

Philanthropia as a Social Reality of Askesis and Theosis in Gregory the Theologian's Oration: On the Love of the Poor

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Introduction

In his Oration 12, *To His Father, when he had Entrusted to him the Care of the Church of Nazianzus*, St. Gregory the Theologian delivered the following concerning the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit:

For how long shall we hide the lamp under the bushel, and withhold from others the full knowledge of the Godhead, when it ought to be now put upon the lampstand and give light to all churches and souls and to the whole fullness of the world, no longer by means of metaphors, or intellectual sketches, but by distinct declaration?¹

Indeed no more metaphors! “Poets speak reasoned truth not metaphor”.² This is the time of the indwelling, the time of the Holy Spirit to make His home in the human person.³ If Gregory’s assertions of the full consubstantial deity of the Spirit sounded as a “startling

¹ Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 12.6 in *Select Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen Sometime Archbishop of Constantinople*, trans. J.E. Swallow and C.G. Browne, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. H. Wace P. Schaff. (W.M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, [1974]), 247.

² Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 28.29, in *On God and Christ St. Gregory Nazianzus The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. L. Wickham. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York 2002), 62.

³ Cf. Or. 2.97, Op. Cit Browne & Swallow, 224; Or. 31.26, Ibid. Wickham, 137; Or. 31.27 in Wickham, 138; Or. 34.12, Browne & Swallow, 337; Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 41.5, in *Festal Orations Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, trans. N. V. Harrison in Popular Patristic Series, ed. John Behr, (SVS Press, 2008), 147; Or. 41.11, Browne & Swallow, 383.

thunderclap”,⁴ his other concern over the human person becoming ‘god’⁵ would no doubt have delivered the concise thunderbolt to awaken one into the presence of the Holy Spirit. “If the Holy Ghost is not God, let Him first be made God, and then let Him deify me His equal.”⁶ Was there a message that Gregory was attempting to deliver to ears perhaps not quite ready to understand: Holy Spirit, gods, union, theosis language? His own life concerning “regret and enthusiasm”⁷ marks a familiar story, one course suggested flights, desert and spiritual healing, the other to be steered forward, work for the common welfare, “...and bring to God a people for His own possession”.⁸ The story of *Philanthropia* or love for one’s neighbour in Gregory’s Oration 14, *On the Love of the Poor* is a story of friendship; a friendship between God making Himself known and uniting with His people.⁹ It is out of this friendship/relationship that philanthropy as an ethical metaphor of deification emerges vividly.¹⁰ Yet for Gregory *philanthropia* was no metaphor, it was a living reality of love in action and the expression of a union between the Holy Spirit and the human person.

The present article will attempt to examine Gregory the Theologian’s practical notion of philanthropy as expressed in his Oration 14, *On the Love of the Poor*. It will examine *philanthropia* from a theological perspective of intimate communion between God and his ‘gods’. More precisely, it will explore the relationship between *askesis*, *theosis* and *philanthropia* in order to determine the nature of the philanthropic act. The paper will aim to show that for Gregory *philanthropia* was the expression of the highest virtue, and the fruit of the meeting between human volition in *askesis* and divine grace in *theosis*.

⁴ J. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus An Intellectual Biography*, (SVS Press, New York, 2001), 206.

⁵ See the specific references given in Note 20.

⁶ Or. 34.12, *Op. Cit* Browne & Swallow, 337.

⁷ Or. 12.4, *Ibid.* Browne & Swallow, 246. C.f. also Or. 2.90, Browne & Swallow, 222.

⁸ Or. 12.4, *Ibid.* Browne & Swallow, 246.

⁹ *Gregory Nazianzus*, Or. 14.7 in Gregory of Nazianzus, trans. B. E. Daley, in *The Early Church Fathers*, ed. Carol Harrison (Routledge, New York, 2006), 120.

¹⁰ D.F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, (The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation Ltd. Massachusetts, 1979), 196.

Askesis, *theosis* and *philanthropia* are linked and link creation to a broader theme, God's economy to salvation. In Oration 14 Gregory appealed to the congregation to care for the destitute. Whether as a support campaign for Basil's hostels for the sick and the poor, he attempted to show that there was a proportional relationship between philanthropy and salvation.¹¹ Locating philanthropy within God's salvific plan, *theosis* will firstly be examined as the personal experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human person for the flowering and fulfilment of the good. *Askesis* will then be evaluated to determine the extent of human desire and volition in participating in the indwelling mystery. The final section will examine *philanthropia* as *theosis* in its social revelation.

Theosis

Theosis or deification¹² for St. Gregory was a progression towards God transcending the barriers that separate Uncreatedness and creation. His use of the term '*theosis*' provided a significant insight into understanding the living God and His presence in creation. *Theosis* as communion between God and the human person was divine grace exemplified. It contributed to anthropology and manifested in practical living. It marked a journey with God and unto God¹³ but also a journey in love with humanity or *philanthropia*.

What St. Gregory meant by the term *Theosis* may be explored within the general categories of the indwelling mystery, when the Holy Spirit which fills all things and is in all things comes and dwells in the human person. It is not so much the glory of the future discovered upon one's termination of this life, but a fulfilment of that journey, when the Spirit "resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of Himself than before."¹⁴ *Theosis* describes a relationship between God and the

¹¹ C.f. Or. 14.5, Op. Cit Daley, 78.

¹² Deification or theosis, theopoiesis or 'becoming God' was the term used for the effect of grace. Its biblical references include 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 8:17-19, 21 and John 10:34-5.

¹³ C.f. Or. 18.3, Op. Cit. Browne & Swallow, 255; Or. 42.5-9, Op. Cit. Daley, 142-145.

¹⁴ Or. 31.26, Op. Cit. Wickham, 137.

human person. This is dynamic and “multi-directional”¹⁵ and can not be confined to the present or any one moment in time but to an ongoing perfecting reality.

The experience/understanding of God in *Theosis* and an ethical life were also inexorably connected for St. Gregory.¹⁶ *Theosis* was not solely a gift of God, but also a prize for virtue and important in the dynamics of one’s freedom to ‘choose’ God voluntary.¹⁷ As Winslow describes, “*Theosis*, quite precisely, is a ‘prize’, and salvation can be ‘purchased’ by moral effort.”¹⁸ St. Gregory’s assertions of the ascetic importance in contributing to *theosis* not only defined his life and beliefs, but came to embody the very notion of how to ‘find’ or experience *Theosis*. As he suggested, *Theosis* was not to be taken literally as one cannot become God, but sons and daughters by adoption, or in that secondary account, gods by grace.¹⁹

The use of this suggestive language on becoming god was purposely launched into the theme of deification in Oration 14 because *Theosis* was difficult to embrace conceptually. It indicated that deification could also be simple and practical in its expression. As it will be identified below under the subheading ‘*Philanthropia*’, Gregory advised all to become gods by giving alms to those in need and having compassion for the sick and needy. These intimations were aimed to confer a ‘godlike’ disposition and attitude, the outcome being the recipient’s welfare, but also the well being of the giver. *Theosis* through philanthropic acts was as much about God’s mercy and grace as it was about human volition attaining this ‘godlike’ persona by approaching God more nearly through other people.

¹⁵ Op. Cit. Winslow, 192.

¹⁶ C.f. Or. 27.3, Op. Cit Williams, 27; Or. 28.2, Wickham, 37-38.

¹⁷ C.f. Or. 2.17, Op. Cit Browne & Swallow, 208.

¹⁸ Op. Cit., Winslow, 158.

¹⁹ C.f. Or. 1.5, Op. Cit Browne & Swallow, 203; Or.14.26, Op. Cit Daley, 90. St. Gregory excludes participation in divine nature and unification with God c.f. Or. 42.17, Browne & Swallow, 391. However see the strong suggestive language he uses in Or. 38.7, Daley, 120 and in Or.14.23, Daley, 88. He also discusses a nearness to God, c.f. Or. 28.2, Wickham, 37-38 and a union as the final state of the human person, c.f. Or.14.23, Daley, 88.

In social compassion or *Philanthropia* the human person reconciled themselves to God (through ascetic awareness and practice) so that *Theosis* acquired another metaphorical understanding of its ethical and salvific significance. One could ‘find’ the one body of Christ through people and “heal wounds by wounds, regain likeness by likeness – or rather, be healed of major things by minor things!”²⁰ In Oration 14 St. Gregory developed and pursued the idea that human kindness or otherwise love for humanity makes one mostly resemble God. He assimilated philanthropy as an outcome of *Theosis* and suggested its attainment through ascetic means.

Askesis

In the opening paragraphs of Oration 14 Gregory examines the virtues in search of the supreme virtue. *Askesis* or asceticism and a virtuous life are related to philanthropy. In his attempt to show that *philanthropia* was the expression of the highest virtue love,²¹ Gregory indicated how this was attained and found expression through ascetic pursuits. On the notion of ‘love’, a term which Maximos the Confessor used synonymously with ‘charity’, it was considered a “good disposition”.²² As a state of being, love or charity was something to partake in, requiring human effort in its ‘acquisition’.²³ The first example Gregory uses in Oration 14 to demonstrate what love was, was the Apostle Paul who did not act/speak out of self-interest.²⁴ A similar thought was pursued by Maximos in his *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, where love was a state of detachment.²⁵ In both authors love found expression in the absence of ‘self’ and the presence of Christ as the ultimate manifestation of the One who exemplified and became

²⁰ Or. 14.37 Ibid. Daley, 96.

²¹ C.f. Or. 14.5 Ibid. Daley, 78.

²² Maximos the Confessor, ‘The Four Hundred Chapters on Love’, in *Maximos the Confessor Selected Writings*, trans. George C. Berthold (Paulist Press, New York, 1985), 36.

²³ C.f. Ken Parry, ‘Maximos the Confessor and the Theology of Asceticism’, *PHRONEMA*, vol 17, (2002): 51-57 on the relationship of asceticism and the manifestation of virtue which the human person is naturally endowed with.

²⁴ C.f. Or. 14.2, Op. Cit Daley, 76.

²⁵ Op. Cit Berthold trans., 51.

this virtue. The attainment of love then was pursued through an ascetic framework of rightful/truthful living. Asceticism provided the means for participating in the virtues by relating to other people through philanthropic acts.

In Gregory's Oration 14, *askesis* or asceticism cannot be pinned down to a precise formula of action to be undertaken for attaining certain higher ends. Each person's response to God's call is framed in a unique relationship.²⁶ *Askesis* is presented as a condition of refining the soul and indeed the whole human person in their quest to come nearer to the living God. Gregory considered asceticism as a response and as a precondition to the philanthropic action. *Philanthropia* awakens within oneself the presence of the living God. This recognition, a characteristic of asceticism and the mature respect for one's dual created formula, "... an alliance and an alienation!"²⁷ was elevated in Oration 14 to a plateau that warranted self-observation of God's abiding presence. Elsewhere he wrote, "Yet one wonders at the ungraspable, and one desires more intensely the object of wonder, and being desired it purifies, and purifying it makes deiform".²⁸

Gregory posited asceticism as the attainment of the heavenly and the lasting over the earthly and perishing. "The prudent ones, then, are those who do not rely on the present circumstances, but make their treasure of what is yet to come".²⁹ What did Gregory mean? Firstly, he sought to refine the human condition allowing the image of God within to permeate without. The purpose of asceticism in this instance was the polishing of the image through the careful consideration that one was

²⁶ The topic of asceticism warrants discussion in light of Gregory's First Theological Oration, where he cautioned on the pursuit of excessive theologising and similar undertakings. When exerting the benefits of ascetic practices Gregory spoke in the capacity of a spiritual elder, this including his Orations 2 and 7. In Or. 14.5, Daley, 78, he remarks, "Let each one simply walk on the way, and reach out for what is ahead, and let him follow the footsteps of the one who leads the way so clearly, who makes it straight and guides us by the narrow path and gate to the broad plains of blessedness in the world to come." In his own life he attributed this role to both his father and St. Basil.

²⁷ Or. 14.7, Op. Cit Daley, 79.

²⁸ Or. 38.7, Op. Cit Harrison, *Festal Orations*, 65.

²⁹ Or. 14.19, Op. Cit Daley, 85.

endowed with “guiding reason”³⁰. This was evidenced in his appeal to those alienated and fearing the condition of leprosy:

...do not you, O servant of Christ – lover of God and of your fellow men and women – fall into a sordid state yourself! Have confidence in your faith; let your mercy conquer your cowardice, your fear of God overcome your squeamishness; let your piety take precedence over your thoughts...³¹

Gregory’s call for asceticism challenged one’s thinking and appealed to reason, “...if reason matters at all to us, who claim to be reasonable people and servants of Reason himself”.³² As he maintained elsewhere, “...let us become reason-endowed whole burnt offerings”³³, which for Gregory marked the highest living condition, “...rational beings, recipient of God’s grace”.³⁴

The ‘face’ of asceticism is thoughtfully articulated in Gregory’s Oration 14. It is marked as a principle that caters to the individual’s capabilities. It is not an unreasonable and exacting preoccupation,

To the one who asks your help...lend him God’s word...if you cannot do this, give the secondary smaller gifts, as far as is in your power”.³⁵

Yet asceticism drives the human person to mark new grounds in terms of personal living and set them on a new course. In this sense it was associated in this Oration with possessing “jealous zeal” for God, “mortification of the body”, “prayer and watching”, “chastity

³⁰ Or. 14.7, Ibid. Daley, 120. C.f. also Or. 42.8, Daley, 144, “Nothing is so magnificent in God’s sight as a purified reason and a soul made perfect by the doctrines of truth.”

³¹ Or. 14.27, Ibid. Daley, 91.

³² Or. 14.33, Ibid. Daley, 94.

³³ Or. 40.40, Op. Cit Harrison, Festal Orations, 136.

³⁴ Or. 28.15, Op. Cit Wickham, 48.

³⁵ Or. 14.27-28, Op. Cit Daley, 91; C.f. also Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 19.9, in *St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Select Orations*, trans. M. Vinson, in *The Fathers of the Church* Vol 107. ed. T.P Halton (The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 2003), 100.

and virginity”. “self-control”, “solitude and silence”, “frugality”, “humility”, “poverty”.³⁶ For Gregory, all this provided a training ground in order to receive the experience of God.³⁷ For instance, mortification was geared towards reliance upon God and not one’s self indulgence.³⁸ Asceticism forces to the fore front trust in the Lord. It is the means for developing the senses in order to “...feel pain at the weakness of my own flesh and sense my own weakness in the suffering of others.”³⁹ This training ushers in the ‘softening’ of the heart and appeals to reason to understand the unique and common bond of humanity, its slavery and dignity. While the body and the senses are associated with the former, Gregory critiqued but did not condemn his “fellow worker”.⁴⁰

Gregory’s association of the body to “filthy clay”⁴¹ highlighted its temporality in his search for the immortal. His suggestion was that for both the body and the soul, the single path to salvation lay in human kindness.⁴² Thus *philanthropia* is at once an ascetic endowment and a disposition expressing love and *Theosis*. The practice of asceticism drives a deeper wedge into a faithful expression of what is yet to come. This is why Gregory pursued it as a course of refinement and a state of living. He recognised that the inconstancy of the human condition was overcome by effort (*askesis*) but also by the image that draws us up into itself (*Theosis*).⁴³

Gregory does not abandon the present world, even though at times he yearns passionately for the other, “...support nature, honor primeval liberty, show reverence for yourself and cover the shame of your race...”⁴⁴ In asceticism he recognised the fluidity and temporality of the present,

³⁶ C.f. Or. 14.3-4, Ibid. Daley, 77.

³⁷ Or. 14.7, Ibid. Daley, 79.

³⁸ C.f. Or. 14.3, Ibid. Daley, 77.

³⁹ Or. 14.8, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁴⁰ Or. 14.7, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁴¹ Or. 14.6, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁴² C.f. Or. 14.8, Ibid. Daley, 80.

⁴³ C.f. Or. 14.20, Ibid. Daley, 86.

⁴⁴ Or. 14.26, Ibid. Daley, 90.

and yet it was in this moment that God dwells. Thus for Gregory it was from within created beauty that he sought to draw disciples towards a heavenly ascension and becoming. The inconsistency is merged via the ascetic method:

...let us come to possess our souls in acts of mercy; let us share what we have with the poor, in order that we may be rich in the things of the world to come. Give a portion of your goods to your soul, not simply to your flesh; give a portion to God, not simply to the world. Take something away from the belly and consecrate it to the spirit...Give a share to the “seven” – that is, to this life – and also to the “eight” – to that which awaits us after this life.⁴⁵

If asceticism has an inverse proportional effect to that which was pursued then Gregory suggested:

...give your all to the one who has given all to you. You will never surpass the lavish generosity of God, even if you throw away all things, even if you add yourself to the possessions you give away.⁴⁶

Asceticism for Gregory was stewardship, the providential care of all that is given, beginning with oneself. It is not a rigid campaign or a contract of created living, but an induction into the heavenly realm. Asceticism is the aid of the destitute, a class to which we all belong; “for all of us are beggars and needy of divine grace”.⁴⁷ Finally, asceticism in Oration 14 is the dressing of the self in the Beatitudes. Gregory makes us think twice about its nature and importance as a philanthropic outcome and precursor. “Do you think that kindness to others is not a necessity for you, but a matter of choice?”⁴⁸ As Verna Harrison explains,

⁴⁵ Or. 14.22, Ibid. Daley, 87.

⁴⁶ Or. 14.22, Ibid. Daley, 87-88.

⁴⁷ Or. 14.1, Ibid. Daley, 76.

⁴⁸ Or. 14.39, Ibid. Daley, 97.

almsgiving is transformed and associated to worship, a “self-offering” which echoes ascetic practices.⁴⁹

Philanthropia

For Gregory, Philanthropy is simply ‘God in action.’ Gregory’s message is clear as to how it may be accomplished, “...it is through my actions that I am to ascend to God.”⁵⁰ It takes us to the act prior to the first creation where Goodness sought to become motion for its beneficiaries.⁵¹ Harrison clarifies the matter thus:

What Gregory describes...is actually the reciprocal self-giving among divine and human persons which constitutes the life of God’s eternal kingdom...such reciprocal giving can be seen as an icon of the life of the Holy trinity and a participation in it.⁵²

The term *philanthropia* in Oration 14 was not only associated with the poor and the sick but included those who were suffering all types of evils, whether long or short term in a way which suppressed one’s dignity.⁵³ Gregory linked *philanthropia* to the greatest virtue, love. He showed that its chief exponent was Jesus who was also ready to suffer for us.⁵⁴ It is a virtue characterised by works in the sense of receiving Christ as a guest and looking after Him in the person in need.⁵⁵ Love as a virtue is merited in philanthropic works. God, says Gregory is served by acts of mercy and not the performance of the virtues, *per se*.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Verna Harrison, ‘Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ according to Saint Gregory the Theologian’, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 39, no 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1994): 163.

⁵⁰ Or. 14.6, Op. Cit Vinson, 43.

⁵¹ C.f. Or. 38.9, Op. Cit Daley, 121.

⁵² Op. Cit Harrison, ‘Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ according to Saint Gregory the Theologian’, 163-4.

⁵³ C.f. Or. 14.6, Op. Cit Daley, 78.

⁵⁴ C.f. Or. 14.2, Ibid. Daley, 76.

⁵⁵ C.f. Or. 14.4, Ibid. Daley, 78.

⁵⁶ C.f. Or. 14.5, Ibid. Daley, 78.

Allotting mercy as an attribute worthy of the call of humanity's plight, Gregory sought to confer on the human person divine-like qualities. It was in instilling His image into the clay that the image, acting as a "guide" for higher things in the present, enabled the human person to perform "good works".⁵⁷

Gregory's theological worldview in which *Theosis* featured prominently was mediated through a Plotinian understanding of the presence of the One which made sensible phenomena understood. Thus it was the heavenly within one that allows one to love and act in love towards those in need. As he reasoned elsewhere:

...it is more in keeping with the greater majesty of the first cause... to reach the creatures through the medium of divinity rather than the reverse, that is, for divinity to acquire substantive existence for their sakes, as our very subtle and high-flown thinkers imagine.⁵⁸

His theological perspective of existence encompassed activity and understanding that unfolded in the presence (or absence) of the Holy Spirit in a world belonging intimately and by choice to the Word. As he describes in Oration 17, *To the Frightened Citizens of Nazianzus and the Irate Prefect*:

...remember whose creature you are and the task to which you are called; how many things you have received and the extent of your obligation...For these reasons imitate God's philanthropy.⁵⁹

The expression of *theosis* is the recognition of one's source in God and the activation of grace in one's life. *Philanthropia* as its social outcome is the mimicking of God in His creative and just treatment equally upon all:

⁵⁷ C.f. Or. 14.2, Ibid. Daley, 76-77.

⁵⁸ Or. 23.6, Op. Cit Vinson, 136.

⁵⁹ Or. 17.9, Ibid. Vinson, 92.

...a human being has no more godlike ability than that of doing good...even if God is benefactor on a grander scale, the human on a lesser, still each does so...to the full extent of his powers.⁶⁰

Elsewhere he encouraged:

It is in this [philanthropy], in doing good, that man is pre-eminently divine. You can become God without hardship; do not forget the opportunity for deification.⁶¹

What does *philanthropia* ‘look like’? Keeping within the Scriptural tradition of the faith, Gregory’s first prescription was the word of God:

...have mercy and lend him God’s word, and earnestly demand your loan back, with the growth of the one you have helped as your “interest” – for he [God] always adds something to the word you have given by letting the seeds of piety grow a little more within himself.⁶²

He continues:

But if you cannot do this, give the secondary, smaller gifts, as far as is in your power: come to his help, offer him nourishment, offer her a scrap of clothing, provide medicine, bind up his wounds, ask something about her condition, offer sage advice about endurance, give encouragement, be a support. Surely you will not pose any danger to yourself by doing this much!⁶³

⁶⁰ Or. 14.27, Op. Cit Daley, 90.

⁶¹ Or. 17.9, Op. Cit Vinson, 92.

⁶² Or. 14.27, Op. Cit Daley, 91.

⁶³ Or. 14.27, Ibid. Daley, 91.

The indwelling mystery experienced partly as social compassion or *philanthropia* was for St. Gregory to share the common bond of humanity. As he explained:

feel pain at the weaknesses of my own flesh and sense my own weakness in the sufferings of others, what reason urges me to say is this: brothers and sisters, we must care for what is part of our nature and shares in our slavery.⁶⁴

His pastoral advice from emperors to the poor was that the human person may partake in one of the divine attributes by acting as God would act through their actions. In Oration 19, *On His Sermon and to the Tax Adjuster Julian* he advises:

...let all of us alike make our contribution too, some a greater, others a lesser one...and thus be joined and fitly framed into a perfect work, *a dwelling place of Christ, a holy temple* according to the master plan of the Spirit.⁶⁵

In Oration 36, *On Himself and to those who claim that it was he who wanted the see of Constantinople*, he suggested, “Behave like gods towards your subjects, if I may put it so boldly.”⁶⁶ The same theme is in Oration 17, *To the Frightened Citizens of Nazianzus and theirate Prefect* where he addressed an official in his audience, “You rule with Christ and you govern with Christ”.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Or. 14. 8, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁶⁵ Or 19.8, Op. Cit Vinson, 99.

⁶⁶ Or. 36.11, Ibid. Vinson, 228.

⁶⁷ Or. 17.9, Ibid. Vinson, 91.

Poverty and charity for St. Gregory were two sides of the same coin. What he revealed was an insight into a unified human nature sharing a single spirituality through a common material life. Charity towards the poor and help towards the sick was a unifying action with respect to Christ's body. The human person's capability for deification and a life in Christ thus applies to both the giver and the receiver. Both are capable of identifying with Christ.

Conclusion

The idea of a God who reveals Himself in the world as part of His act of salvation and the human person who acquires the likeness of God by imitating Him as a response to God's economic activity are mutually related. *Theosis* in its social reality as *philanthropia* reveals the crux of St. Gregory's Trinitarian theology as the understanding and experience of the presence and glory of God in creation and beyond.

Philanthropia is presented in Gregory's works as part of an ascetic account of living. It encompasses the aspect of the image-endowed human person caring for the body which is called to the same inheritance. Gregory supported this poem of co-existence not in terms of individual and private living but positions the wellbeing of the individual as dependant on the welfare of the many. "And what the limbs are to each other, each of us is to everyone else, and all to all."⁶⁸ Love for humanity is a heavenly seeking virtue allowing one to partake in God's salvific economy.

⁶⁸ Or. 14.8, Op. Cit Daley, 79.

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