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Author(s): Raymond Van Dam

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Hagiography and history: the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus

AT ABOUT the time, in the early third century, when Gregory Thaumaturgus was born in the remote northeastern region of Asia Minor called Pontus, the emperor Caracalla was issuing the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, which conferred Roman citizenship upon practically everyone in the empire. As with so much else about his life and activities, we can hardly know what effect this edict had on the making of Gregory.¹ The grant of citizenship may not have been the most significant aspect, for Gregory was apparently born into a wealthy family and may reasonably have expected eventually to attain sufficient local eminence for him to be awarded Roman citizenship. But it is possible to guess how the edict may have influenced his education, for another result of the edict was that now Roman law took priority over local laws, and so—as when Constantinople was declared the capital of the Eastern empire, over a hundred years later—young men hurried to attend schools of Roman law.² After attending a local school of rhetoric, Gregory learned Latin and then proposed to study at the illustrious law school at Beirut.

1. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi*, in *PG* 46.893–957, cited (usually in the text) only by column number and section letter; Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Panegyric*, in H. Crouzel, *SChr* 148 (1969); *StudPont* = *Studia Pontica*,

1. J. G. C. Anderson, *A Journey of Exploration in Pontus* (Brussels 1903);
2. F. and E. Cumont, *Voyage d'exploration archéologique dans le Pont et la petite Arménie* (Brussels 1906);
3. J. G. C. Anderson, F. Cumont, H. Grégoire, edd., *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines de Pont et de l'Arménie* (fasc. 1 only, Brussels 1910).

Although the title *Thaumaturgus* became common for Gregory only by the early sixth century—see H. Telfer, *HThR* 29 (1936) 240—I use it occasionally for convenience and clarification.

2. J. Modrzejewski, “Grégoire le Thaumaturge et le droit romain: A propos d’une édition récente,” *RD* 49 (1971) 313–24; for the later empire see G. Dagron, *RH* 241 (1969) 23–56.

Since his sister was about to set out for Caesarea to rejoin her husband, who was a legal expert assisting the governor of Palestine, Gregory intended to travel south with her and her military escort as far as Beirut. But for some inexplicable reason which Gregory himself later described only as the agency of his “divine travel companion, an excellent escort and protector,” he went on to Caesarea.³ There he met Origen.

Origen had only recently moved to Caesarea. In Alexandria he had built up a high reputation as a teacher, and when he moved to Caesarea in 231 he took his library, and his “school” with him. In one sense it is surprising that a man like Gregory should study with Origen, for Gregory came from a pagan family, while Origen was one of the best-known Christian teachers of the early third century. But we also know that Gregory’s father had died when he was only fourteen,⁴ and perhaps we can guess that Origen filled that paternal role in Gregory’s life. For whatever reason, we know from Gregory’s *Panegyric* to Origen that the five or eight years during the 230s (and perhaps early 240s)⁵ during which he studied with Origen had a powerful influence on him. In places this *Panegyric* is so effusive in its praise of Origen that it begins to obscure the relationship between the two men; yet it remains one of the finest examples of the gratitude which only the most courageous or humble of students can express to their teachers.

About the year 240 or shortly afterward, Gregory left Origen and returned to Pontus; there, supposedly against his will, he was eventually consecrated bishop of Neocaesarea. The chronology and even the sequence of events during Gregory’s tenure as bishop are still more difficult to determine than for his earlier life. Although for Gregory’s tenure as bishop we have a document of capital importance, the *Vita* written by Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century, over a hundred years later, only one episode in this *Vita* can be dated precisely. When Gregory of Nyssa narrated how Gregory Thaumaturgus has survived a persecution of the Christians in Pontus, he claimed that the persecution was initiated by a *prostagma*, an edict sent by the emperor to the provincial governors, who in turn announced it to the local magistrates and issued public proclamations. This procedure corresponds with what we know about the persecution under the emperor Decius, who issued his edict during the winter of 249/250.⁶ From other scattered references we can deduce a few more datable events in Gregory’s life. During the 250s, Goths invaded Pontus; afterward Gregory wrote a *Canonical Letter* that discussed how Christians were to react to such atrocities as the rape of their

3. *Paneg.* 5.71. P. Nautin, *Origène, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris 1977) 183–97, now argues that this *Panegyric* was not written by Gregory Thaumaturgus, but use of the *Panegyric* is not in any case integral to my argument about the *Vita*.

4. *Paneg.* 5.48–50.

5. For chronology see Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 14–22; also V. Ryssel, *Gregorius Thaumaturgus. Sein Leben und seine Schiften* (1880) 12–19, and P. Koetschau, *Des Gregorios Thaumaturgos Dankrede an Origenes* (Freiburg 1894) viii–xxi.

6. *Vita* 944B–D, 948C; cf. F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London 1977) 566–68.

women or the loss of their property.⁷ In 264 or 265 he was (perhaps) present at the first Council of Antioch, which condemned Paul of Samosata, and he may also have attended the second Council of Antioch. If we accept an emended text in a tenth-century lexicon, Gregory died in the 270s, sometime during the reign of Aurelian.⁸

Modern scholarship on Gregory Thaumaturgus has hardly investigated his activities as bishop in Pontus; instead, most studies have focused on essentially theological or literary topics such as the educational techniques of Origen's school at Caesarea,⁹ the place of Gregory's theology and, particularly, his creed within the general history of Christian doctrine, or the problem of which of the many writings attributed to Gregory can plausibly be assigned to his authorship.¹⁰ In general histories of the Christian church, references to the episcopal career of Gregory tend to be perfunctory and stereotyped, usually describing him as a "missionary" and then considering his missionary work to have been an important factor in the Christianization of Pontus, especially of the peasants in the rural districts.¹¹

These descriptions of the activities of Gregory Thaumaturgus are rarely shown up as the labor-saving devices they have become. On a purely empirical basis alone, the conception of Gregory as a missionary is misguided and anachronistic, for the notion of missionary work implies the effort of proclaiming the Christian message through verbal preaching; yet such verbal communication could hardly have been effective in Asia Minor, a region that was already notorious under the Roman empire and would be renowned still during the Byzantine period for its wide variety of local native dialects, at least one of which was incapable of expressing vital theological subtleties.¹² Given that the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy was often reduced to the finest of linguistic nuances, it becomes difficult to imagine how Gregory could have preached his version of Christianity in his learned Greek, especially to those peasants among whom he was supposedly so popular. In fact, years earlier another man from

7. Text in *PG* 10.1020–48; cf. D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950), 705–707.

8. Eusebius, *HE* 7.27–30, with discussion in Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 24–26, and Nautin (*supra* n. 3) 81–86. Suda Γ.452 (ed. A. Adler, 1. 542–43).

9. A. Knauber, "Das Anliegen der Schule des Origenes zu Cäsarea," *MünchTheolZft* 19 (1968) 182–203; H. Crouzel, "L'École d'Origène à Césarée: Postscriptum à une édition de Grégoire le Thaumaturge," *BLE* 71 (1970) 15–27.

10. Survey in Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 27–33.

11. E.g., K. Baus, *Handbook of Church History* 1 (Freiburg 1965) 375, and the canons in E. J. Jonkers, *Acta et symbola conciliorum quae saeculo quarto habita sunt* (1944) 35–38. As other exemplary standard accounts, cf. H. Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London 1967) 112: "a century later the peasants told wonderful tales of his exorcisms"; Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 13: "le plus grand missionnaire du III^e siècle."

12. Basil *De spiritu sancto* 29 (*PG* 32.208); see also K. Holl, "Das Fortleben der Volkssprachen in Kleinasien in nachchristlicher Zeit," *Hermes* 43 (1908) 240–54, and S. Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley 1971) 42–48.

Pontus, faced with the similar problem of communicating with neighbors who spoke different languages, had come up with a more inspired solution by proposing to use—a mime.¹³

It is possible to go further, however, and on methodological grounds to object to some of the assumptions that underlie the traditional interpretations of the activities of Gregory. First of all, beneath the description of Gregory as a missionary lie the assumptions that conversion in Late Antiquity meant transition from one set of beliefs to another, more correct (i.e., orthodox) set of beliefs, and that this was the result of an individual's rational choice.¹⁴ In the case of someone like Gregory himself, conversion to Christianity did seem to mean a definite, momentary transition from pagan wisdom to the "true and saving message" of Christianity—even if, according to his own confession, he did not understand how it had happened!¹⁵ But for the people whom Gregory influenced while he was bishop, the transition was much different. For them, according to the *Vita*, "seeing" was somehow more influential than "hearing," and the visible wonders of Gregory were as effective as any of his sermons (cf. 924A). Hence, when a man claimed that "the Christian faith was not confirmed by Gregory's words but gained credibility through wonderful events," and so asked to "see" another wonder, Gregory obliged by moving a huge stone: "and immediately afterward the man believed the message of Gregory" (917A–B). In fact, Gregory himself only accepted his consecration as bishop after he had received a vision of the evangelist John with Mary, the mother of the Lord; then, strengthened by "what he had seen" (913C), Gregory set out for Neocaesarea. The general points are that actually "seeing" extraordinary events was effective in changing people's minds, and that there was an intimate relationship between physical sight and spiritual insight which our distinction tends to obscure.

A second misconception is the assumption that Gregory spread Christianity primarily into the countryside; this can easily be corrected by noting that many of Gregory's wonders were in fact performed in cities.¹⁶ A further underlying assumption is of an essential contrast between country, characterized by "popular beliefs," and city, characterized by civilized Greek—and, later, Christian—culture. This distinction owes much to the magnificent theories of Rostovtzeff, and although economic and social historians now emphasize the close cultural and economic links between urban centers and their rural hinterlands, many historians of ideas, including theologians, continue to use the dichotomy. Nevertheless, as several fine studies have argued, continuing to label as "popular beliefs" all ideas and practices that in any way strain the credulity of the modern

13. Lucian *Saltatio* 64.

14. Cf. A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (London 1933) 1–16, for this traditional perspective; some of his assumptions are criticized by S. C. Humphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks* (London 1978) 20–21.

15. *Paneg.* 5.50.

16. *Vita* 909B, 924C–D, 941A; also Basil *De spiritu sancto* 74 (PG 32.205).

historian or appear to influence Christian doctrine in unorthodox or unexpected directions is instead to obscure the role of religious beliefs in the lives of those people.¹⁷

A related misconception is the idea that we can write a history of the Christian church in which there is a linear progression about the spread of Christianity and in which heresies and recurring paganism are merely deviant sidelines. In part this is a reflection of the idea of Christian orthodoxy, which is the church's image of itself and which naturally brings with it a sense of inevitability to the direction of history; but, even more, it indicates a failure to take seriously the immediate role of Christian thought or of Christian bishops in small communities, and the fact that other beliefs or other men might have been even more useful or successful in those communities. For when studying late Roman Pontus we cannot forget that already in the second century the "charlatan" Alexander of Abonouteichos had been respected as an influential prophet. Even though the precedent of Alexander may not be quite the correct model for our understanding of the activities of Gregory or other Christian bishops, Gregory did claim that what he offered was only another "mystery". Hence, the introduction of Christianity must be considered along with those other local cults. This is particularly important when historians look at the third century, for then the later imperial patronage on behalf of the Christian church still seemed beyond expectation.

The process of conversion to Christianity must be cut down to size; furthermore, since the process happened in a particular society, it must be analysed in the context of how people lived and thought in that specific society. This discussion will focus on the *Vita* of Gregory Thaumaturgus in order to investigate not only its implications (if any) for our historical understanding of Gregory and his career as a third-century bishop, but also some of the possible methods which are available for analyzing hagiography. As was already mentioned, although the common picture of Gregory's "missionary" activity in Pontus is apparently based on the implications of some of the information in the *Vita*, other information in the *Vita* contradicts that perspective; and, conversely, other aspects of the *Vita* such as, most notably, Gregory's miracles, have been dismissed or ignored by serious historians. My discussion will focus on a number of different topics and approaches: first, the literary (or rhetorical), biblical, and theological presuppositions of Gregory of Nyssa that, presumably, influenced the formal narration of these episodes in the *Vita* and therefore perhaps also their historical content and historical value; second, the highly structured oral traditions that underlay many of the episodes in the *Vita*, and their implications for its historical value; third, the possibility that this *Vita* was a myth, not only in the functionalist sense that it provided a charter for justifying aspects of fourth-century society but

17. See A. Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs and the Late Roman Historians," in *Popular Belief and Practice*, ed. G. J. Cuming and D. Baker, *Studies in Church History* 8 (Cambridge 1972) 1-18, and, most recently and emphatically, P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago 1981) 12-22.

also in the cognitive sense that its real message was communicated precisely through the logical or symbolic structure of these episodes; fourth, an attempt to locate this structural message in Gregory's contemporary society of the early empire; fifth, a concession that even this structural message may be more appropriate to the fourth-century mentality of Gregory of Nyssa than to that of the third century. Although concentrating on Gregory Thaumaturgus and his world, this essay is essentially an exercise in the methodology of writing history based on oral and hagiographical sources and intends only to define topics and approaches for consideration, without itself being definitive.¹⁸

I

Gregory of Nyssa first composed the *Vita* on one of the feastdays commemorating Gregory Thaumaturgus, probably at Neocaesarea: "for you people," he said, "Gregory the Great provides the motive for a festival, for me the opportunity for an oration" (893A). At a later date he apparently rewrote the oration into "biography," thereby obscuring whatever possibility there might have been of determining from internal references precisely when he first delivered it; but since all his other orations date from the period 379–388, this one can reasonably be assumed to be associated with them during those years. A probable year is 380, most likely late in the year, if we associate it with Gregory Thaumaturgus' traditional feastday of November 17.¹⁹

The narrative structure of the *Vita* as written, and probably initially orated, by Gregory of Nyssa corresponds fairly closely with the classical formulae given by the rhetorical handbooks for panegyrics composed to celebrate the deeds and sayings of famous men.²⁰ It is outlined here as a convenient introduction to the contents of the *Vita*.

Introduction: difficulties of describing Gregory's life, 893A–896A.

1. πατρίς, πόλις, γένος

Christian perspective, 896A–897B

Pontus, Neocaesarea, Gregory's family, 897B–900A

2. Gregory's youth, moral qualities, early education, 900B–905C

transition from Hellenism to Christianity, 901A

18. Especially since we still await the new critical edition of the *Vita* by G. Heil and the final fascicle of inscriptions from Pontus promised by T. Mitford, "Studia Pontica III Fascicle 2—Sixty Years of Progress," in *Acta of the Fifth International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy, Cambridge 1967* (Oxford 1971) 377–80.

19. J. Daniélou, "La Chronologie des sermons de Grégoire de Nysse," *RSR* 29 (1955) 346–72; J. Bernardi, *La Prédication des pères Cappadociens* (Paris 1968) 308, suggests 380. For a detailed discussion of chronology, see P. Maraval, *Grégoire de Nysse, Vie de Sainte Macrine, SChr* 178 (Paris 1971) 57–67.

20. See H. Delehay, *Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (2nd ed. Brussels 1966) 133–69, and *Les Légendes hagiographiques* (3rd ed. Brussels 1927) 93; cf. 905A, εἰς ἐγκωμίωv ὑπόθεσιν.

- miracle in Alexandria, 901D–904C
 his virtues in Alexandria, 904D–905C
 The life proper: cf. 905C, Ἀυτὸς δὲ ὁ βίος τίς;
3. meets Firmilian of Caesarea; studies with Origen; returns to Pontus, 905C–908A
 rejects Neocaesarea and retreats to solitude, 908A–D
 ordination by Bishop Phaedimus of Amaseia, 908D–909C
 vision of John and Mary; doctrine of initiation, 909C–913C
 4. ἀριστεία against the demons in the pagan temple, 913D–920A (including the miracle of the boulder; cf. 920C, ἡ ἐν τῷ λίθῳ θαυμαστοποιία)
 “arrival” at Neocaesarea, 920A–D
 hospitality of Musonius, 920D–921C
 conversion of people; the message of Gregory; construction of Christian church, 921C–924C
 5. εὐνομία and εἰρήνη: resolution of the feud between two brothers, 924C–929A (cf. 928C, τὸ ἐπὶ τῷ ὕδατι θαῦμα)
 6. ἕτερον δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο θαῦμα: control over the Lycus River, 929A–933B
 7. selection of Alexander as bishop at Comana, 933B–940B
 8. digression (τὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ πάρεργον): incident with Jews, 940C–941C
 9. exorcism of young man who challenged Gregory, 941C–944A
 10. opposition to the activities of Gregory, 944A–953C
 persecution by emperor and his governors, 944B f.
 Gregory leaves Neocaesarea and hides in the mountains, 945D f.
 vision of the martyrdom of Troadius, 949A f.
 deacon returns to city and overcomes demon in the baths, 949D f.
 Gregory returns and establishes martyr festivals, 953A–C
 11. death of Gregory, 953C–956A
 12. festival of Zeus at which Gregory stops a plague, 956B–957D

Although the Cappadocian Fathers sometimes claimed that they did not always follow the traditional rules for the composition of panegyrics,²¹ in this oration Gregory of Nyssa did include most of the usual components of a typical panegyric. One common characteristic of panegyrics was the use of comparisons, and in this oration, as was appropriate to its new Christian context, Gregory of Nyssa often compared Gregory Thaumaturgus to biblical figures, usually from the Old Testament.²² The comparison Gregory of Nyssa used most often was with Moses: both men were familiar with Egyptian knowledge, both had once retreated into solitude and had visions, both performed water miracles, and both

21. Delehaye, *Passions*, (*supra* n. 20) 138–41.

22. *Vita* 901A, 905B, 924D–925B, 928A–B, 932D–933A, 933D. Note that the only comparison with a New Testament figure (941A–B) occurs in the context of the only story of Gregory’s dealings with Jews—on which see H. Hilgenfeld, “Die Vita Gregor’s des Wunderthäters und die syrischen Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum,” *ZfwissensTheol* 41 (1898) 452–56, and P. Devos, “Le Manteau partagé: Un thème hagiographique en trois de ses variantes,” *AB* 93 (1975) 157–63.

encouraged their people even when absent. In one instance, however, the analogy vanished: “in short, Gregory was the Moses of our times.”²³

This final identification points out most clearly that Gregory Thaumaturgus had also become a symbol of the author’s own theology. About a decade later, near the end of his life, Gregory of Nyssa would in fact write a *Vita* of Moses in which that prophet’s life became an extended allegory for the mystical journey of the Christian soul toward the final goal, contemplation of the divine.²⁴ In this *Vita*, however, Gregory of Nyssa was at least explicit about the analogy: the life of Moses was only an example of “the perfect life for men,” “an image of beauty.”²⁵

In terms of communication with a fourth-century audience use of traditional rhetorical forms, of analogies with biblical figures, and of theological allegories was probably a highly effective way of presenting the essence of the Christian message to a largely illiterate and polyglot society. In a public performance people expected such respect for rhetorical forms and delivery from the speaker, to the extent that the content of the oration might become less important than the formal performance—during another public oration, for instance, the audience received most pleasure from “the tones of the speaker’s voice, his expressive glance and the rhythm of his speech”²⁶—and, like other public orators, Gregory of Nyssa was not above deriving personal satisfaction from his speaking abilities.²⁷ Likewise, by presenting the biblical message and his own theology in terms of the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, Gregory of Nyssa was able to bypass, to a certain extent, their inherent sophistication; according to the *Vita*, both the life of Gregory and his activities were a concrete articulation or acting out of the biblical stories and of a specific Christian theology of mystical contemplation and redemption.

However much adherence to the expectations of rhetorical composition and delivery or allusions to the doctrines of a specific theology may have contributed to communication with Gregory of Nyssa’s fourth-century audience, though, they raise immense problems about the historicity of these events in the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus. The account of Gregory’s early education at Alexandria and his virtue in the face of a prostitute’s accusation is a telling example. Within the traditional form of a panegyric this episode described Gregory’s boyhood and early moral fiber. It offered Gregory of Nyssa the opportunity to introduce com-

23. *Vita* 901C, 913B, 925D, 949A; quotation from 908C. Note that Gregory of Nyssa also compared, almost identified, the life of his brother Basil with that of Moses: *In Basilium fratrem*, PG 46.789B, 808D–813A.

24. Text in J. Daniélou, *SChr* 1 (3rd ed. 1968); cf. J. Daniélou, *L’Etre et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden 1970) 1–17.

25. *Vita Moysis* 1.15, 2.319.

26. Philostratus *V. soph.* 491, “even those in Favorinus’ audience who did not understand the Greek language shared in the pleasure he gave”; cf. 589.

27. *Encomium in XL martyres* I (PG 46.757A–C; and cf. L. Méridier, *L’Influence de la seconde sophistique sur l’oeuvre de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris 1906).

parisons with Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, and so to discuss the respective virtues those saints now symbolized;²⁸ and it put Gregory firmly into Gregory of Nyssa's own theology, for here was another man who, like Moses, had resisted the allurements of a pagan education to become a Christian leader. Yet most scholars now agree that Gregory Thaumaturgus never went to Egypt during the years he was studying with Origen in Palestine.²⁹ In this case, then, we seem to have a clear example of how Gregory of Nyssa tinkered with the early life of Gregory Thaumaturgus by outright inventing an episode in order to say something in his panegyric about Gregory's early education, and then to present Gregory as a theological symbol; such distortion does not enhance our confidence in the rest of the *Vita*. In his *Vita* of Moses, Gregory of Nyssa would at least maintain a clear distinction between his own spiritual interpretation and the (supposedly) historical narrative on which it was based;³⁰ but in this *Vita* of Gregory we have difficulty distinguishing the literary, biblical, and theological forms and interpretations from whatever information about the historical Gregory Gregory of Nyssa may have had.

In fact, it is possible to question whether any of these episodes has much historical basis, a problem we face most acutely in the presence of miracles, the "wonders" Gregory performed to enhance his message and his power. Within the traditional form of a panegyric, accounts of miracles were a firm way of demonstrating a man's virtues, while within a biblical and theological perspective miracles were another means of identifying Gregory with the historical and mystical Moses. Yet, to us, not only do many of the miracles in this *Vita*—as in all hagiography—seem to represent merely common literary themes from folklore, but many of them seem to be outright unbelievable.³¹ However much they may have been demonstrations of saints' powers, they appear (to us, again) to represent the point precisely at which an author's fantasies and credulity became most evident. With this perspective on miracles the most historians may be able to do is to strip the layers of popular fantasy away from a more or less historical core; for the demands of form seem to have taken precedence over concern for historical reliability.

II

A study of the sources for the *Vita*, however, may allow us to determine, if not the historical value of the narrative, then perhaps at least which aspects of the

28. See M. Simon, "Les saints d'Israël dans la dévotion de l'église ancienne," *RHPHR* 34 (1954) 98–127.

29. Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 21.

30. *Vita Moysis* 2.320.

31. See, e.g., A. J. Festugière, "Lieux communs littéraires et thèmes de folk-lore dans l'hagiographie primitive," *WS* 73 (1960) 123–52, and, on fantasies, Delehay, *Légendes* (*supra* n. 20) 58–59: "car il serait injuste de condamner, au nom de l'histoire, celui qui n'a entendu écrire qu'un récit d'imagination."

Vita represent third-century information about the behavior of Gregory Thaumaturgus and which are fourth-century literary or theological embellishments by Gregory of Nyssa. Such a discussion will focus on the events from Gregory's career in Pontus, ignoring the more or less obviously apocryphal events of his early life in Egypt.

Long ago Koetschau demonstrated that there had been no original written document that might have been used by Gregory of Nyssa and by other writers apparently independent of him, such as Rufinus and the compiler of a Syriac *Life* of Gregory.³² In fact, Gregory of Nyssa appears to have used no written sources at all, not even any of the tracts written by Gregory. Since there is no reference in the *Vita* to barbarian invasions, Gregory of Nyssa seems not to have used the *Canonical Letter* Gregory had written after the Goths invaded Pontus; nor did he use, or even know of, Gregory's *Panegyric* to Origen, since he described Gregory's study with Origen only in a very perfunctory manner;³³ nor, apparently, did he use a tract that his brother Basil attributed to Gregory and that he knew well enough to assert that its theological infelicities were due only to copyists' errors.³⁴

In fact, during the fourth century there was an almost total contrast between writers such as Gregory of Nyssa and Basil who were apparently unfamiliar with most of Gregory's own writings, and the writers who were familiar enough with them to be able at least to quote titles. Since these latter writers were all in or from Palestine, we can probably conclude that Gregory's major writings were available exclusively there during the fourth century.³⁵ We know that, in the early fourth century, Pamphilus of Caesarea had written a defense of his teacher Origen, to which he had added the *Panegyric* by Gregory.³⁶ In this he had been assisted by the historian Eusebius, who in his own *Ecclesiastical History* had written something about Gregory's studies with Origen but little or nothing about his tenure as bishop. Presumably, most of Gregory's writings, particularly the *Panegyric*, had

32. P. Koetschau, "Zur Lebensgeschichte Gregors des Wunderthäters," *ZfwissTheol* 41 (1898) 211–50, arguing against V. Ryssel, "Eine syrische Lebensgeschichte des Gregorius Thaumaturgus," *TheolSchweiz* 11 (1894) 228–54. The *Vitae* of Gregory in other languages are largely derivative: on the Latin *Life*, see W. Telfer, "The Latin *Life* of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus," *JThS* 31 (1930) 142–55, 354–63, and P. Devos, "Deux oeuvres méconnues de Pierre sous-diacre de Naples au X^e siècle: la Vie de S. Grégoire le Thaumaturge et la Passion de Ste. Restitute," *AB* 76 (1958) 336–53; on the Coptic versions, see H. G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi'n Natrûn*. Part 1: *New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius* (New York 1926) 144–56, and M. van Esbroeck, "Fragments sahidiques du Panégyrique de Grégoire le Thaumaturge par Grégoire de Nysse," *OLP* 6/7 (1975/76) 555–68.

33. Origen *Philocalia* 13, considered by Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 84–92, as a reply from Origen to Gregory Thaumaturgus, was instead probably sent to another Gregory: see Nautin (*supra* n. 3) 155–61, and E. Junod, "Remarques sur la composition de la 'Philocalie' d'Origène par Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze," *RHPPhR* 52 (1972) 149–56. In any case, Gregory of Nyssa did not use the letter.

34. Basil *Ep.* 210, referring to the "Dialogue with Gelianus" (so Y. Courtonne, in the Budé *Saint Basile, Lettres* 2 (1961) 195); cf. H. Crouzel, "Grégoire le Thaumaturge et le 'Dialogue avec Elien'," *RecSciRel* 51 (1963) 422–31.

35. Cf. Jerome *De vir. illus.* 65, and Rufinus, *HE* 7.28.2 (*GCS* 9, p. 955).

36. Socrates, *HE* 4.27.

survived only in the library of Origen, and then of Pamphilus, at Caesarea during the fourth century.

The only written source Gregory of Nyssa explicitly quoted in the *Vita* was the creed John and Mary had recited to Gregory during his vision, which was still preserved in the church at Neocaesarea as a confirmation of Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity. The copy at Neocaesarea was in fact the autograph version of the creed: "if anyone doubts this [doctrine], let him pay heed to the church where Gregory proclaimed this message, where the actual letters engraved by his blessed hand are preserved even today" (913A).³⁷

Hence the most important source of information for the *Vita* was oral traditions. These took different (although overlapping) forms: some were built up around direct "sayings," usually by Gregory; some were constructed around memorials still visible in the later fourth century; and some may possibly have developed from the traditions of specific families or churches.

First, the sayings:

1. When accused by a prostitute in Alexandria, the young Gregory told a companion to pay her off so that she would no longer disturb their debates (904B).
2. As they first entered Neocaesarea after Gregory's ordination as bishop, he chided his companions for worrying about the availability of lodging (921A-B).
3. As Gregory surveyed the damage done by the flooding Lycus River, he delivered a short homily on God's power over nature (932A).
4. During the selection of a new bishop at Comana, Gregory taught people of their inability to perceive true beauty and piety (937B-C).
5. While hiding from the persecution, Gregory's deacon said to him, "Commend me to God and I will have no fear of the enemies" (949D).
6. Gregory's speech about his death (quoted *infra* p. 292).

In the *Vita* it is never clear whether Gregory of Nyssa was actually quoting a memorized saying (or at least what was thought to be one), or whether he simply inserted direct discourse for literary reasons; for in other sections he has Gregory speaking to people in indirect discourse (e.g., 956D), or he simply summarized Gregory's message in terms of its effect on the people and not as a direct exhortation to them (921D-924B). In another passage Gregory of Nyssa mentioned a remark of Gregory that was a "good-luck charm" both in the third century and later. Although given indirectly, this saying can be reconstructed: "Each one must commend himself to God through the priests." As Gregory of Nyssa went on, this saying was a "memorial" of Gregory's assistance to his deacon (953A),

37. For discussion of this creed, see L. Froidevaux, "Le Symbole de Saint Grégoire le Thaumaturge," *ResSciRel* 19 (1929) 193-247; A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* 1, trans. J. Bowden (2nd ed. London 1975) 232-38; and now L. Abramowski, "Das Bekenntnis des Gregor Thaumaturgus bei Gregor von Nyssa und das Problem seiner Echtheit," *ZKG* 87 (1976) 145-66, who argues that this creed was instead fabricated during the doctrinal controversies of the later fourth century.

an identification which can remind us that, as we will see, in the fourth century there was little difference between the oral sayings and the visible, physical memorials of Gregory.

Even though there is some doubt about which sayings of Gregory were actual ones, we do know that his sayings were in circulation in the later fourth century. Some were carefully preserved at Neocaesarea. In 375, when Basil wrote to the clergy of Neocaesarea, he warned them that their petrified devotion to the traditions of Gregory no longer corresponded with contemporary theology and liturgy: “do not misinterpret the words of Gregory.”³⁸ More relevant to the *Vita*, some sayings of Gregory also circulated in families. We know that Gregory of Nyssa’s older brother Basil had been brought up by their paternal grandmother Macrina on her family estates near Annisa on the Iris River in Pontus; and in one of his letters Basil mentioned that Macrina had then taught him the sayings of Gregory, “as many as she herself retained, preserved to her time in unbroken recollection.”³⁹ Macrina died after 340, so at the very most she may have seen Gregory when she was a little girl; but the point is that after the death of Gregory people still learned and taught to their children some of his aphoristic sayings.

Second, some oral traditions about Gregory Thaumaturgus focused on physical memorials still visible in the fourth century:

1. The autograph copy of Gregory’s creed was still at Neocaesarea.
2. The church the newly converted Christians had built at Neocaesarea in the third century had survived a recent earthquake.
3. The basin of the lake Gregory had dried up in order to settle a feud between two brothers could still be seen in the fourth century. “For around what used to be a lake there are preserved even now some traces of the water’s overflow. What was then submerged and at the bottom of the water was entirely transformed into grassy groves, homes, meadows, and fields” (928A).
4. The staff Gregory used to mark out the boundary of the Lycus River had grown into a tree. “Up to the present time the tree is called ἡ βακτηρία, ‘the staff’; for the inhabitants it is a lasting memorial for all time of the grace and power of Gregory” (932C–D).

Finally, some episodes may have been preserved, at least for a while, either in the traditions of other local churches or in private family traditions:

1. Since Gregory was not present at his ordination, this tradition may have been preserved by the church at Amaseia, whose bishop, Phaedimus, consecrated him; likewise, the church at Comana may have preserved the tradition about the selection of Alexander as its bishop.
2. When Gregory initially entered Neocaesarea as bishop he was

38. *Ep.* 207 (*PG* 32.765C).

39. *Ep.* 204 (*PG* 32.752–53); note also Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* (*PG* 46.980C–981A), for Gregory of Nyssa listening to his sister Macrina reminiscing about their grandparents.

offered accommodation by Musonius, who came from a wealthy and influential family. As a result Musonius became famous: "time has transmitted to [his?] descendants the memory of this notable honor" (921B). Other than the bishops Firmilian, Phaedimus, and Alexander and the martyr Troadius, Musonius was the only man whom Gregory of Nyssa did (perhaps could) mention by name.⁴⁰

3. Within the context of the *Vita* the story of how Gregory's deacon overcame the demon in the baths is yet another example of Gregory's own power. But there were only three participants who could originally have told the story: the deacon, the bathkeeper—or the demon.

For the historian of the Roman empire these oral traditions are difficult to evaluate and are hence usually dismissed as local folktales. Both the sayings and the aetiologies of the physical memorials still extant in the fourth century appear to be embedded in excessively uncritical narratives about miracles, whereas the third category does not even contain a core of words or visible souvenirs, although the episodes may ultimately derive from something other than church traditions at Neocaesarea. But even if the transmission of the sayings can be traced back to the late third or early fourth century, and even if some of these traditions do not necessarily represent Christian traditions at Neocaesarea, we are still left wondering how much elaboration Gregory of Nyssa added to these "wonders." The problem becomes acute when we compare these oral traditions preserved in the *Vita* first with the abbreviated versions of them known to Basil and then with the apparently independent but similar traditions in other writers.

In his discussion of the Holy Spirit, Basil referred to the creed of Gregory the Great, which supported Basil's own theology and which anyone could verify by traveling to Neocaesarea.⁴¹ Like his brother Gregory of Nyssa, Basil compared Gregory to Moses and also insisted that through Gregory's soul a "beacon" had shone for the church, an analogy similar to one Gregory of Nyssa used to describe the effect of Gregory's life on people.⁴² Basil also mentioned some episodes from Gregory's life, claiming that he had had power over demons, had initially found only seventeen Christians in Neocaesarea,⁴³ had diverted the courses of rivers by using the name of Christ, had dried up a lake over which brothers were feuding, and had, like the biblical prophets, been able to prophesy the future. Similar claims or episodes appear in the *Vita*, although most of course in an elaborated and sometimes slightly different form.

Although the problem about the elaboration or compression of episodes is common in discussions of the transmission of oral traditions, in this case it is possible to argue that some of the "wonders" in the *Vita* may have been trans-

40. Perhaps it is significant that until his death in 368 a man named Musonius was bishop of Neocaesarea: Basil *Epp.* 28, 210.

41. *De spiritu sancto* 74 (PG 32.205–207).

42. Cf. *infra* n. 124.

43. Cf. *Vita* 909B–C.

mitted as complete units. Gregory of Nyssa conceded that, although people could remember other wonders of Gregory, it would be too tedious or time-consuming adequately to record them (cf. 944A, 957D). Such a statement seems to imply that each wonder in the *Vita* was already a self-contained narrative unit within the oral tradition and that Gregory of Nyssa simply strung them together into an oration and then into a ‘‘biography.’’

One example is the last episode in the *Vita*, which describes how Gregory stopped a plague. Although Gregory of Nyssa placed this episode as an appendix after the death speech of Gregory, he made a point of insisting that it had in fact occurred at the beginning of Gregory’s episcopacy and that he had merely overlooked it (956B). There is no obvious literary or theological reason why this episode should conclude the *Vita*, other than that it formed an appropriate pendant because it encouraged people to accept the name of Christ: perhaps it is possible to argue that only the existence of an entire episode, as opposed to a short reference needing elaboration, would have motivated Gregory of Nyssa to include it here.⁴⁴ Another example is what might be called the ἀριστεία against the demons. This fairly long episode includes several shorter incidents such as the overnight stay in the temple, the display of power over the demon, moving the huge stone, and the conversion of the pagan priest. At the beginning of the episode is the statement that ‘‘Gregory the Great begins his heroic combat against the demons’’; a virtually identical statement, but in the past tense, concludes the episode (913D, 920A).

A further difficulty arises from a comparison of these Cappadocian and Pontic traditions about Gregory with other, slightly different accounts of incidents in Gregory’s life which are given in two later sources apparently independent of the Cappadocian Fathers, namely, the historian Rufinus and a Syriac *Life* of Gregory preserved in a sixth-century manuscript. Koetschau’s long discussion of the Syriac *Life* remains important although, without any definite indication of links between it and the *Vita* by Gregory of Nyssa, his deduction that the Syriac *Life* utilized later and less pure forms of the oral traditions about Gregory remains somewhat conjectural. Nevertheless, he does present strong arguments that the *Vita* by Gregory of Nyssa preserved a more reliable content and form of the oral traditions.⁴⁵

In fact, Koetschau was inclined to rate even the anecdotes of Rufinus more highly than the contents of the Syriac *Life*. These were episodes Rufinus had inserted into his translation of Eusebius’s *History*, which he then published in the early fifth century. Along with a translation of Gregory’s creed, Rufinus knew of three additional stories: one about a lake Gregory dried up to settle a fraternal feud, one about a large boulder Gregory moved to make space for a new church,

44. In at least one manuscript of the *Vita*, the copyist moved this final episode into the main narrative: W. Telfer, *HThR* 29 (1936) 235.

45. Koetschau (*supra* n. 32) 211–50; German translation of the Syriac *Life* in Ryssel (*supra* n. 32) 241–54, with the corrections of Hilgenfeld (*supra* n. 22) 452–56.

and another about a temple of Apollo whose priest Gregory converted. We know that Rufinus tended to supplement his translation from oral traditions, an inclination he makes explicit in this case: "for the sake of posterity's memory I think it most proper to include in the historical narrative the deeds of Gregory, omitted for some unknown reason, which in the north and the east are remembered in everyone's conversation."⁴⁶ But some of his details, such as the claim that Gregory was traveling in the Alps (!) when he stopped in the pagan temple, suggest that his sources were probably independent of the *Vita* by Gregory of Nyssa.

We can now summarize this brief discussion of sources. Fourth-century Cappadocian writers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Basil, who claimed to know something about the episcopal career of Gregory depended almost entirely on oral traditions handed down among the inhabitants of Pontus, in part as ecclesiastical traditions and in part perhaps as private family traditions. At the core of many of these traditions was an aphoristic saying or a reference to some extant memorial; although there was no obviously necessary connection between these sayings and memorials and their ascribed context, it is plausible also that these traditions included longer narrative units. And insofar as comparative reliability can meaningfully be assigned to oral traditions, the Cappadocian and Pontic ones appear to preserve older and more reliable stories about the activities of Gregory than do the oral sources used by Rufinus and the compiler of the *Syriac Life*.

A good comparison for this kind of source- and form-criticism is some of the work done on the sources of the Gospels and the historicity of the life and activities of Jesus. In this criticism much research has been done on oral traditions that were shaped for theological purposes and possess hardly any absolute chronology, on the direct sayings of Jesus and their appropriate contextual situations, and on entire units of tradition, such as the narrative of Passion Week, called *pericopes*.⁴⁷ There is even a parallel to the way Gregory of Nyssa compared some of Gregory's activities to biblical events in the correspondence of the message and deeds of Jesus to Old Testament themes and images.⁴⁸

Criticism of the sources for the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus is based on far less comparative material than is available to New Testament scholars; although the quest for the historical Jesus may be surrounded with more fervor and devotion, the search for the historical Gregory can, likewise, never transcend some basic uncertainties. First of all, theories of oral transmission of historical information stress the forms this information assumes in order to facilitate memori-

46. *HE* 7.28.2 (*GCS* 9, p. 953); cf. J. E. L. Oulton, "Rufinus's Translation of the Church History of Eusebius," *JThS* 30 (1929) 150-74.

47. Survey discussion in A. R. C. Leaney and R. Davidson, *The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology*. Vol. 3: *Biblical Criticism* (London) 252-65, and J. G. Gager, "The Gospels and Jesus: Some Doubts about Method," *JR* 54 (1974) 244-72.

48. See F. F. Bruce, *This Is That: The New Testament Development of Some Old Testament Themes* (Exeter 1968).

zation and transmission, and also how these formal demands can affect the historical content of the information; not only do the same difficulties arise with regard to orally transmitted material—as we have already seen—with the imposition of literary, biblical, and theological concepts and forms on written literature, but there is the additional complication of whatever influence the mechanisms of oral transmission may have exerted. Second, although theories of oral transmission concede the (very strong) possibilities of the material being altered, expanded, or reduced during the process of oral transmission, they also recognize the near-impossibility of evaluating this process without a fixed control. Hence there will always be some doubt over whether the short recension of Basil or the long recension of Gregory of Nyssa was more accurate, whether the apparent shell of Gregory of Nyssa's elaborations was really part of the historical kernel.

Third, and perhaps most important, information transmitted orally is notorious for its continually “present” aspect, with the result that very often orally transmitted information becomes more a charter myth for contemporary society than a purely historical account of the past; as Vansina puts it in his study of oral tradition, “in a last analysis, every tradition exists as such only in virtue of the fact that it serves the interests of the society in which it is presented.”⁴⁹ Hence the portrait of Gregory Thaumaturgus offered in this *Vita* seems to function better as justification or explanation for fourth-century theology or for fourth-century ecclesiastical administration and, especially, the role of the bishop⁵⁰ than as an historical account of Gregory's career as a bishop in Pontus.

But we must not think that Gregory of Nyssa and his brother Basil were necessarily consciously manipulating these traditions about Gregory Thaumaturgus for their own purposes. Instead, for them as for others, the wondrous power of Gregory seems not to have died in the past; as Basil put it, “even now there is still a great admiration for this man among the local inhabitants, and his memory, always fresh and always green, is planted among the churches and does not wither away through time.”⁵¹ In the *Vita*, Gregory of Nyssa elaborated this apparent disregard for the contrast between past and present. According to him, although Gregory Thaumaturgus may once have impressed his contemporaries with those powerful “momentary surges of wonder-working” (933A), that same divine power was supposed to be still effective in the fourth century: “that which happened once remained just as it was, so that the wonder was not disbelieved after a passage of time because among the physical objects of this world it is an eternal witness” (929A; cf. 912C, 924B, 933A). Each episode in the *Vita* was a *μνήμη*, a memorial to the continuing efficacy of Gregory's life and activities (cf.

49. J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition* (English trans. London 1965) 78; on myths as sociological charters see B. Malinowski, “Myth in Primitive Psychology,” in *Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays* (Boston 1948) 93–148.

50. So J. Bernardi (*supra* n. 19) 311: “on peut se demander si Grégoire imagine son lointain prédécesseur [Gregory Thaumaturgus] sur le modèle d'un grand évêque du IV^e siècle.”

51. *Ep.* 207.

893B). Many of the contemporary tombstones from Pontus end with the common formula *μνήμης χάριν*, a pathetic reminder of an attempt at least to perpetuate the memory of the deceased: "Chrysogne's husband has honored her after she died young, and with this gravestone he has covered her memorial."⁵² Sometimes a man tried, through his funerary inscription, to defy the inevitable results of dying: "Since the ground has covered resourceful Severus after he died, it allows him to speak only through this gravestone. When I was alive, living men greatly praised me; now, after I have died, my witness is this stone which preserves my own voice although I have died, and which presents me to living men as an immortal."⁵³ In the same way Gregory of Nyssa was now defying the distinction between past and present by praying that the same spiritual grace that had helped Gregory through his *βίος* might now help him deliver a proper *λόγος* about that life (893A): "the purpose of this oration is to show to those present through recollection (*διὰ τῆς μνήμης*) the same sort of man that he was seen to be by his contemporaries on account of his actions" (893B).

This confusion between past and present or, rather, their identification into an argument for the continuing efficacy of Gregory's divine power is not a problem unique to Christian hagiography; it reflects instead that basic Greek perspective on reality in which the eternal and immutable ranked higher than the transient and changeable, and which Christian thought took over—that "rigorously anti-historical metaphysics", as Collingwood once called it.⁵⁴ For all the sophistication of his theology of time, creation, and salvation, Gregory of Nyssa retained the essentially Platonic contrast between the atemporality of God and divine existence and the temporality of nature and men;⁵⁵ now, in the *Vita*, he seems to have lifted the life of Gregory out of the bounds of time and history into an atemporal realm where it could serve, in a functional sense, as a charter myth for the later fourth century. In more general terms, not only do we apparently lack a control for evaluating this orally transmitted material, we seem also to lack any precise historical content from the third century; and even if there is any genuine third-century information in the *Vita* other than details such as names of people, we can apparently only evaluate it in terms of its function within a fourth-century context.

III

Although the historical value of the *Vita* seems to be minimized as a result, first, of the distorting techniques of the oral traditions in which information was

52. *StudPont* 3, no. 80, from Neoclaudiopolis.

53. *StudPont* 3, no. 145a, near Amaseia; cf. H. Grégoire, "Rapport sur un voyage d'exploration dans le Pont et en Cappadoce," *BCH* 33 (1909), no. 2, ἀέμνηστον.

54. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford 1946) 20.

55. Cf. B. Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time," *StPatr* 14 (= *TU* 117) (1976) 327-57.

transmitted and, second, of the demanding constraints of the literary, biblical, and theological forms into which Gregory of Nyssa then cast the material, there is another approach to the *Vita* that may allow us to view its historical value a bit differently. This is to treat the *Vita*, or at least the section describing the career of Gregory in Pontus, as a symbolic or logical myth communicating information not through its temporal narrative but, rather, through its internal logical structure—an approach which has the advantage of allowing us to treat the *Vita* essentially as what it was originally supposed to be, a literary text, as well as the potential of offering us historical meaning precisely through or, rather, in its structured arrangement of the material.⁵⁶ For our hesitations about oral traditions comprise at least two distinct, although often confused, considerations. One has to do with the actual oral transmission of the material, since it is in this process that historical information about the past can be exaggerated, elaborated, or outright invented, to become nonhistorical traditions about the past. But the second important consideration about traditions ought to focus on the cognitive logic or symbols through which events were initially perceived and recorded. Even in discussions of written sources, modern historians often omit any consideration of the logical or symbolic categories by means of which actors and authors perceived, understood, and therefore created their reality.⁵⁷ Yet the important questions about any historical source, whether written or oral, should be concerned as much with the logical structures underlying it as with the purity of the transmission of information;⁵⁸ in other words, the historical Gregory was as much a structured image or myth in the third century as any myth of him conjured up, for whatever formal or social functions, in later centuries.

Approaching the *Vita* as a logical myth rather than simply as a functional charter myth or a straightforward historical account has important implications. First, it allows us not to quibble over the absolute historicity or plausibility of specific details or incidents in the *Vita* such as the miracles. Conversely, it allows us, even requires us, to use all the information in the *Vita*, including the miracles, although not as discrete episodes or “bits” of information but, rather, in terms of the symbolic values represented and their internal relationships.

In this *Vita*, Gregory of Nyssa often referred to Gregory simply as *ὁ Μέγας*, “the Great,” a title he had presumably earned through his ability to perform

56. Others have already suggested the application of structuralism to hagiography: see J. Fontaine, *Sulpice Sévère, Vie de Saint Martin*, *SChr* 133 (1967) 184, and, especially, E. Patlagean, “Ancienne hagiographie byzantine et histoire et histoire sociale,” *AnnESC* 23 (1968) 106–125.

57. Cf. D. Lee, quoted in T. Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley 1977) 32: “a member of a given society—who, of course, codifies experienced reality through the use of the specific language and other patterned behaviour characteristic of his culture—can actually grasp reality only as it is presented to him in this code. The assumption is not that reality itself is relative, but that it is differently punctuated and categorized by participants of different cultures, or that different aspects of it are noticed by, or presented to, them.”

58. Cf. D. Henige, “Oral Tradition and Chronology,” *JAH* 12 (1971) 371–89, at 388: “In short, documented, written, external evidence should be viewed with as much skepticism as any piece of oral tradition.”

θαύματα, the wonders which formed many of the episodes in the *Vita* (cf. 893A, 933B). Nevertheless, it is important not to see Gregory simply as a wonderworker overawing and even frightening the people with his divine power—as when a demonic woman fell headlong before him: “this spectacle caused those present suddenly to shudder and be afraid” (904C). Instead, we must look for the qualities in Gregory that caused these reactions in people, for Gregory’s outstanding characteristic was that he apparently did not fit into conventional society, even though he possessed all the traditional characteristics of influential men; somehow he, and his behavior, were both conventional and nonconventional at the same time. In the *Vita*, Gregory of Nyssa brought out this ambiguity about Gregory by showing how he mediated between or participated in both sides of a series of antitheses; and in this sense each episode in the *Vita* seems to present to us different versions of the same message, which is that Gregory Thaumaturgus, as well as variants of him such as his activities or memorials, mediated between the traditional expectations of Greek society and, say, an unconventional source of authority and prestige located away from the city, out on the “fringes.” As an ambiguous figure who acted as a conduit between human society and divine power, Gregory was also able, simultaneously, to transform traditional Greek society into a new Christian society.

First, although many men evaluated the good life according to wealth, family, honor, or magistracies, others considered proximity to God to be the vital quality (cf. 896B–C). According to Gregory of Nyssa, although Gregory came from a wealthy and prestigious family (900A), he had abandoned urban life in order to live in seclusion (908C); in other words, the *Vita* presented Gregory as a man who had minimized the characteristics of a traditionally influential man and who had instead found his inspiration and his authority only out on the fringes of civilization (908C, ἐν ἐσχατιᾷ), whereas in fact Gregory did have those traditional attributes as well. The “elevation” of Gregory, closer to God and into the zone where he was eventually to defeat a demon, had also corresponded to a spatial separation from the city; and so his return (cf. 913D, ἀπὸ τῆς ἐσχατιᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν) meant that he brought back into the civilized city the divine power he had acquired out on the margins.

Another contrast that Gregory of Nyssa used to articulate the ambiguity of Gregory was to suggest that Gregory, although obviously only a man, displayed characteristics usually associated with divine beings. This comes out clearly in the account of Gregory’s first arrival at Neocaesarea as bishop: although he had not been accompanied by chariots or horses or retainers, Gregory of Nyssa compared him to an emperor (920A–B). Indeed, in some respects Gregory’s entrance did resemble the arrival of an emperor or his images into a city during Late Antiquity.⁵⁹ Despite the fact that everyone was staring at him, Gregory never ac-

59. Cf. S. MacCormack, “Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: The Ceremony of Adventus,” *Historia* 21 (1972) 721–52.

knowledged their presence, “passing them by as if they were a lifeless forest,” and, contrary to expectations, he never deviated from the road, “as if he were traveling in an uninhabited region:” “and to the men watching this was considered an even greater θαῦμα than moving the huge stone” (920C). The point is that in the middle of an exuberant ceremony, Gregory had apparently displayed those characteristics of impassivity and imperturbability which were usually associated only with divine beings and such partially divine men as emperors. It was precisely this uncertainty over the identity of Gregory that so amazed the citizens who were watching and who could only ask, “who is this Gregory who, although a man, has power just like an emperor over those whom we consider to be gods?” (920B).

According to Gregory of Nyssa, people responded to Gregory precisely because through him a little of that divine stability might appear to enter their own lives. Gregory, for instance, was able to soothe the outbursts of violence to which small, intimate communities are particularly susceptible. When two brothers feuded over a lake and began to raise private armies of retainers to settle the issue,⁶⁰ Gregory solved the problem by drying up the lake. In this way he introduced a far more effective form of justice for the disputes of daily life, and also a “goodwill and peace” (924D) which may have been scarce in those communities. As those people saw it, the actions and works of Gregory were representative of divine power: “for such was the power of Gregory the Great, or rather of God who performed these wonders in that man” (924D, 932C).

Another contrast Gregory of Nyssa used in the *Vita* to point up the ambiguity of Gregory revolved around Gregory’s attitude toward his own life and death. During their lifetimes men were always proud of their family, home city, and native province, and they often took special care to indicate their origins. From some of the funerary inscriptions in Pontus we can see that even after death they would continue to think about their origins: one man made a point of bringing his son’s bones back to Amaseia in order to bury them with those of his ancestors and his family.⁶¹ These tombs became a man’s, or a family’s, last claim on the respect of others. The well-known inscription from Neocaesarea which called for the annihilation of anyone who might mutilate the monument was simply a far more elaborate and severe example of the usual warning against violation, or curse upon the violator found on many tombstones in Pontus.⁶² As another inscription put it, a man’s tomb was his οἶκος, his final home.⁶³ Gregory, however, again appeared to contradict the normal expectations of society. When he knew

60. Note 925D, καὶ στρατὸς ἐκατέρωθεν ἐκ τῶν ὑποχειρίων παρεσκευάζετο: a useful passage for any discussion of local authority in the later empire.

61. *StudPont* 3, no. 103 (= *IGRR* 3.103).

62. P. Moraux, *Une Imprécation funéraire à Néocésarée* (Paris 1959), whose text is reprinted with slight modifications in *SEG* 18.561; for the more common imprecation see *StudPont* 3, nos. 30, 35a, 35e, 38, etc.

63. *StudPont* 3, no. 70b; cf. no. 30.

he was about to die he insisted that no memorial tomb be built for him, and instead said, "In the future let this be the summary of my life: that when alive Gregory was not named after some place and that after death he was still not an inhabitant in other people's graves. He had no possessions in this land, so that not even his burial was held on his own property. The only possession he considered worthy of himself was whatever had no innate trace of possessiveness" (956A). As a man in pursuit of the "high life," Gregory would never want to end up buried in a tomb.⁶⁴ But again, the actual position of Gregory was a mediation between these two extremes. Although he may have possessed nothing as bishop, he had in fact returned to his native province and his home city; and although he may have had no grave monument, recollections of his life continued to dominate Neocaesarea more effectively than even such a memorial as the great royal tombs which still towered over the Pontic cities. As his deacon put it, Gregory was "far beyond human nature" (949C).

In addition to this portrait of the man himself, Gregory of Nyssa put many of the activities of Gregory into the same context, so that his actions or their tangible results were forms of mediation between heaven and earth. One example was the church that Gregory inspired the people of Neocaesarea to construct. According to Gregory of Nyssa, this church, perhaps surprisingly, was still standing: "In our time a severe earthquake struck the city and almost all the buildings, both public and private, were totally destroyed; but this church alone remained uncracked and unshaken. As a result it is obvious what sort of power this great man used in assisting at the construction of this building" (924B-C). In Asia Minor earthquakes were particularly frequent,⁶⁵ and the indiscriminate destruction they caused might all too easily also expose latent animosities and rivalries. In the early third century, for instance, as a result of an earthquake in Cappadocia and Pontus, the Christians were persecuted and a prophetess who claimed control over earthquakes acquired a brief following.⁶⁶ Hence the survival of the Christian church would have had great significance for residents of the area. This "foundation of Gregory's episcopacy," because of its location in "the most conspicuous site in the city,"⁶⁷ was a highly visible reminder of his ability to introduce stability and predictability into a fickle world.

Another example of how Gregory's actions represented a form of mediation or transformation was the episode of his control over a rampaging river. The Lycus River had already earned itself a bad reputation: the local inhabitants called it "the wolf" because of the unpredictable damage it did every spring when it flooded (929A-B). Eventually some of them asked Gregory for assistance, claiming that they had already tried everything humanly possible, such as stone

64. Cf. 897A, with *Vita Moysis* 2.317.

65. List of earthquakes in T. R. S. Broughton, *ESAR* 4 (1938) 601-602, and L. Robert, *BCH* 102 (1978) 395-408; note esp. *StudPont* 3, no. 139.

66. Firmilian *ap. Cyprian Ep.* 75.10.

67. *Vita* 924B; cf. Basil *Ep.* 28 (*PG* 32.305C).

barriers, against it. Gregory went to see the raging river and, after delivering a homily on God's control over nature, he sank his staff into the bank of the river with the prayer that it would be a "bolted gate" against the flood (923B). So it turned out, for the staff grew into a tree which thereafter marked out the course of the river. In this episode, then, after the human power of stone barriers had failed, the divine power of Gregory, symbolized by the blossoming staff, was successful (cf. 929C and 932B for this explicit contrast).

As we can see, this *Vita* can easily assume the characteristics of the sorts of myths that some anthropologists are intent upon decoding, for it reveals an essential structural matrix of contrasting logical or symbolic pairs between which Gregory Thaumaturgus, his actions, and his saying appear to mediate. One of these fundamental logical oppositions was that between human society as characterized by community honors and values, but also by feuds and violence, which were all largely unpredictable, and the divine existence as characterized by harmony and tranquility; use of other fundamental oppositions, such as those between life and death or between culture and nature, also highlighted this contrast in the *Vita* between traditional urban society and the power a man might acquire out on the fringes. And transforming these oppositions was an ambiguously mythical figure like Gregory Thaumaturgus or some variants of him: "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction," as Lévi-Strauss put it.⁶⁸

For historians, structuralism is a mixed blessing. Whereas traditional forms of exegesis such as form- and source-criticism focus on the historicity or distortion of the specific content and the specific discrete events, structuralism focuses on the internal, underlying relationships that give significance to those events and that content; likewise, whereas traditional exegesis simply defines an opposition between form and content to the extent that the form may distort the content, structuralism identifies structures and content and finds its most powerful insights and meanings precisely in the logical organization of that structure/content. But structuralism becomes useless for historians precisely at the point of its greatest claim, which is that it somehow represents the unconscious logic of the human mind. Since such a claim essentially allows, or even concedes, little possibility of change in the way men think, it creates havoc for historians interested in changes in societies over time. Although traditional forms of exegesis are, as we have seen, interested in the diachronic layers and implications of a text, structuralist analysis tends to become resolutely synchronic or, perhaps better, achronic; as Momigliano has put it, "I cannot foresee history ever becoming a science of the permanent"⁶⁹—or, we might add, of the timeless. In other words, even a structuralist analysis of this *Vita* cannot resolve the problem of location in time—in this case, whether these structures really represent the logical and symbolic

68. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (English trans. New York 1963) 229.

69. A. Momigliano, "Historicism Revisited," in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middleton 1977) 369.

categories of Gregory's contemporaries, whether it is possible to assume that the action represented by the transformation of these logical categories corresponds to the real historical behavior of Gregory Thaumaturgus. For although ostensibly the *Vita* presents the historical behavior of Gregory, it is equally possible within a structuralist analysis to claim that these symbolic categories represent the thinking of fourth-century men, and particularly that of Gregory of Nyssa who composed the *Vita*, about the image and functions of their own contemporary bishops.

This problem of location in time cannot be resolved simply by comparing this structural image of Gregory Thaumaturgus with either a third- or a fourth-century context. Although such an approach may be valid for investigating, say, the existence of empirical techniques (e.g., whether men knew of a certain medical procedure before a certain date), it does not work well in the study of attitudes and beliefs. It is not simply that we have little third-century material to act as a context; rather, the whole procedure can all too easily begin to beg the question by assuming that some information about attitudes and beliefs is context and therefore to be accepted, while other information is not necessarily so and therefore must be evaluated and perhaps rejected.

Another difficulty with this comparative approach is that it is possible to demonstrate how this structural image of Gregory could fit equally well into both the third and the fourth century—or, in fact, into other centuries as well, simply because such basic oppositions as those between human society and a serenely divine existence were almost always characteristic of intellectual theology as well as of ordinary thinking. Because sophisticated Christian theology had inherited this contrast from Greek philosophy, questions about the absoluteness of God, the exact nature and functions of the members of the Trinity, the relationship between good and evil—in short, the precise location and limits of “the holy”—continued to haunt and divide the minds of theologians of all centuries, including the Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century;⁷⁰ as we have seen, Gregory of Nyssa could easily make Gregory Thaumaturgus into the embodiment of his own theology. But Gregory Thaumaturgus' theology had discussed precisely these same questions in the third century; one of the tracts assigned to his authorship, for instance, dealt with the theological puzzle of how an impassible God could possibly suffer in this world.⁷¹ And in his *Panegyric* to Origen he had, naturally enough, adopted a highly Origenist theology. God was described in clearly Platonic terms, and his basic characteristic of immutability stood in total contrast to human beings; between them the Logos acted as mediator, transmitting human prayers to God and speaking to men through the biblical prophets. The chasm between these two existences could also be bridged by an ascetic life

70. Cf. J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (Chicago 1971) 52–54, 132–41, 172f., 226f.

71. H. Crouzel, “La Passion de l'Impassible. Un Essai apologétique et polémique du III^e siècle,” in *Mélanges . . . H. de Lubac* 1 (1963) 269–79, although L. Abramowski, “Die Schrift Gregors des Lehrers ‘Ad Theopompum’ und Philoxenus von Mabbug,” *ZKG* 89 (1978) 273–90, now denies authorship to Gregory Thaumaturgus.

devoted to the knowledge of God. In that way a man might overcome his human condition and even become “similar to God”; and although in Gregory’s own opinion the finest example of such a man had been Origen himself, in fact according to the *Vita* Gregory himself had also enacted many of the functions, such as teaching and healing (921D–924B), that he had assigned to the Logos in his task of mediation.⁷²

This essential distinction between human and divine was common in ordinary thinking, as we can see from the local tombstones. An epitaph to a woman at Neoclaudiopolis, for example, claimed that she had been cleansed from her body and had gone to “immortal homes”: “the immortals have rescued you from diseases and carried you off to your fatherland.”⁷³ Hence, although some living men might be able to make themselves into ambiguously divine figures by undergoing the social death of asceticism, most ordinary people could make the transition between the human and the divine only when they actually died.

If, however, this structural image of Gregory provides no inherent temporal location, it does help us see how Gregory closely resembled prophets in other traditional societies. Some of this comparison could have been made, of course, on the basis of other information we have about Gregory, for as an educated and well-traveled man he had experience of the outside world, while as a member of a locally prominent family his background was traditional. Hence, like other prophets, Gregory was a man acquainted simultaneously with local traditions of authority and with wider aspects of the exercise of power. But it is the structural image of Gregory that links him most clearly with the ambiguous nature of other prophets. As Burrige puts it, prophets are dangerous people who can articulate, although not always verbally, new assumptions about the ordering of society and, particularly, about the exercise of authority in society. The function and effectiveness of a prophet are directly related to the image other people have of him: “A prophet is generally believed to have access to a source of inspiration that transcends man’s ordinary wits. . . . He externalizes and articulates what it is that others can as yet only feel, strive towards and imagine but cannot put into words or translate explicitly into action.”⁷⁴

In other words, the version of Gregory’s ambiguous behavior and mediating role in society presented in the *Vita* compares very well with this model of prophets and millenarian activities in other traditional societies, and as such it emphasizes that the real problem involved in conversion to Christianity in the ancient world revolves not so much around introduction of new beliefs as around acceptance of new paradigms of prestige and authority. Given the difficulties already discussed concerning the historicity of the context, even the structural

72. Crouzel (*supra* n. 1) 46–53, 73–78.

73. *StudPont* 3, no. 86; on what might be called “commonsense philosophy” see A. D. Nock, “Orphism or Popular Philosophy?” in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* 1 (Harvard 1972) 503–515.

74. K. Burrige, *New Heaven, New Earth* (New York 1969) 154–55.

content, of the *Vita*, we need to make two explicit assumptions in order to elaborate the application of this comparative model within a specific historical context. First, it is possible that this structural image of Gregory as a logically and symbolically ambiguous figure was one already perceived as such by the members of his own society, that it was handed down (subconsciously?) in the oral traditions about Gregory, and that it therefore offers us a contemporary perspective on Gregory.⁷⁵ Second, it is possible that the logical and symbolic categories within which people perceived and evaluated their world corresponded or were identical with the social and cultural categories within which they lived and acted; that, from a slightly different perspective, “these structures refer to an external reality of which the [literary] work is a metaphor.”⁷⁶ As a sociologist puts it, interpretative categories “are . . . rarely found as exclusively explanatory constructs. We know from empirical investigation that they are used to summon behaviour as much as to explain it.”⁷⁷ With this assumption, then, not only were Gregory Thaumaturgus and his actions perceived to be logically ambiguous, he and they were also in actuality socially ambiguous, somehow operating according to paradigms and assumptions similar to but different from the traditional ones; hence he was in his behavior, too, a true wonderworker. In other words, these two assumptions together offer one possibility for locating this structured image of Gregory Thaumaturgus in a specific historical period and in a specific context of human behavior: the first hypothesis allows us to put the knowledge of Gregory that we acquire from the *Vita* into the third century, while the second allows us to analyze within the society of Pontus the portrait of Gregory that we acquire from a structural analysis of a literary text. We can then link this third-century, socially ambiguous Gregory with our models of the behavior and functions of prophets in traditional societies, and try to understand how Gregory could have “converted” Pontus to Christianity. For, since he was a “successful” prophet, he was presumably able to articulate clearly thoughts and aspirations already immanent in his own society.

Using this logical, structural portrait of Gregory as a genuinely historical portrait has immense potential for our understanding of the third century, not least because by locating the authority of Gregory precisely in his ambiguous status we can also, perhaps, better understand the idea of conversion in Antiquity, especially among ordinary people (that is, virtually everyone). In this perspective, conversion represents the response of people to a “discourse” on the level of

75. Lévi-Strauss’s comment on the (non-) effects of translation may be relevant here: “The mythical value of the myth is preserved even through the worst translation”: (*supra* n. 68) 210.

76. J. Pouillon, “Structuralism: A Definitional Essay,” in *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. A. M. Johnson, Jr. (1979) 52. For an example of categories of interpretation influencing, if not creating, specific behavior, see J. Starobinski, “The Gerasene Demoniac: A Literary Analysis of Mark 5:1–20,” in *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis*, trans. A. M. Johnson, Jr. (Pittsburgh 1974) 81–84.

77. B. R. Wilson, in *Rationality*, ed. B. R. Wilson (Oxford 1970) xi.

immanent symbolic categories rather than to a presentation on the level of verbal conversation and preaching, an observation that ties in with earlier remarks about the outright improbability of the effectiveness of ordinary preaching and about the importance of “seeing” or “perceiving” for changing men’s lives.

IV

Although previously temples had controlled, if not owned, much of the land of Pontus, under the early empire the province was reorganized around a number of free cities to which this old temple land may have been reassigned.⁷⁸ But the disappearance of the domination exercised by these cults because of their control of the land and therefore of the people working that land—whether in fact or merely in the sources—can be beneficial to historians, because it helps focus analysis on the social role played by cults in Pontic society: first, for all people, local cults and priests provided a focus for immediate concerns and problems; second, for local aristocrats, the priesthoods provided another honor within the competition over status inherent among these local elites and also, through the imperial cult in particular, a means for them to enter a wider arena of honor and prestige.

Much research has concentrated on this second topic of competition among local aristocrats, both in a particular region and on a wider, imperial level. The establishment of the imperial cult particularly facilitated this wider competition, for by definition it allowed some form of access to the emperor. To become a high priest of the imperial cult was a great honor for a family, as Philostratus wrote in the early third century: “for the sophist Scopelian was himself high priest of Asia and so were his ancestors before him, all of them, inheriting the office from father to son. And this was a great crown of glory and more than great wealth.”⁷⁹ In Pontus, a man would likewise list high priests as ancestors in the same way that he claimed descent from kings or tetrarchs.⁸⁰ The rewards of holding a priesthood in the imperial cult might include an audience with the emperor as part of an embassy, the grant of Roman citizenship, or promotion into the equestrian or senatorial orders.⁸¹

When a man became a high priest of the imperial cult it presupposed that he or his family had already become prominent in local society. Inscriptions, of

78. In general, see Magie (*supra* n. 7) 139–42, 179–82, 369–71, and A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (2nd ed. Oxford 1971) 147–73; on temple estates see T. R. S. Broughton, “New Evidence on Temple-Estates in Asia Minor,” in *Studies . . . A. C. Johnson*, ed. P. R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton 1951) 236–50, and H. Kreissig, “Hellenistische Grundbesitzverhältniss im oströmischen Kleinasien,” *JWG* (1967, Teil 1) 200–206.

79. *V. soph.* 515.

80. *StudPont* 3, no. 3 (= *IGRR* 3.1436).

81. A. Stein, “Zur sozialen Stellung der provinziellen Oberpriester,” in *ΕΠΙΤΥΜΒΙΟΝ Η. Swoboda dargebracht* (Reichenberg 1927) 300–311, with the comment of Magie (*supra* n. 7) 1302 n. 64.

course, do not always make this clear, because often cities honored men simply for the generosity they had shown as high priests.⁸² But sometimes the little evidence we have from Pontus (and the adjacent region of Bithynia) also mentioned the local prominence of these imperial high priests. In the second century, Sebastopolis honored one native son who, in addition to having been lifelong high priest of Hadrian, had also “performed every liturgy and been distinguished in every magistracy (archon and thiasarch many times, *agoranomos* even more often, Pontarch in Neocaesarea . . .) and had supervised the construction of many great projects and paid for more, greater ones himself (he was the first to open the gymnasium).”⁸³ One imperial high priest of Pontus during the second century had once been *epistates* of Amastris; another had held a number of local magistracies, including the chief archonship, at Amastris.⁸⁴

The same background of local prominence can be seen in the men who became Pontarchs under the empire. Although there is controversy about the precise functions of this position, it seems to have been connected with the imperial cult and high priests.⁸⁵ One Bithyniarch and Pontarch had been *epistates* of his city and had once improved the revenues from the local market; another Pontarch and Lesbarch was considered to be the most important man in Lesbos and Pontus. In the late second century, another man was chief archon of Sebastopolis and also a Pontarch.⁸⁶

The local prominence of these men not only offers a basis for their wider prestige, it also links them with the interests of their local communities. Tombstones are particularly revealing of which concerns most immediately weighed on people, for the occurrence of death so disrupts people’s views of the world that it brings to the surface latent fears and worries. Death itself often needed explanation, particularly in the case of young people who were not expected to die: “this mound covers Paula, who was twenty years old. If I have been deceitfully murdered, may the divine light be my avenger.”⁸⁷ So, too, these latent anxieties would be articulated at the death of a wife “whom a harsh grudge has swiftly deprived of life; she was not struck down by disease but was killed by a very quick death.”⁸⁸ In small communities such as the cities in Pontus during the imperial period, the thought of vengeance was apparently common, particularly in unexpected or unnatural death. In their own way these tombstone-threats suggest

82. *IGRR* 3.79, 107, and 115 (= L. Robert, *Les Gladiateurs dans l’Orient grec* [Paris 1940] no. 75).

83. *IGRR* 3.115.

84. *IGRR* 3.88, 90 (+ 1435).

85. Cf. J. Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Munich 1965) 41–50, 64–66.

86. Respectively, *IGRR* 3.1427; *IGRR* 3.87, with the comment of E. Kalinka, “Aus Bithynien und Umgegend,” *JOEAI* 28 (1933) Beiblatt, col. 70; *IGRR* 3.116, with G. de Jerphanion and L. Jalabert, “Inscriptions d’Asie Mineure (Pont, Cappadoce, Cilicie),” *MUB* 3 (1908) fasc. 7, no. 16.

87. *StudPont* 3, no. 9.

88. *StudPont* 3, no. 123.

something not just about beliefs but also about personal relationships, for these imprecations were addressed to other people, even if unnamed, and became a means of publicizing suspicions about them. In some cases, however, this “curse” was apparently all men had; without a powerful patron, they could only beg for divine retribution: “Helios, take revenge!”⁸⁹

Death from disease was, naturally, common. A man who made his living as a gladiator might defeat all the bears in the stadium, but eventually he too would die of a fever at Amaseia.⁹⁰ Hence it is no surprise that of the few dedications to the local gods in Pontus some mentioned gratitude for cures. North of Amaseia were hot springs, which Strabo had claimed were good for people’s health. There one man set up a dedication to the savior-god Asclepius and the Nymphs, to the high priest, and to the keeper of the temple; another thanked the Nymphs and the priest for healing his nose. In both cases the priest seems to have interceded in the role of a doctor.⁹¹

In Pontus there were many local cults. In addition to the ones already mentioned, at Amaseia was a cult of Zeus Stratios,⁹² at Euchaita one of Demeter, Kore, and Zeus Epikarpios,⁹³ at Sebastopolis one of Zeus Hypsistos,⁹⁴ in eastern Pontus one of Pylon,⁹⁵ and at Neocaesarea a local oracle.⁹⁶ And there were other smaller cults such as the temple of the Mother of the Gods on the bank of the Iris River near Amaseia.⁹⁷ For all the inhabitants of Pontus these cults provided a focus for local enthusiasm and a source of local pride. At Amastris (?) a man could put down the foundations for a new temple to Zeus Bovitenos, and his son would complete it in the early third century. On the basis of the magistracies they had held, both men were obviously prominent in the city, and the son had also become high priest of the imperial cult, Bithyniarch, and Pontarch; now, however, they were honoring their own local, “hereditary” god.⁹⁸ At Amaseia a priest of Zeus Stratios erected a dedication financed “from the god’s own revenues”; another dedication was put up by the entire city on the basis of a decision made in the assembly, this time financed “by the collected public revenues.”⁹⁹ Often, too, there were community festivals associated with the cults, such as the one in honor of Zeus Stratios at Amaseia.¹⁰⁰

89. *StudPont* 3, no. 258.

90. *StudPont* 3, no. 109 (= Robert [*supra* n. 82] no. 77).

91. Strabo 12.3.38; *StudPont* 3, nos. 24–25; and G. E. Bean, *TTKBulleten* 17 (1953) 172–75. Cf. Strabo 14.1.44, for Carian priests prescribing cures based on their dreams.

92. *StudPont* 2, 171–84; III, nos. 140–43.

93. *StudPont* 3, no. 189.

94. *StudPont* 2, 203.

95. T. B. Mitford, “The God Pylon in Eastern Pontus,” *Byzantion* 36 (1966) 471–90.

96. Athanasius *De incarnatione* 47.

97. Gregory of Nyssa *De S. Theodoro* (PG 46.744A).

98. *IGRR* 3.90 (+ 1435).

99. *StudPont* 3, nos. 141, 142.

100. *StudPont* 3, no. 143.

Finally, these local cults highlighted the prestige of their priests, simply because every cult brought to prominence men and women who thereby enhanced their own influence in local society. These priests allowed other people access to the cures, oracles, or knowledge offered by their cults, and in the cult festivals they played leading roles. Sometimes these men and women can be identified, particularly when they or their relatives later attained higher positions;¹⁰¹ but even though they may be infrequently named in the extant evidence, the general point remains that local cults offered additional and, by the third century, traditional positions of prestige and influence.

It is in this context that we may place the activities of Gregory Thaumaturgus leading to the "conversion" of Pontus. Gregory apparently came from a prominent local family and might have been expected to participate in the life of his home-city Neocaesarea, all the more since he returned from Palestine as a highly educated man with connections with imperial magistrates. In many aspects Gregory now resembled the image of a traditionally influential man. He was knowledgeable in Roman law, and already in Pontus there were precedents for *νομικοί* to become either advocates at a provincial tribunal or local priests.¹⁰² Furthermore, according to the *Vita*, the citizens of Neocaesarea hoped he would share his learning with them in "community assemblies," in the same way that the citizens of Smyrna had in the second century encouraged the sophist Polemo to teach in their city and thereby also acquired his abilities to settle lawsuits and to represent them before the emperor Hadrian.¹⁰³ To the citizens of Neocaesarea Gregory had returned like "a traveling merchant"—a telling comparison in a city like Neocaesarea, situated on a main road leading to the Armenian frontier,¹⁰⁴ which had surely seen many merchants pass through and which had always had to compete for their trade with the bazaars organized around the religious festivals in other cities.¹⁰⁵ These merchants were often important links with the outside world; now Gregory had returned to Neocaesarea, capable of dispensing the profits of his learning and reputation with perhaps even greater benefits than a man who might have increased the market revenues and facilities for another city.¹⁰⁶ Hence the citizens of Neocaesarea offered to honor Gregory as their "founder of virtue and lawgiver of life," titles which, although largely honorary, still implied some heady company, because often these or similar municipal titles were conferred on the gods.¹⁰⁷

101. *IGRR* 3.69 (+ 1419), 95.

102. *StudPont* 3, no. 103 (= *IGRR* 3.103, no. 189); for comparative material see L. Robert, "Un Juriste romain dans une inscription de Beroia," *Hellenica* 5 (1948) 28–34.

103. *Vita* 908B; on Polemo see Philostratus *V. soph.* 531–32, 539–40.

104. *Vita* 905D–908A; cf. J. A. R. Munro, "Roads in Pontus, Royal and Roman," *JHS* 21 (1901) 52–66.

105. Strabo 12.3.36, on Comana; *StudPont* 3, pp. 202–204, on Euchaita and the cult of Theodore.

106. *Vita* 908B; cf. *IGRR* 3.1427.

107. *Vita* 908A; cf. *StudPont* 2, 203.

But Gregory refused: “he separated himself entirely from the bustle of the agora and life in the city and lived in solitude only with himself and through himself with God. He considered of little importance the affairs of this world, not caring about the empire or holding municipal offices” (908C). According to the *Vita*, Gregory rejected the advances of Neocaesarea because of his aversion to φιλοτιμία—precisely that desire for honor for which other men were praised by their cities.¹⁰⁸

Eventually Gregory did leave his solitude, although only after he had become priest of a cult, that is, bishop of Neocaesarea, and after he had had his selection confirmed through a vision of John and Mary. In many traditional societies it is common that the dream, the result of a state somehow participating in both life and death, should be considered influential; in Late Antiquity a dream might compel a man at Neoclaudiopolis to set up a dedication to the “holy goddess.”¹⁰⁹ A vision was also an important way of legitimating or reinforcing a man’s message or activities not only to himself but also to others. “At the start, the personal qualities of a prophet seem to matter little. What is important is that his message should appear to come from a source beyond commonsense experience. It must be a revelation. Usually the message is claimed, or presumed, to have been revealed in a dream or vision or some other mystical experience.”¹¹⁰ Gregory was not the only prophet in Asia Minor who had a vision, proclaimed a message, and developed a following. The second-century prophet Montanus provides another obvious example of a man, and then of a later image and cult of the prophet, offering an alternative access to divine power that did not necessarily conflict with orthodox Christianity, so much as with the prevailing paradigms of power and authority in Greek society in general.¹¹¹ More directly relevant to Pontus is an incident described by Hippolytus, a Greek theologian at Rome in the early third century: a man in Pontus who was a leader in the Christian church began to believe his own dreams and presented himself to his supporters as a prophet. His message was very simple: “The crisis will happen after one year.” Some people were so upset by the imminent “day of the Lord” that they sold their land. When nothing happened after the year, the people returned to their farming, although some who had lost their land were now beggars.¹¹² In a similar fashion, Gregory after his vision would appear as a direct successor to the original Apostles, and the people would describe his wonders as apostolic (924C).

When Gregory and his companions first approached Neocaesarea after his ordination, they spent the night in a pagan temple. There, in the episode of his

108. *Vita* 908B; contrast *IGRR* 3.115.

109. *StudPont* 3, no. 65.

110. K. Burrige (*supra* n. 74) 111.

111. Eusebius, *HE* 5.16.7–10. For a possible revival of Montanism in late third-century Phrygia see W. M. Calder, “Philadelphia and Montanism,” *BRL* 7 (1922/23) 309–354; disputed by E. Gibson, *The “Christians for Christians” Inscriptions of Phrygia* (Harvard 1978) esp. 125–44.

112. *Comm. in Daniel*. 4.19 (*GCS* 1, pp. 232–34).

ἀριστεία against the demons, Gregory demonstrated that his power was greater than that of the resident demon. As the *Vita* put it, the demons who usually revealed oracles to the priests were now too terrified to approach the temple again; but within the perspective emphasizing that Gregory was an ambiguous figure somehow transforming in himself a number of basic restrictions about the functioning of traditional society, the bishop had now provided a very firm sign or proof of his superiority over the existing cult. From now on in Neocaesarea the community would focus itself around “the God of Gregory”—a transformation which involved new assumptions about power and the means to acquire it. By compelling this local priest to concede that “the power in Gregory through which he appeared to be more powerful than the demons was divine” (917A), Gregory effectively took the place of this local priest himself. In other words, a change in the belief about the efficacy of local cults was closely associated with a change among the men who acted as local religious leaders; people could now see that a greater divine power was somehow resident and accessible in a different cult with its own representative.

Discussions of the conflict between Christianity and paganism or heresy tend too often to be conducted in highly metaphysical and theological terms and to lose sight of the fact that the persecution or destruction of any cult entailed the loss of those very real positions through which men gained prestige and meaning for their lives. If priests were not powerful enough themselves to resist they could appeal elsewhere for assistance; for instance, when the priest at Neocaesarea could no longer get a response from his terrified demon, he threatened to use force against Gregory or to haul him before the local magistrates or the emperor (916B–C). Only when the local magistrates acquired the support of an imperial edict from Decius and a proclamation from the provincial governor could they force Gregory to leave the city and hide in the mountains.

Throughout most of the early empire, life in these Greek cities had depended on a delicate equilibrium between the benefits of mutual concord and respect and the potentially disruptive effects of unrestrained competition over prestige among the local aristocrats.¹¹³ Local cults, as we have seen, contributed to the maintenance of this equilibrium by providing local aristocrats with public prominence and access to greater honors, as well as by insuring that these aristocrats in turn continued to enrich their local communities and respect other citizens. Yet the potential for disruption had always existed, and what one sophist said of a rival could have wider implications: “he makes my heart palpitate, and my mind too, when I think how many admirers he has.”¹¹⁴ What Gregory had accomplished was to break, deliberately or not, with this traditional consensus and become a

113. Cf. C. Panagopoulos, “Vocabulaire et mentalité dans les *Moralia* de Plutarque,” *DHA* 3 (1977) 197–235, for Plutarch as “le porte-parole d’une couche sociale soucieuse avant tout de stabilité” (p. 206), and C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Harvard 1978) 89–91, 100–103.

114. Philostratus *V. soph.* 525.

fine example for what Peter Brown has recently described for the third century as a transition from “an age of equipoise to an age of ambition”: in contrast to many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Gregory had now found “a religious means of expressing, by drastic gestures of protest or renunciation, such as the publicizing of visions to [his] fellow believers . . . , that sense of separateness which went with a sense of superiority based upon closeness to the divine.”¹¹⁵ Because he had acquired a different, private access to divine power, Gregory could effectively impose his own authority over the selection of a bishop even upon “the patrons of the election” in a neighboring city (936A).

Since the introduction of Christianity during the early empire had often rested largely on these highly localized competitions over authority and prestige, Gregory’s success in articulating different forms of power could, like other prophetic movements, easily have flickered out. Instead, it was caught up in other social trends, thus insuring the lasting “conversion” of Pontus. One of these trends, as A. H. M. Jones described it a generation ago, was the rise to prominence in the late third and early fourth centuries of precisely those urban social groups most affected by Christianity¹¹⁶—and perhaps also most marginal to existing cults and most susceptible to new perspectives on the acquisition of prestige and authority. Another significant development was the introduction of imperial patronage for Christianity in the early fourth century. Some men seem to have sensed this unexpected change immediately: the father of Gregory of Nazianzus was a local magistrate who had been a member of the *Hypsistarioi* until during the reign of Constantine in 325 he had a vision and converted to Christianity; according to his son, “at that very time it happened that a number of bishops were hurrying to [the Council of] Nicaea.” This is a fine example of moving with the times: in 329 this old man became bishop of Nazianzus—and then financed the construction of his own memorial, another new church.¹¹⁷ Since the Christian bishops were now backed by imperial support, their pagan opponents or, rather, competitors could only hope for the emperor’s patronage also. The emperor Julian, for instance, would agree to an embassy from Cyzicus by allowing them to restore their pagan temples and expel the Christian bishop;¹¹⁸ in 362 he proposed to promote the pagan priests in Galatia to the position of authority then enjoyed by Christian bishops;¹¹⁹ and in 372 the emperor Valens proposed additional honors for the high priests of Asia.¹²⁰

115. P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Harvard 1978) 43–44.

116. A. H. M. Jones, “The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity,” in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Oxford 1963) 17–37.

117. Quotation from Gregory of Nazianzus *Orat.* 18.12 (PG 35.1000B); for other details see M. M. Hauser-Meury, *Prosopographie zu den Schriften Gregors von Nazianz* (Bonn 1960) 88–90.

118. Sozomen, *HE* 5.15.

119. Julian *Ep.* 22 (Wright) = Sozomen, *HE* 5.16.

120. H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d’Asie Mineure*, fasc. 1 (Paris 1922) no. 100; discussion in A. Schulten, “Zwei Erlasse des Kaisers Valens über die Provinz Asia,” *JOEA* 19 (1906) 61–70.

But though there may have been a change in the cults and beliefs considered effective, there was very little change in the type of men who held the new Christian priesthoods. Previously the pagan priesthoods had been held by men who ranked high by the criteria of wealth, family, and local influence; and in spite of Gregory of Nyssa's claim that these secular criteria were irrelevant among Christians, in fact practically every Christian bishop we know of in Pontus and Cappadocia during the third and fourth centuries came from this local aristocracy, men such as Gregory Thaumaturgus himself and his brother.¹²¹ These criteria are reflected in the *Vita* when Gregory of Nyssa mentions the debate over the selection of a new bishop for Comana. Even Alexander, the charcoal-burner whom Gregory finally selected, was living this humble life because of a philosophic desire to live virtuously (936C); when he delivered his first oration he was able to speak with perception, even if not with much rhetorical grace.¹²² Nor did a pagan past necessarily exclude a man from becoming a Christian bishop. The father of Gregory of Nazianzus was an obvious example; another was the temple priest whom Gregory had once defeated. He became a Christian deacon, accompanied Gregory when he fled the persecution, and eventually, according to one tradition, succeeded Gregory as bishop of Neocaesarea.¹²³

The function of the new Christian cult and its priests in local society provides a further element of continuity with the pagan past. As we have already seen, Gregory was called upon to settle feuds, provide flood relief, and heal sicknesses—precisely the tasks that pagan cults and their priests had earlier performed. As the *Vita* put it, “with regard to their human controversies the people thought that no other judgment was more authoritative, and every crisis and every insoluble snarl of events was resolved by his decisions. Hence there was rule by law and peace” (924D). Once people had called upon the sun for vengeance and assistance; now Gregory was himself a beacon for the citizens, a man whom people could instantly “see” and who could illuminate their uncertainties.¹²⁴

In all this it was precisely Gregory's ambiguous position as a mediator between divine power and human society that had formed his role and function in Pontus. Gregory offered a way for the local aristocracy to break out of their usually latent, although still potentially unrestrained, competition over local authority and prestige. Through his own ascetic life of philosophy he instead emphasized the significance of quiet moral qualities for local prominence as bishops, and by promoting the Christian church as the focus of his community he allowed the church, rather than individuals, to assume many civic expenses. Gregory also presented an alternative to the usual networks of local patronage, which, as we have seen, might easily lead to feuds even between brothers, for he was

121. T. A. Kopeček, “The Social Class of the Cappadocian Fathers,” *ChHist* 42 (1973) 453–66.

122. *Vita* 937C; but Cappadocian orators were notorious for their coarse and heavy accents (Philostratus *V. soph.* 594).

123. Rufinus, *HE* 7.28.2 (*GCS* 9, p. 955).

124. *StudPont* 3, nos. 9, 258; cf. *Vita* 893C, and Basil *De spiritu sancto* 74 (*PG* 32.205B, 207A).

the kind of man from whom one could ask for assistance and yet, apparently, not fall into obligation. By seeming to have rejected the normal activities of life and taking on a “statusless status,”¹²⁵ he slipped into the interstices between social categories and became the perfectly neutral focus for all people.

In this sense, then, there were no drastic changes in the society of Pontus after the μεταβολή, the “conversion” of the people to Christianity (956B). The local cult still served many of the same purposes in society, its priests were drawn from the same class of men as before, and in some cities the old pagan temples were converted directly into Christian churches.¹²⁶ At Neocaesarea, Gregory even held the community assemblies he had previously avoided (cf. 941C) and acted as if he were performing a municipal position he had once rejected, for by instituting festivals in honor of the local martyrs he was now functioning as a “lawgiver” (953B). Nor was there much change in the virtues to which members of the community aspired. Previously men had been praised on their tombstones for comforting the poor, honoring their friends, protecting their families, and offering hospitality to strangers;¹²⁷ similar exhortations about community values were part of Gregory’s message to the citizens of Neocaesarea (924A–B). The contrast to previous times was, rather, in the legitimation that lay behind these activities, for now everything was done with reference to “the God proclaimed by Gregory” (917D).

Studies of continuity and change often omit any consideration of motivations, either for retention of similar beliefs and activities or for acceptance of contrasting ones. In the case of conversion to Christianity, imperial patronage could obviously influence these dilemmas, but not before the reign of Constantine, or, perhaps better, not before the fanatical collusion between emperors and bishops in the later fourth century, was this a particularly significant factor in favor of Christianity. Instead, as we can see in the case of Gregory, conversion to Christianity was dependent on such intangible factors as variations in individual power and status in local society—in the way local men of authority were perceived by other people. In the ancient world perhaps the most obvious method of marking an explicit victory over rivals was in the contests, games, and festivals which the cities promoted. Historians ought not to overlook these contests. In a city such as Gaza in southern Palestine, the transition from the cult of Marnas to Christianity in the early fourth century came down entirely to the outcome of a chariot race. After the team blessed by the holy man Hilarion defeated the team backed by Marnas, a great shout went up that Marnas had been conquered by Christ: “this decisive victory and several others which followed in successive games of the circus caused many to turn to the faith.”¹²⁸

125. V. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago 1969) 103.

126. Cf. Procopius *Hist. bell.* 1.17.18, at Comana in Cappadocia; see F. W. Deichmann, *RLAC* 2 (1954) 1228–41.

127. *StudPont* 3, no. 20.

128. Jerome V. *Hilarionis* 20 (*PL* 23.36–38).

In two analogies Gregory of Nyssa compared Gregory Thaumaturgus to an athlete and a charioteer (913C, 953B). In the world of Late Antiquity, particularly as the popularity of gladiatorial shows declined, athletes and charioteers became the headliners of society. Their competitions were two of the most visible any man could enter, and in them competitors placed their pride and honor on public display. For the local aristocracy, contributing to the financing of these games as a part of religious festivals was an honor in itself,¹²⁹ while the victorious participants might be commemorated by their native cities and in ladies' fantasies.¹³⁰ In his own way, Gregory too was providing games for the people of Neocaesarea, but with the important difference that he was also a participant himself. When Gregory had had his vision and felt ready to be bishop of Neocaesarea, "he took part in the ἀγῶνες, the contests." Gregory of Nyssa could write that his entire tenure as bishop had been one long "contest" or "athletic competition" against the power of demons (913C). A man like Gregory Thaumaturgus could do his soul-searching, his pursuit of virtue and philosophy, in the privacy of a solitary retreat, but his prestige and authority depended on a visible and public performance. So it was when Gregory entered Neocaesarea for the first time as bishop: "every citizen turned up as if curious about a new show, and everyone wanted to see who was this Gregory" (920B).

v

The role and function of Gregory Thaumaturgus in the conversion of Pontus to Christianity during the third century remain elusive. Although the previous section has discussed one possible way of reconstructing his history, it is still an open investigation, not least because it rests on certain assumptions about the relationship between an essentially literary analysis of the *Vita*, a model for the activities of prophets in other traditional societies, and the historical context for the behavior of Gregory, assumptions which are all open to further questioning—even by the present author. Although by birth and education he could easily have become an influential man in his local society, Gregory had preferred to withdraw into solitude, living only with his thoughts and his God. There, in what was almost a ritual form of dissociation from the traditional assumptions of society, he had discovered through a dream a new paradigm for articulating the exercise of authority and the composition of relationships among men. He could return to his community with all the theatrical flair of an emperor, even displaying the divine characteristic of transcendent impassivity. At Neocaesarea he was able first to convince the local priest that his own power was indeed divine, and then, effectively, make himself the focus of all community activities and values. The

129. Cf. Robert (*supra* n. 82) 257–58.

130. *StudPont* 2, p. 116, for a bronze statue of an athlete from Amisus; G. E. Bean, *TTKBulleten* 17 (1953) no. 12 (= *SEG* 13.540), a boxer from Sinope.

ambiguity of his position in society remained the basis of his success: although he performed a necessary role in the community, he still seemed to be, according to the *Vita*, ὑπὲρ τὴν φήμην, which we may translate here as “larger than life” (920C).

A text such as this *Vita* has a number of significations, and the validity of each one need not conflict or dispense with the others. As we can see, it is possible for this *Vita* to function simultaneously as an example of the panegyric form transposed into a Christian setting, as a medium for transmitting biblical and theological teachings, as a charter myth legitimating or explaining fourth-century (and later) practices, as an historical text possibly preserving in the logical structure of the oral traditions used in it a third-century portrait of Gregory Thaumaturgus—and, lest we forget, as an object of scholarly research up to today. Such a suggestion about the many dimensions of this *Vita* is meant to be more than a rationale for this discussion; it is also a plea that scholars of the ancient world, who now tend to work largely on historical content or literary forms or theology or symbolic metal structures in isolation from one another, should instead begin to work together. There is still much to be learned about the interaction between beliefs and behavior, between attitudes and actions.

After his death the cult of Gregory expanded and spread, especially in the Byzantine East but even to the medieval West.¹³¹ But in the fourth century it was the clergy and congregation at Neocaesarea who, predictably, preserved his memory and his liturgy so tenaciously that at times their devotion to the institutions of Gregory became obstinate. In 375, Basil wrote to the clergy at Neocaesarea insisting that they had no reason to break off communication with him over a difference in liturgical practices. Well might they argue that the present forms of vigils, prayers, and recitation of psalms did not exist “in the days of the great Gregory”; but by doing so, Basil claimed, they were no longer in correspondence with the common Eastern liturgies.¹³²

In this case Basil could criticize a rigid devotion to the traditions of Gregory, because he was entangled in a disagreement with the Christian community at Neocaesarea.¹³³ In other arguments, however, Basil was only too happy to claim support for his own theological position from the precedent of Gregory.¹³⁴ The point is that by the later fourth century in Pontus and Cappadocia the image and the traditions of Gregory had clearly become a sociological charter that was one way of promoting and maintaining existing authority and status in society. Instead of presenting a challenge to current notions of authority in society, the image of Gregory Thaumaturgus had been carefully integrated into the existing structure. Just as the family of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa seems always to have

131. See Sozomen, *HE* 7.27; E. W. Brooks, trans., *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus Patriarch of Antioch* 2.2 (1904) 393; and W. Telfer, “The Cultus of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus,” *HThR* 29 (1936) 225–344.

132. *Ep.* 207 (*PG* 32.763B); cf. *De spiritu sancto* 74 (*PG* 32.208A).

133. Cf. *Ep.* 204.

134. *De spiritu sancto* 74.

asserted its special relationship with the memory of Gregory Thaumaturgus, so likewise the Christian community at Neocaesarea would insist that its liturgical practices were correct because "the great Gregory" had first instituted them.

By the later fourth century, the rivalry among cities and among the new aristocracy of bishops would be argued out largely in the idiom of Christian doctrine and cults. The process whereby bishops became a powerful aristocracy in late Roman society is slowly becoming more familiar.¹³⁵ But individual cities too might find themselves in competition with the prestige of cults in other cities. By the later fourth century, soldier-martyrs had acquired a great vogue; at Euchaita, for instance, the cult of St. Theodore became influential,¹³⁶ while at Sebaste there was a cult of the Forty Soldier-Martyrs,¹³⁷ near Comana a cult of the martyr Basiliscus,¹³⁸ and at Amaseia even the tomb of a female stylite.¹³⁹ Of course, the prestige of a cult also directly affected the authority of that city's bishop, who was the custodian of the local cult. By the later fourth century, these local Christian cults provided not just a focus for all people's concerns and anxieties but also a new context within which men and cities would continue to compete for prestige and authority.

In the face of such competition it is no surprise that Neocaesarea held so tightly to the traditions of Gregory. As Basil put it in one of his letters, the bishops of Neocaesarea retained the ecclesiastical organization of Gregory "as if from some sacred icon."¹⁴⁰ By the fourth century, this image of Gregory Thaumaturgus offered both individuals and cities legitimation and reassurance of their existing prestige and authority. But, as this discussion has tried to suggest, even in the third century, during his own lifetime, Gregory may have been perceived as an "icon" offering people through the mediation of himself, his message, and his activities the possibility of access to new sources of authority and prestige.

University of Texas, Austin

135. E.g., T. A. Kopeček, "The Cappadocian Fathers and Civic Patriotism," *ChHist* 43 (1974) 293-303.

136. Gregory of Nyssa *De S. Theodoro* (PG 46.736-48); see H. Delehaye, "Euchaita et la légende de S. Théodore," in *Anatolian Studies* . . . W. M. Ramsay, ed. W. H. Buckler and W. M. Calder (Manchester 1923) 129-34.

137. E.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Encomium in XL martyres* 1, 2 (PG 46.749-88).

138. Palladius *Dial. de vita S. Joannis Chrysostomi* (ed. Coleman-Norton, p. 67).

139. *StudPont* 3, no. 134; cf. H. Delehaye, "Les Femmes stylites," *AB* 27 (1908) 391-92.

140. *Ep.* 28 (PG 32.305B).