiwā'*” (38,3). Ibrāhīm’s rendering of *ortha* as *istiwā'* denotes both “maturity” and “ascension to the heaven”. If this idea of ascension or *ṣu'ūd* (2,6-7; 25,9) is thought of together with the interpretation of the theosis process “as the melting of the soul and body” (9,10), it will remind us of the *mi'rāj* accounts in Arabic, be it Muslim or Christian. We can get glimpses from Gregory’s lamp imagery of what happens when one reaches the heavens. Gregory says, in the last paragraph of *Oration on baptism*, that “lamps” which are kindled (46,4-5 *Hai lampades, hasper anapseis*, 46,4 *wa-l-maṣābiḥ l-latī tuwaqqiduhā*) after the sacrament of baptism are the mystery (sacrament) (46,5 *mystērion*, 46,4 *fa-hiya sirrun*) and the light (46,5 *tēs ekeithen phōtagōgias*, 46,4 *li-dhālīka l-nūr*) with which the “prudent souls” will meet the Bridegroom [...] with the “lamps” of their faith shining (46,7

69 This reminds one of the Pentecost experience of the apostles. See, Acts 2:1-31.

70 “(As long as) we proceed towards the heaven” (16,15). Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, 230. Grand’Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua III: Oratio XL (Arab. 4)*, 62.

71 Grand’Henry, “La version arabe du discours 24 de Grégoire de Nazianze”, 238.

72 Swanson, “Beyond Prooftexting”, 306. Khoury, *Paul d’Antioche*, 32 (Ar.).

phaidrais tais lampasi tēs pisteōs, 46,5 bi-maṣābīḥ min l-amāna munīrāt). Those prudent souls do not lack food (46,14 trophēs, 46,8 li-l-ghidā), as the others who ask for “oil” (46,14 to elaiōn, 46,12 al-zayt). In my view, those who have not delayed their baptism fill their “lamps” with “oil”, thus they have the illumination and they experience the mystery until they enter the bride chamber of the bridegroom in the next world. The “lamp” here may stand for intelligence or “the imaginative faculty” in which “the prophetic spirit” (oil) is kindled by “discursive thinking”.<sup>73</sup>

### The Perfect Men or *Muta'allihūn*<sup>74</sup>

Gregory refers to those who reach the perfect state of humanity as men and friends of God:<sup>75</sup> (16,19-20 “Sy de, ō anthrōpe tou Theou”, gnōthi tēn epiboulēn tou antikeimenou, 16,16 fa-immā anta yā ‘abd Allāh wa-ṣāḥibahu fa-a‘rif mawḍia‘ ḥidā‘ahu). As purified intellects (‘uqūl), they will see (*baṣara*) and know (‘arafa) God in the next world (45,27-29). They will shine like the sun and God will stand in the midst of gods and kings (6,24 theōn ontōn kai basileōn 6,17 wa-hum ilāhatun wa-mulūkun). However, we are not assured

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73 Very interestingly, as in *dihlīz* and the symbolism of “pen, the angel of writing and heart-writing” in *Mishkāt al-anwār*, al-Ghazālī’s “niche-lamp-glass-tree-oil” imagery is very similar to Gregory’s figurative language. See, Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 127 and Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*, 228. For the concepts of “calligrapher”, “being marked with the good inscription”, “being rightly written upon the soul”, “the tablets of the heart” and “a new Decalogue”, see paragraphs forty-four and forty-five in Orat. 40.

74 Orat. 21 PG 35.1084B, 1,14 (God makes the rational nature divine (*muta'alliha*)), PG 35.1184C, 2,4 ([...] and for his deification (*ta'alluhihi*) there [...]). Grand'Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua I: Oratio XXI (Arab. 20)*, 5-6. Orat. 24 PG 35.1180C, 10 (the pure and deified (*muta'alliha*) souls). Grand'Henry, “La version arabe du discours 24 de Grégoire de Nazianze”, 258. Orat. 45 PG 36.632B, 7,19 (deified (*muta'allihan*) by his inclination towards God), PG 36.633D (*etheōse*: the human nature of Christ made divine), 9,21 (*ta'alluh*). Tuerlinckx, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua II: Orationes I, XLV, XLIV (Arab. 9, 10, 11)*, 74-75, 88. For the Syriac rendering of *etheoumen* in Orat. 40,42 as *methalah* (to become god), see Haelewyck, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio syriaca I, Oratio XL*, 129.

75 See, Orat. 21: “He [Athanasius] was in fact a friend of God” (PG 35.1096B *ontōs anthrōpos tou Theou*, 13,7 *huwa bi-l-ḥaḥīqa ṣāḥīb Allāh*, and “to be a friend of God”) and “When it was risen up to the love of God [from fearing of God], wisdom made us friends and sons of God” (PG 35.1088C *Theou philous hēmas kai huiois*, 6,12-13 *ja'alatnā aṣfiyā Allāh wa-ṣāratnā awlādan*). Grand'Henry, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua I: Oratio XXI (Arab. 20)*, 16. Also, Orat. 24: “the friends of God (*awliyā*)” (PG 35.1193B *to pautōn oikeiotaton tois logou therapeutais*, 19 *bi-khidām l-kalima wa-awliyāyihā* (with servers and friends of the Gou)). Grand'Henry, “La version arabe du discours 24 de Grégoire de Nazianze”, 288.

whether they will be able to see the light in its real nature, which proceeds from the face of the Lord and burns everything around it (36,26-28 eite ho pro prosōpou Kyriou poreuetai kai phlogiei kyklō tous echthrous autou, 36,19-20 aw al-nār l-latī tanba'atha amāma wajh l-rabb fa-taḥarraqa ḥawlahu).

From the account of a 10<sup>th</sup> century Melkite writer, al-Majdalus, we are offered glimpses of what was thought of the vision of God in the next life by Ibrāhīm's contemporaries. He points out that, on the day of judgement, Christ will be seen as the image of the divine essence. In his *Tafsīr al-amāna al-urtudūksiyya*, he employs a Qur'ānic verse (Q 75:22-23): "Wujūhun yawma idhin nāzira".<sup>76</sup> And so, he adds, "He [God] will appear (*yazharu*) to one who believes in [H]im in this world in the court of the resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*) in the image (*bi-ru'yat al-šūra*) in which [H]e was seen (*zuhūrihi*) in this world". Then he continues: "When they see [H]im on the day of resurrection (*fa-idhā ra'awhu yawm al-qiyāma*) in the form of Christ, He will appear in it as Lord and Christ and Judge (*wa-qad zahara bi-hā rabban wa-masīhan wa-dayyānan*). Then, they will "realise (*wa-yuḥaqqiqū*) that that form is the vision of God (*ru'yat Allāh*) and the image of [H]is eternity and the mirror of [H]is eternal essence".<sup>77</sup>

The depiction of the next world (*na'im* 24,24-25; *al-malakūt l-samā* 45,29; *sa'āda* 6,17) in *Maymar* is in line with the terminology of medieval Arabic texts, particularly the writings of Christian authors like Theodore Abū Qurra,<sup>78</sup> Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq,<sup>79</sup> Ibn al-Ṭayyib,<sup>80</sup> Elias of Nisibis<sup>81</sup> and 'Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl<sup>82</sup> who teach of an intellectual afterlife.<sup>83</sup> What we see in *Maymar*

76 Q 75:22: "Wujūhun yawma idhin nāzira ilā rabbihā nāzira" (Some faces, that Day, will beam [in brightness and beauty]; looking towards their Lord)

77 Al-Majdalus, *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, 124-125, 51-52, 144-145.

78 See Griffith, "The Qur'an in Arab Christian Texts", 231.

79 See Samir, "Maqālah 'fi l-ājāl li Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq", 120.

80 Al-Mu'taman ibn al-Assāl's *Majmū' uṣūl l-dīn* includes an extract of Ibn al-Ṭayyib's *Maqāla fi l-qiyāma* and indicates that this treatise should have been written before 1043 and deals with the description and necessity of resurrection. Faultless, "Ibn al-Ṭayyib", 696.

81 Sala, "Elias of Nisibis", 738-739. For his *Maqāla fi na'im l-ākhirā*, see Cheikho, *Vingt traités théologiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens (ix<sup>e</sup>-xiii<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, 129-132.

82 Ibn al-Faḍl describes the next life in his *Kitāb bahjat l-mu'min* (Question III.93-6). Treiger, "Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Anṭākī", 94.

83 However, we know that the punishment in hell will be fire: 9,7 tēs ekeise deomenous pyrōseōs, 9,6 li-l-nār l-latī hunāk. According to *On the hour of death*, those who are the lowest of the low (*asfal al-sāfilīn*, Q 95:5) will experience great pain in hell (*'adhāb kathīr wa-jahannam*) and they will not see the glory of God (*lā yarā majd Allāh*). Tuerlinckx, "Sur l'heure de la mort et la sortie de l'âme du corps", 232-233. For the angels of the right side (*malāyikat al-yamīn*) that will surround those who have done

is in fact the journey of those of great soul (*al-kibār al-nufūs* 12,17-18) and the righteous (*al-şādiqūn* paras. 23-24) who have completed their perfection (*tamām* 3,6-7) in this world and will meet with God (*wuşūl* 12,17-18) and rejoice in Him (*nafraḥu bi-llāh* 25,8) in the highest paradise (*al-Na'im* 23,25-26).

## Conclusion

The Arabic translation of Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration on Baptism* introduces the role of the Holy Spirit in theosis in a way that highlights its function in the intellectual, spiritual and experiential realm. The terminology of *Maymar* is very effective in drawing the attention of the reader to the wide world of medieval Arabic philosophy. This is strong evidence for the intellectual level of the Islamicate world in the Middle Ages, particularly of the Arabic (and Syriac) speaking Christians. Furthermore, I argue that *Maymar* is the outcome of a project conducted by the Antiochene Melkite Church in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century, which intended to inaugurate a kind of ethical and intellectual renaissance for the Melkite community.

Gregory the Theologian has a special place in discussions of theosis, old or new. As a theologian whose attempts to strengthen the position of the orthodox belief through the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century are regularly acknowledged, he managed to build a theosis theology in parallel to his explanation of the Trinity on the basis of the distinctive qualities of the divine hypostases. While doing this, he combined theology with philosophy and mysticism, theoretically and practically. However, the practical side of this task was more effective during his lifetime. Nevertheless, readers throughout time can find a beautiful composition that promises salvation as long as they have faith in becoming like God.

I find that what makes Gregory an eminent authority in whom Medieval Christians of the Middle East based their arguments against their theological rivals is his success in bringing theology to life. On the other hand, *Maymar* is a crowning achievement which transmitted Gregory's theology in the idiom that became the *linguae franca* among these Christians. As an important intermediary, Syriac should never be neglected. Likewise, Byzantine and

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good deeds (*a'mālahu şāliḥa*), see Tuerlinckx, "Sur l'heure de la mort et la sortie de l'âme du corps", 231. For *al-janna* (*paradeison*, the Garden of Eden) and *al-na'im* (tḡn anōtatō tryphḡn) in the Arabic version of Orat. 24, see Grand'Henry, "La version arabe du discours 24 de Grégoire de Nazianze", 256, 276. On *firdaws* (*paradeison*), see Tuerlinckx, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: versio arabica antiqua II: Orationes I, XLV, XLIV* (*Arab. 9, 10, 11*), 182, 260.

Orthodox Christianity owes much to the Gregorian theology, realised by their inclinations towards a philosophical and mystical theology.

Baptism is the setting in which Gregory built his theosis theory. In fact, he also developed a baptism theology through which he could explain his Trinitarian doctrine as well as his Christology and Pneumatology. The baptismal symbolism of *Maymar* succeeds in presenting this theology in accordance with the different needs of its audience, some of whom read it literally, while others go beyond the letter, as when it likens baptism to the Muslim prayer (ṣalāḥ/ ṣalāt, p. 1-3) which is “the pillar of religion” (‘imād l-dīn), “a veil or clothing to our shame” (sutrāt l-fawāḥish, p. 4) and an ascension (ṣu‘ūd p. 2, 25) towards the first light.

Gregory draws a strong connection between the Holy Spirit and theosis in his discussion of the deity of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, because the Holy Spirit deifies believers by baptism, He must be God Himself. Here, Gregory uses liturgy as a basis for his Trinitarian theology and theosis theory. The role of the Holy Spirit in theosis is clearly defined and comes to the fore through the end of the process of perfection. The Holy Spirit makes the baptised ones brothers of Christ and sons of God or privileged members of the church. This is the gift of God, but it is the Holy Spirit who makes it personal in individuals through either inspired knowledge or experience. Then, the divine gift becomes realised in spirits.

As for the real character of theosis in terms of the highest point of perfection, it is in the ultimate human knowledge of God and participation in the divine nature. Although it will be fully realised in the next life, perfected souls can have a share of it while on earth. It is not very clear in Gregory’s system whether God’s face will be seen in its real nature in paradise. However, the Holy Spirit seems to be the active agent who is experienced in this life as in Pentecost or visions of holy men and women. This point is one of the most significant elements of Orthodox theology and mysticism, as in their doctrine of the uncreated light. If *Maymar* was read by Ibrāhīm’s Muslim friends, they would not be surprised since the Muslim philosopher al-Fārābī identifies the transcendent Active (or Agent) Intellect with Gabriel, the angel of revelation, which is sought to be joined by individual intellects.

Overall, the study of *Maymar* contributes to our understanding of Christian Arabic theology and literature. It draws attention to Arabic works and translations written for Christians in the terminology of the medieval Islamicate world which have not been studied as much as the literature on Christian-Muslim relations. Translations from Greek and Syriac, in particular,

enable us to study the reception history of the church fathers. In this article, by making a comparative analysis of two texts, I have introduced the Gregorian theosis theory whose long history extends from the Christianisation of an ancient Greek concept to the Arabisation of a Christian doctrine. Special attention has been drawn to the intellectual and psychosomatic role of the Holy Spirit in theosis because of its threefold function, which works in the final steps of the theosis process. I have argued that *Maymar* continued the Gregorian description and discussion of this role but reintroduced it in new colours and shadings that make it available to a larger audience.

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**The Relationship Between the Holy Spirit and Human Perfection in the Baptismal Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus: Examined with Reference to Christian Arabic Literature**

Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329-390) is one of the church fathers who played a significant role in the formulation of the Christian faith and the development of Christian theology. He was also one of the theoreticians and practitioners of Christian ascetic life. He was a Late Antique writer who not only expressed his views on Christian education and culture but also took active part in matters relating to these areas. It is possible to say that despite his Theological Orations by which he became the second person after John the Evangelist who was given the title “Theologian” and his active role especially against the Arians during his archbishopric of Constantinople, Gregory has been neglected and seen by Western Christianity only as a Byzantine literary figure. It is interesting to learn that in the 10<sup>th</sup> century Antiochene Melkite Church, a need arose to introduce or remind the Melkite community of Gregory in Arabic. The texts chosen by the Arabic speaking translators of the Melkite Church to be translated from Greek into Arabic were mainly ethical and intellectual in character. It is important to note that intellect and spirit (and heart) are given equal attention in the emphasis of these texts on human perfection and salvation. As the father of the doctrine of *theosis* or human perfection, Gregory teaches that the Holy Spirit is the power that leads and even unites with both intellect and spirit. This paper examines the role attributed to the Holy Spirit by the Arabic translations of Gregory’s orations – particularly his *Oration on Baptism* – on human perfection in the context of Christian Arabic theology and literature.

**Keywords:** Gregory of Nazianzus, theosis, the Holy Spirit, the Antiochene Melkite Church.

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