

# Medicine, Rhetoric and Philanthropy in Gregory of Nyssa's second sermon "On the Love of the Poor"\*

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## Introduction

In his second sermon *On the Love of the Poor*, Gregory of Nyssa is referring to the disease of leprosy<sup>1</sup>, describing the miserable and pitiful condition that the

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\*\* 'Ο Λάμπρος Άλεξόπουλος είναι διδάκτωρ τής Θεολογικής Σχολής τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης (Τμήμα Ποιμαντικής καὶ Κοινωνικῆς Θεολογίας) καὶ μεταδιδακτορικός ἐρευνητής.

1. I will use the term *leprosy* for the disease that Gregory depicts here and the term *lepers* to refer to its victims, although this term in the language of ancient medicine describes the maladies of the skin in general. The term *λέπρα* of the Hippocratic corpus is not the disease that Gregory refers to here but a type of a non fatal putrefaction, which covers the skin: HIPPOCRATES, *Prorrhetic* II, 43; *Aphorismes* III, XX; *Diseases* I, 3. GRMEK M. D., *Diseases in the ancient Greek world* (tr. M. Muellner and L. Muellner, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 165-168. The *νοῦσος ἡ Φοινικίη* in *Prorrhetic* II, 43 is the only reference throughout the Hippocratic Corpus that matches modern leprosy. Galen identifies this latter with *elephantiasis*, the disease that subsequent medical texts will hitherto describe. On this see: GRMEK, *Diseases*, 168-173. HOLMAN S., *Healing the social leper in Gregory of Nyssa's and Gregory of Nazianzus' Περὶ Φιλοπρωχίας*, HThR 92:3 (1999), 287, n. 19-23. The word *λελωβημένος* (mutilated) that Gregory uses in his sermons is a term that describes best the victims of what is known today as the Hansen's disease and, in fact, the terms *λώβη* and *λωβοί* or *λελωβημένοι* will prevail in Christian literature as the appropriate terminology to illustrate the disease and its victims. For example: CHRYSOSTOM JOHN, *In Psalmum XLVIII*. PG 55,515; *In Matt. Hom. LXVI*. PG 58, 630; 671; *In Epist. I Ad Cor.*, Hom. XXI. PG 61, 180; 330. ASTERIUS OF AMASEIA, *Hom. V in Matt.* PG 40, 224A. There are also accounts that refer to the disease as *ἐλεφαντίασις*: CHRYSOSTOM JOHN, *Ad Stagirium* sermo III. PG 47, 490; *In epist. Ad Phillipp.* Hom. VIII. PG 62, 243. SOPHRONIUS OF JERUSALEM, *Laudes in SS Cyrum et Joannem*. PG 87c, 3468D. MACARIUS OF EGYPT, *Vita*. PG 34, 180B. Nevertheless, it seems that Christian Fathers were aware of the

lepers of his time experienced. Along with this description he makes an intriguing allusion to a theory about the causes of the disease, which attributes to his contemporary medical explanation: “that he [the leper] has a weakness characterized by oozing of the rotten humors and blood infected by pus, followed by a flow of black bile”<sup>22</sup>.

Susan Holman’s recent studies<sup>3</sup> were the first erudite attempts that succeeded in examining the medical aspect of Nyssen’s set of sermons *For the Love of the Poor*, in accordance with Gregory’s social, pastoral and scientific (medical) context. Shedding some more light on both the pastoral and the theological objectives of the Cappadocian philanthropic discourse, Holman argued that solidarity and the active support to lepers, mostly the direct contact with them, is considered in the sermons of the Cappadocian Fathers as an act of participation “in the divine immanence of creation that proceeds from the incarnate Son’s essential sharing in both deity and cosmos.”<sup>24</sup> With her savant presentation of the disease that involves a more integrated use of medical texts and an in depth analysis of leprosy’s social impact, Holman managed to introduce a new level of

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difference between the Hippocratic λέπρα and the disease identified today as modern leprosy. For example: CHRYSOSTOM JOHN, *In illud Vidi Dominum*, Hom. IV. PG 56, 158 and SOPHRONIUS OF JERUSALEM, *Laudes in SS Cyrum et Joannem*. PG 87c, 3468D, both distinguish the terms λεπρός, in the Hippocratic sense, from λελοβημένος, i.e. infected by modern leprosy. For an additional commentary see PATLAGEAN E., *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4<sup>e</sup>-7<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: École des Hautes Études et des Sciences Sociales, 1977), 110-111.

2. HECK VAN B. A., *Gregorii Nysseni De pauperibus amandis Orationes Duo* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 30:25-27 : “Ὅτι διέφθαρται τὸ ὑγρὸν ἐν ἐκείνῳ καὶ τις σιπεδονώδης χυμὸς ἐγκατεσπάρη τῷ αἵματι, τῆς μελαίνης χολῆς τῷ ὑγρῷ παρεγγεθείσης”. I follow S. Holman’s English translation of Gregory’s Greek text in her study *The hungry are dying. Beggars and bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 199-206.

3. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 283-309 and *The hungry are dying*, 151-167. Additional studies regarding these two sermons include: QUERE-JAULMES, *L’aumône chez Grégoire de Nysse et Grégoire de Nazianze*, SP 93 (1966), 449-455. BERNARDI J., *La prédication des Pères Cappadociens. Le prédicateur et son auditoire* (Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 273-283. CALVACANTI E., *I due discorsi De pauperibus amandis di Gregorio di Nissa*, OCP 44 (1978), 170-180. DALEY B., *Building a New City: The Cappadocian Fathers and the rhetoric of philanthropy*, JEChS 7:3 (1999), 447-454. LALLEMAND A., *Références médicales et exégèse spirituelle chez Grégoire de Nysse*, in V. Boudon-Millot and B. Pouderon (eds.), ‘Les Pères de l’Église face à la science médicale de leur temps’ (Beauchesne, 2004), 411-416.

4. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 294-309. Also, QUÉRÉ-JAULMES, *L’aumône*, 450-451 provides a similar, yet not so explicit, commentary.

understanding Nyssen's philanthropic sermons, which involves both practical and theological aspects of Cappadocian philanthropy.

Holman's significant remarks and the abundant theological background she suggested offers a first orientation towards the wider theological and social perspectives of Cappadocian philanthropy.<sup>5</sup> However, the importance of Nyssen's medical explanation has gathered little respect, if any. It is my intention in this paper to propose a different reading of Gregory's second sermon *On the Love of the Poor*, focusing on this particular medical reference. In order to offer this alternative account I will attempt to pursue two particular questions: Firstly, which were the reasons that imposed the application of such a medical explanation and secondly, in accordance with which historical, social and pastoral circumstances this explanation took shape and formulated in Nyssen's discourse?

I begin by exploring Gregory's medical influences with reference to the clinical picture of the disease, provided by certain medical texts. This investigation leads to the suggestion of the potential motives that may have indicated the application of such a terminology. The discussion then turns to a reconsideration of the date, the context and the occasion that prescribed the sermon's delivery. I will propose a comparison of Gregory's sermon with Gregory of Nazianzus' *Or.* 14 and Basil of Caesarea's 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> homilies. The final step of this essay will be to question to what extent Gregory's medical reference could shed some light on his association with his brother's philanthropic institution, the Basilias, and consequently how Basil's hospital complex could have been formative of his medical knowledge.

### The medical sources

The subject of the sermon does not represent an unusual theme for Gregory's audience, as the nomad, destitute and mistreated mutilated victims of the horrible disease were actually a familiar image in the topography of the cities in late antiquity.<sup>6</sup> The credit, however, for being the first to deliver a sermon espe-

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5. HOLMAN, *The hungry are dying*, 27-29. For an additional commentary see FERNGREN G., *Medicine and health care in early Christianity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 103-104.

6. On this, most useful guides have proved the studies of KOUKOULES P., *Vie et civilisation*

cially dedicated to the lepers should be given to Gregory as, through the vivid, detailed and extensive descriptions of the ill that he delivers, which occupy almost half of his sermon's length, not only does he provide an important testimony that depicts how the lepers lived, conceived their malady and regarded themselves, but portrays also the morality of his contemporary social framework that he evaluates through its attitude towards health and disease.

Gregory's heartrending descriptions are especially important because they introduce us to the context of his medical influences, as we see him asking his audience: "Which is worse: to be able to see the evidence of their loss or to no longer have it in sight, the malady having rendered them blind? To have such misfortune tales to tell, or to be dumb victims for whom the leprosy has eaten away their tongue? To feed miserably on a mouthful of bread or to have lost the form of the mouth altogether and no longer be able to eat normally? To have the experience of their body rotting, or to be completely without nerve sensations? Where is their sight, their smell, their touch; where are the other sensations that the infection eats away?"<sup>7</sup> All the suffering, physical and emotional, that Gregory sketches here with gloomy colours actually point to a language common in his contemporary medical texts, which describes a series of leprosy's symptoms and explains the loss of sensorial ability, with all its tragic consequences, as an effect of the degenerative force of the disease.

The work of Aretaeus of Cappadocia (possibly 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) and of Oribasius (ca. 325-395/6),<sup>8</sup> celebrated physicians of the time, consist the most adequate sources to explain Gregory's use of medical language, since their descriptions of *elephantiasis* are considered as the most complete testimonies of

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*Byzantines*, vol. VI (Athens: Papazisis, 1955), 36-43 and FINN R., *Almsgiving in the later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 137-175.

7. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 28:15-24.

8. On Aretaeus' life and work see: STANNARD J., *Materia medica and philosophic theory in Aretaeus*, *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften* 48:1 (1964), 27-53. OBERHELMAN S. M., *On the chronology and the pneumatism of Aretaios of Cappadocia*, *ANRW* 37:2 (1994), 941-966. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 288-289. On Oribasius see: EUNAPIUS, *Lives of the philosophers* (trans. W. C. Wright, LCL 134), 532-536. CORLIEU A., *Les médecins grecs, depuis la mort de Galien jusqu'à la chute de l'empire d'Orient*, 210-1453 (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1885), 111-115. TEMPKIN O., *Byzantine medicine: Tradition and empiricism*, *DOP* 16 (1962), 98-99. SCARBOROUGH J., *Oribasios*, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. III, 1991, 1533.

the disease in ancient medical literature<sup>9</sup>. Aretaeus reports as the origin of the disease “a refrigeration of the innate heat, or rather a congelation, like a great winter, when the water is converted into snow, or hail, or ice, or frost”. “This, he adds, is the common cause of death and of the affection.”<sup>10</sup> Oribasius, on the contrary, claims that the first cause of the disease is an effect of the dispersion of the black bile in the blood, which with the lapse of time dominates the blood.<sup>11</sup> These distinctive, yet equally possible, perceptions are actually revealing the different medical tendencies that each of the two physicians stands for; however, both coincide with Gregory’s own account. All three of them report a series of the disease’s typical visual symptoms, such as difficulties in food reception, due to the corruption of the lips and the wrecked jaw line;<sup>13</sup> they refer to the putrid respiration of the ill, due to the corruption within of the breath.<sup>12</sup> Finally, they depict a variety of corporeal alterations, such as severe deformities, disfigurements and sensorial damages, which make the ill gross and repulsive.<sup>14</sup>

9. For Aretaeus, I use the Greek text of ADAMS F., *The Extant Works of Aretaeus the Cappadocian* (London: The Sydenham Society, 1898) and for Oribasius the Greek text of BUSSEMAKER U. C. – DAREMBERG C., *Œuvres d’Oribase*, vol. IV (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1861). The fullest Byzantine account of elephantiasis is provided by PAUL OF AEGINA, *The seven books of Paulus Aegineta*, translated from the Greek with a commentary by F. Adams, vol. II (London: The Sydenham society, 1846), 1-5.

10. ARETAEUS, *On the causes and symptoms* II, XIII, 126: “Ψύξις ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐμφύτου θερμοῦ οὐ μικρὰ γε, ἢ καὶ πάγος, ὡς ἐν τι μέγα χεῖμα [...]. ἦδε ἐστὶ ἡ ξυνή θανάτου καὶ τοῦ πάθους αἰτία, ἀτὰρ οὐδὲ ἴσχει τέκμαρ οὐδὲν ἢ ἀρχὴ τῆς νούσου μέγα”. GRMEK, *Diseases*, 171.

11. ORIBASIIUS, *Coll. Méd.* XLV, 60: “Μελαγχολικόν ἐστὶν ὁ ἐλέφας πάθημα, τὴν μὲν πρόωτην γένειν ἐξ αἵματος ἴσχων μελαγχολικοῦ”. See also GALEN, *De atra bile* IV, 6-7. W. DE BOER (ed.), *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* IV.1.1. Leipzig-Berlin, 1937. On the black bile the following works proved most useful for this study: MÜRI W., *Melancholic und schwarze Galle*, *Museum Helveticum* 10:1 (1953), 21-38. JOLY R., *Le système cnidien des humeurs*, in “La collection hippocratique et son rôle dans l’histoire de la médecine”, Colloque de Strasbourg, 23-27 Octobre 1973, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 107-128. PIGAUD J., *Prolégomènes à une histoire de la mélancholie*, *Histoire, Économie et Société* 4 (1984), 503-510.

12. ARETAEUS, *On the causes and symptoms* XIII, 127: “[...] neither are they aware whether or not they digest, thus digestion or indigestion is all one to them, since [...] digestion is not useful to them.” ORIBASIIUS, *Coll. Méd.* XLV, 60, 63: “their lips become thick [...] and their jaws become loose.” HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 28:19-20: “[they] have lost the form of the mouth altogether and no longer be able to eat.”

13. ARETAEUS, *On the causes and symptoms*, 126. ORIBASIIUS, *Coll. Méd.* XLV, 60. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 24:22-23.

14. ARETAEUS, *On the causes and symptoms*, 126-128. ORIBASIIUS, *Coll. Méd.* XLV, 60-64. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 28:19-20; 24:22-23; 25:6-8; 28:23-24.

These almost identical accounts, particularly the masterfully dramatic eloquence of Aretaeus that Gregory seems to repeat, could possibly imply an influence on Nyssen's account of the disease. In fact, Holman already suggested that "Aretaeus' description of elephantiasis contains many observations that are identical to those in the *On the Love of the Poor* sermons. This, she argued, may indicate that the Cappadocian bishops knew Aretaeus work, or it may simply be the case that all these authors are reiterating a standard image, or even, a standard text of the illness."<sup>15</sup> It is entirely possible that Gregory reproduces in his sermon a common and well known illustration of leprosy, potentially originating in medical texts that he was aware of. But it is equally possible that he is simply documenting a situation that he actually witnessed, since he confirms to his audience that the dreadful spectacle of the ill filled him with alarm.<sup>16</sup> Whatever Gregory's original source may have been, what is interesting here is to question whether he deliberately employs medicine as a figure that will serve his arguments, mixing and matching diverse medical theories; or whether this explanation is actually mapped onto the pneumatist or the humoral disease aetiology.

Albeit most of the medical references scattered in early Christian literature have mostly a figurative use, operating as metaphorical allusions that stress the comparison between disease and sin and foster the image of *Christus medicus*, representing thus the Incarnation of the Son of God as an act of healing and describing His redemptive work in terms of medicine and therapeutics,<sup>17</sup> their lit-

15. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 288-289.

16. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 27:22-25.

17. The first-class monograph of DÖRNEMANN M., *Krankheit und Heilung in der Theologie der frühen Kirchenväter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) offers an abundant commentary on the motif of Christus-Medicus in the theology of the Fathers, while his recent study *Einer ist Arzt, Christus. Mediunales Verständnis von Erlösung in der Theologie der griechischen Kirchenväter des zweiten bis vierten Jahrhunderts*, ZAC 17:1 (2013), 102-124 provides further useful points. It is imperative to mention the important studies of LARCHET J. C., who extensively discusses this aspect of patristic theology, particular his *Théologie de la maladie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2001), 24-32 and *Thérapeutique des maladies spirituelles* vol. I (I use the Greek translation of C. Koulas, Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 2009), 419-447. The works of CONSTANTELOS D. J., *Byzantine philanthropy and social welfare* (I use the Greek translation of Fos Editions: Athens, 1986), 53-74 and FERNGREN, *Medicine and health care*, 64 ff., particularly 97-109, offer a broader, yet particularly useful, outlook on the subject. To cite, finally, the recent work of NICOLAE J., 'Christus praedicator/medicator'. *Homeletical, patristic and modern elements of theologia medicinalis*, EJSTh 8:2 (2012), 15-27 and the interesting studies of GUILLOT R. P., *Jé-*

erary aspect rewards equal attention. Christian writers broadly drew up armouries of medical argument from Hippocratic science and expertise, in order to rebut pagan objections to the doctrine of resurrection and to meet, also, the need of the elaboration of Christian anthropology.<sup>18</sup> Particularly for Gregory of Nyssa, F. Vinel, in her introduction to his *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, has nicely demonstrated how Gregory exploited medical metaphors by establishing an analogy between the physical and spiritual health or, as he puts it, “an analogy between what is thought to belong to the soul and the parts of the body,” enhancing thus his moral teaching.<sup>19</sup> However, Nyssen’s literal use of such medical teachings calls for our attention. The abundant studies of A. Roselli and S. Wessel have convincingly attested Gregory’s practice to put medicine in the service of his Christian anthropology, bringing medical science and expertise to bear upon theological reflection, particularly in his *On the Making of Man*.<sup>20</sup> It seems that the same method comes into play here.

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*sus guérisseur et exorciste* (Paris: Laffont, 1984), 33-95 regarding Jesus’ healing work, as reflected in the New Testament and DULAËY M., *Symboles des Évangiles* (Ier-VIe siècles). *Le Christ médecin et thaumaturge*, (Paris, 2007), 55-68.

18. The treatise of Athenagoras on the resurrection of the dead, which interweaves theological discourse with Hippocratic physiology, by extensively discussing the process of digestion and metabolism, is a characteristic example of that practice, while both Clement and Origen readily placed medical science in the context of their Christian purview. For an extensive discussion on this see TEMPKIN O., *Hippocrates in a world of pagans and Christians*, (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 126-134 and DÖRNEMANN, *Krankheit und Heilung*, 88-160. For additional information see PEASE A. S., *Medical allusions in the works of St. Jerome*, HSCPh 25 (1914), 73-86. D’ ISRAY S., *Christian medicine and science in the third century*, JRel 10:4 (1930), 515-544. AMUNDSEN D. W., *Medicine and faith in early Christianity*, BHM 56:3 (1982), 331-350.

19. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *In Ecclesiastes VI*, (ed. P. Alexander) GNO V, 384: 7-8: “ἀναλογεῖ τὰ τοιαῦτα τοῦ σώματος πάθη πρὸς τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρροσθήματα”. Also GNO V, 357: 7-9: “[...] ὅτι ἀναλογία τις ἐστὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ θεωρουμένων πρὸς τὰ τοῦ σώματος μέρη”. GRÉGOIRE DE NYSSÉ, *Homélie sur l’Écclésiaste*, ed. P. Alexander - F. Vinel, Sources Chrétiennes 416, (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1996), 43-47. Also LALLEMAND, *Références médicales*, 411-416. DÖRNEMANN, *Krankheit und Heilung*, 247-272.

20. ROSELLI A., *Il volto e le mani. Materiali per un commento a Greg.Nyss. ‘De hominis Opificio,’ cap.8* (PG 44, pp. 144-149), in J. M. Galy - M. R. Guelfucci, eds. ‘L’ homme grec face à la nature et face à lui-même. Hommage à Antoine Thivel’ (Nice: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres, Arts et des Sciences Humaines de Nice, 2000), 330-340. WESSEL S., *The reception of Greek science in Gregory of Nyssa’s De hominis opificio*, VC 63 (2009), 30-46.

Gregory reiterates the prevailing medical theory that putrid humors are the antecedent causes of health and malady and considers the disease's aetiology in terms of humoral disorder, attributing the origin of the affliction to the oozing rotten humors of the blood that trigger the flow of the black bile.<sup>21</sup> With the application of the humoral explanation of the disease Gregory, *contra* Holman's arguments about Aretaeus' influence on the Cappadocians, seems to reject –or was possibly unaware of– the pneumatist theory, according to which the nature of human life, including health and disease, is closely connected with a subtle vapour called the *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), which has affinities with the air that humans breathe. Because this *pneuma* is transported to the parts of the body by the vascular system, its relation with the blood is very close; therefore, any alteration in the blood supply or quality could cause either health or malady. Even if the pneumatists held that the fundamental constituents of the body are the warm, the cold, the dry and the moist and believed that health and the normal functions of the organism depended on the harmonious balance of *pneuma* and the four humors, they considered humoral disorder not as a primary cause of a disease, but rather as a secondary morbid matter.<sup>22</sup>

There are two particular reasons, therefore, to believe that Gregory follows Galen's causation aetiology, through Oribasius' encyclopaedia. Firstly, Galen was the first to consider causal theory at all, observing that the diseases affected individuals in a given environment. He explained this process by identifying two substantial factors, which determine whether or not a person will be affected by a disease: (i) the antecedent cause, that is, the pre-existing internal or external (environmental) element that provokes malady and (ii) the condition of

21. ORIBASIIUS, *Coll. Méd.* XLV, 59-60. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 30:25-27.

22. Although Aretaeus is not considered as a partisan of the pneumatists, his theories however show a close kinship with this sect and his explanation here illustrates this reconciliation of the fundamental, for the Stoic philosophy, pneumatic doctrine with pathology and physiology, which resulted in the pneumatist medical school. Amidst an abundance of studies regarding the pneumatist theory, old and new, the following have proved particularly helpful: SPRENGEL K., *Histoire de la médecine. Depuis son origine jusqu'au dix-neuvième siècle*, vol. II (french translation by A. Jourdan; Paris: De Lebégue, 1815), 70-88. NEUBURGER M., *History of medicine*, vol. I (English translation by E. Playfair; London: Oxford University Press, 1910), 223-232. WELLMAN M., *Die Pneumatische Schule bis auf Archigenes* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1895), 23-64. HARRIS C. R. S., *The heart and the vascular system in ancient Greek medicine. From Alcmaeon to Galen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 235-251. STANNARD, *Materia medica*, 30-32.



the body itself, that is, someone's physical predisposal to be affected or resist to a certain malady.<sup>23</sup> Gregory refers to both Galen's factors. He initially points that "certain illnesses, such as the plagues, do have an external cause and can be traced to pestilence in the air or water, with suspected transmission from the afflicted to those who approach them"<sup>24</sup> and continues affirming that "in our case [of leprosy] because the disease exists and develops in the interior of the sick person, invading the blood by putrid humors that infect it, the infection does not leave him."<sup>25</sup> This latter affirmation is Galen's second factor and it is important to observe that Gregory emphasizes on the fact that the disease exists and develops in the interior of the person, therefore whether a disease will manifest or not, depends on someone's predisposal to it.

Secondly, Nazianzen's younger brother Caesarius, who served as physician during Constance's reign (337-361), might have been responsible for Nyssen's acquaintance with Galen's humoral pathology, displayed in Oribasius' medical encyclopaedia. Caesarius' presence in the Empire's capital city coincides with the appointment of Oribasius in the imperial court, at the side of the new emperor Julian. It could be possible that the outbound imperial physician met his newly arrived replacement before following his brother's advice to abandon a turf hitherto hostile to Christians (*Ep.* VII, PG 37, 32C-33C) and it is equally possible that Caesarius returned to his homeland either with some of Oribasius' works, or with the material that Julian's physician and librarian employed to compile his medical encyclopaedia.<sup>26</sup>

23. GALEN, *De Sectis*, VI-IX. Marquardt J. - Müller I. - Helmreich G (eds.), *Claudii Galeni Pergameni Scripta Minora*, (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1983), III, 12-32. HANKINSON R. J., *Galen's theory of Causation*, ANRW 2.37.2 (1994), 1759-1762.

24. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 34:12-16. Gregory might had in mind here the outbreak of the plague in the region of Pontus, during the times of Gregory the Wonderworker, mentioned in his *De Vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi*, GNO X, 54-56.

25. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 34: 21-24. Gregory refers here to the fear of contagion, which prevented his audience from approaching the ill, and reiterates his disdain for the hypocritical attitude towards the lepers, depicting it here as "made-up excuses by which you conceal your scorn for divine wishes (προφάσεις καὶ πλάσματα [...] εὐπρόσωπά τινα προκαλύμματα)." HECK VAN, *ibid.*, 34:4-6. This argument may help to better understand why Gregory explains the disease in terms of humoral pathology. If he did draw upon Oribasius' encyclopaedia, as suggested in this paper, then nowhere in the texts that the celebrated physician quotes (Galen, Rufus of Ephesus and a treatment of elephantiasis attributed to Philumenus) exists any allusion or assumption that elephantiasis is or could be contagious.

26. This hypothesis could add to the argument of Caesarius' alleged library, which Gregory

Hence, Gregory, as Roselli and Wessel already demonstrated,<sup>27</sup> seems to have been familiar with Galen and his work and applied to his sermon the disease aetiology of the famous physician, in order to explain the origins of the disease he describes. But, however remarkable the application of humoral pathology in his interpretation of the disease might be, we should now turn our attention to the motives that lie behind the delivery of Gregory's sermon.

### Applying the medical reference

The sermon's theme invokes the widespread conception concerning lepers' impurity, as it is particularly manifested in the Old Testament. The detailed accounts in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus provide clear evidence of the biblical conception of the disease: "[...] when a man shall have on the skin of his flesh a pimple, a scab or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his

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took advantage of, as suggested by CUESTA J. J., *La antropología y la medicina pastoral de San Gregorio de Nisa* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1946), 31-32 and DANIELOU J., *Grégoire de Nysse et son milieu* (Notes prises au cours par les élèves, Paris: Institut Catholique de Paris 1984), 51. On Caesarius' career see: GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *In laudem Caesarii fratris*. PG 35, 761C-768B. For additional information see: KEENAN M. E., *St. Gregory of Nazianzus and early Byzantine medicine*, BHE 9 (1941), 10-12. NUTTON V., *Archiatroi and the medical profession in antiquity*, Papers of the British School in Rome 45 (1977), 211. LE COZ R., *Les Pères de l'Église Grecque et la médecine*, BLE 98 (1997), 148, n. 49. MILLER T. S., *The birth of the hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (I use the Greek translation of N. Kelermenos, Athens: Vita Medical Arts, 1998), 75, where Miller also suggested that the ῥοχιάττος Eustathios, a good friend of Gregory, could be an alternative source for his medical knowledge.

27. ROSELLI, *Il volto e le mani*, 336-337. WESSEL, *The reception*, 30-46. One is tempted to ask here whether Gregory's rejection of Aretaeus' theory is due to the fact that this latter does not describe elephantiasis. As the editor of his writings correctly noted (*On the causes and symptoms* II, XIII, 370, n.1), the physician here describes mentagra, a disease that prevailed in Rome during 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., mentioned also by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* XXVI) and Martial (*Epigrammata*, XI, 8 and XII, 59). In terms of modern medicine, mentagra is best described as endemic syphilis (button scurvy or spirokolon) and what Aretaeus depicts as elephantiasis strikingly resembles the disease mentioned above. Whether Gregory was aware of the fact that Aretaeus was describing a different disease or not, it is a question that lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, since Paul of Aegina in the 7<sup>th</sup> century knew Aretaeus' account on what he calls elephantiasis, it would be very interesting to question whether Nyssen's alignment with humoral pathology was a matter of choice between two distinctive medical theories or that he was simply not aware of Aretaeus' original text.

flesh like the plague of leprosy,<sup>28</sup> then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests.” Henceforward, the diagnosis is a priest matter. The priest will isolate the ones under suspicion of being afflicted with leprosy for seven days, until he re-examines the marks on their skin. If the marks subside, the person is declared clean; yet if the scabs spread further, then he is declared impure and he must withdraw immediately from the community.<sup>29</sup> Further detailed instructions about the ceremonial cleansing of persons or even of their garments verify the Old Testament’s ritual rather than medical notion of leprosy, which considers disease as an affliction of moral or spiritual origin and associates skin disease with impurity that requires ritual purification and quarantine<sup>30</sup>. It is entirely possible that Nyssen’s audience had such an established link between leprosy and sin in mind. Certain aspects of the sermon may suggest that Gregory’s intention was to refute this biblical conception. His persistence, for example, to the notion of common nature (κοινή φύση) and his frequent reiteration of relative terms, such as *ὁμογενής* or *ὁμόφυλος*, may offer a hint towards such an interpretation: “There is for all only one entrance into life”, he remarkably notes; “one way to live, to drink, to eat, only one physical make-up, a common biological law, only one physical death, only one return to the dust.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, he exhorts his audience not to disparage those beings who partake of our nature as baser than the animals.<sup>32</sup> These men, born in the image of God, because of their sickness are forced to wander, scattered along the

28. The clinical picture of leprosy in Leviticus does not correspond to modern leprosy and it could involve a series of skin diseases, such as psoriasis, eczema, vitiligo etc. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that the biblical text involves references to the actual Hansen’s disease. See more in: MC EWEN E. L., *The leprosy of the Bible and its medical aspect*, *The Biblical World* 38:3 (1911), 194-202. PRINCE J. D., *Note on Leprosy in the Old Testament*, *JBL* 38:1/2 (1919), 30-34. GRMEK, *Diseases*, 160-161. NEUBURGER, *History of medicine*, 39.

29. MC EWEN E. L., *The leprosy of the Bible: Its religious aspect*, *The Biblical World* 38:4 (1911), 257-261. PREUSS J., *Biblische-talmudische Medizin* (Berlin: S. Karger, 1923), 372. FERNGREN, *Medicine and health care*, 16-17. GRMEK, *Diseases*, 160-164. This practise is also documented in Jesus’ healing of the ten lepers in Luke’s Gospel, 17:14.

30. BRODY S. N., *The disease of the soul: leprosy in medieval literature* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca-London, 1974), 108-110. COVEY H., *People with leprosy (Hansen’s disease) during the middle ages*, *Social Science Journal* 38: 2001, 316. FERNGREN, *Medicine and health care*, 23-24. HOLMAN, *The hungry are dying*, 144; 159.

31. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 30:13-16.

32. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 30:8-10.

roads to find a little nourishment. Outcasts from every communal assembly, forbidden from public fountains and streams, they are driven away without the least grief, even by their own parents.<sup>33</sup> The suffering ill is treated like a criminal, like a parricide condemned to exile, or as if he was someone to instil his poison to infect the social organism. Yet, the one who instils horror making someone flee his approach, like the assault of a wild beast, shares the same nature. He is condemned, nevertheless, by the healthy members of the society, who turn from their own race.

Behind this kinship language one may trace hints of Gregory's original objective: Since we are all similarly bound to the common human nature, the antecedent causes of health and malady are the same for all, therefore we all share the same chances and we are all equally subject both to health and malady. Disease and suffering are consequences of the mutability of human nature,<sup>34</sup> understanding therefore and accepting the lepers suggests that we affirm a given condition of our frail nature. Hence, the putrid and mutilated body parts, the sensorial impairment and the brutal calamity of the appearance of lepers' bodies are no longer considered as a mark of the divine wrath, but as a natural consequence of the disease's degenerative power. Consequently, the reference to a medical explanation and its incorporation to the sermon announces a completely different approach to leprosy -in particular- and to disease -in general- and may serve, on the one hand, as a rational explanation of a hateful and horrid disease and on the other, it prompts the audience to remember that in this transitory world and because of our fragile and mutable nature, we all share the same odds to find ourselves in the position of the ones we now despise and banish from our lives.<sup>35</sup>

However, it is difficult to determine whether Gregory's original objective was to refute the hostile conception of Leviticus against the lepers and it is equally

33. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 27:5-6.

34. On Gregory's concept of mutability see: DANÉLOU J., *Le problème du changement chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Arch.Phil. 29 (1966), 323-347. Particularly in Περί φιλοπρωχίας sermons see HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 305-308.

35. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 294-298 is probably right when she argues that Gregory defines the malady in terms of social terror rather than of ritual impurity and pollution. The textual evidence she provides suggests such an interpretation and her careful analysis of the theme of contagion allows us to propose that the original objective of this medical reference was to provide a rational account of the disease, which would incite Gregory's audience to practice Christian philanthropia.

difficult to establish to what extent this conception was responsible for the negative attitude towards them.<sup>36</sup> The interesting, albeit relatively vague, testimony in the biography of Gregory of Nazianzus that “Basil saw the mutilated brothers, who were very pitiful and deserved sympathy because people, due to ignorance and misanthropy, considered the ill as defiled by ritual pollution (ὡς ἄγος τι καὶ μίασμα)”<sup>37</sup> may provide some hints, in order to understand if the motives behind lepers’ deportation were due to religious precepts or if they were simply measures for public sanitation and hygienic precaution. If one combines this testimony with the arguments of Aretaeus, who holds that “there is danger from the communication of the ailment (δέος μεταδόσιος τοῦ κακοῦ) [...] there is danger, moreover, in living or associating with it, for the infection is thereby communicated by the respiration” and of Aëtius of Amida (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), who argued that it is unsafe to contact with the ill, as the air becomes contaminated, due to their breathe,<sup>38</sup> it would seem conceivable to suppose that Grego-

36. It is interesting to note that BROWNE S. G., *The history of leprosy*, in R. C. Hastings, ed., ‘Leprosy’ (Edinburgh-New York: Churchill Livingstone, 1985), 1-14 suggests that much of the stigma associated with the negative view of leprosy was likely stemmed from an erroneous translation of Leviticus’ passages by scholars in Alexandria, who identified the Hebrew term zara’ath, which stands for unclean acts or conditions, with the Greek λέπρα, which was used by physicians for a scaly skin condition. Furthermore, HAYS J. N., *The burdens of disease: epidemics and human response in Western history* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 21-25 also refers to this misunderstanding and stresses the contagionist argument, as a result of Leviticus’ horrifying depiction. For an additional commentary on this see: SAMELLAS A., *Death in the Eastern Mediterranean 50-600 AD* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 155-161.

37. GREGORY THE ELDER, *Vita S. Gregorii Theologi*. PG 35, 273B. Gregory of Nazianzus also accounts that the lepers were banished from the cities because they were considered to be ritually polluted. Or. 14. PG 35, 872C: “ὡς ἄγη μὲν ἀπελαύνουμεν.”

38. ARETAEUS, *On the causes and symptoms* XIII, 128; *On the therapeutics*, XIII, 237. ANTIUS OF AMIDA, *Περὶ ἐλεφαντίασεως. Ἐκ τῶν Ἀρχιγόνου*. XIII, 120. As WELLMAN, *Die Pneumatische Schule*, 28-34 argued, Aëtius’ account on ἐλεφαντίασις is almost identical with that of Aretaeus, suggesting an influence from the pneumatist school. On Aëtius see also NEUBURGER, *History of medicine*, 332-334. This conception was based both on experimental observation and the Hippocratic tradition, which had established the elements that communicate diseases: atmospheric alterations, a corruption of the air or of the water, even the change of seasons or of the climate could provoke airborne or waterborne spreading of a disease. See in particular: ROSEN G., *A history of public health. Expanded edition* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Josh Hopkins University Press, 1993), 45-47. Finally, it is interesting to note here that the Benedictine bishop of Mainz, Rabanus Maurus, although he depicted leprosy in terms of humoral imbalance, he considered sin to be responsible for such a malfunction. On this concept

ry refutes here a misunderstanding, perhaps due to the ignorance that Nazianzen's biographer mentioned, which equated the mainly endemic leprosy with epidemic and communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis.<sup>39</sup> This is why, perhaps, Gregory explains that "certain illnesses, are suspected of transmission from the afflicted to those who approach them, however in the case of leprosy, he continues, because the disease exists and develops in the interior of the sick person, invading the blood by putrid humors that infect it, the infection does not leave him."<sup>40</sup> What is more striking here is the fact that Gregory confirms this latter opinion bringing an example of disease immunity into the picture: "how often do you see, he asks, people who have devoted their lives to the sick from their youth to their old age, without their health being in the least affected."<sup>41</sup> This account is especially important because, albeit in passing, it transmits invaluable information about a certain degree of practical assistance to the suffering ill, in particular towards those who were considered to be afflicted with contagious diseases.

A set of questions present themselves here, calling for our attention: Who were these people that devoted their lives to the care of the sick and how familiar Gregory was with them? Although Gregory states that there were people who took care of the sick, it is all but possible to know whether these people were laymen or clergy. Furthermore, however tempted may one be to associate Nyssen's sermon with Nazianzen's similar *Oratio* 14 and, consequently, with his brother's benevolent institution, the Basiliads, certain problems appear: The date of the sermon's delivery, the silence concerning Basil's hospice outside the walls of Caesarea and finally, Nazianzen's affirmation in his funeral oration to his late friend that, because of him, that loathsome view is no longer before the public eye.

I shall now turn my attention to these problems.

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see: MOORE R. I., *Heresy as disease*, in W. Lourdaux, D. Verhelst (eds), 'The concept of heresy in the Middle Ages' (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), 1-11 and *The formation of a persecuting society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 42-61. TOUATI F. O., *Maladie et société au Moyen Age: La lèpre, les lépreux et les léproseries dans la province de Sens jusqu'au milieu du XIVe siècle* (Paris Bruxelles: De Boeck & Larcier, 1998), 102-109. BRODY, *The disease of the soul*, 126.

39. See a detailed discussion in GRMEK, *Diseases*, 198-209.

40. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 34: 12-16; 21-24. See above, n. 25.

41. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 34:8-12.

An attempt to date *On the Love of the Poor*

Susan Holman and Brian Daley, who extensively studied the Cappadocian sermons on philanthropy, both agree that Nyssen's pair of sermons *On the Love of the Poor* can best be understood when considered in the broader context of his brother's philanthropic activity, since their content bears on susceptible social groups, to whom the Cappadocians showed practical concern.<sup>42</sup> But the study of Gregory's pair of sermons in relation with his brother's rhetoric on beneficence is a task that has never been explicitly undertaken, since dating Nyssen's sermons appears to be difficult and speculative. Jean Daniélou, the first who attempted to work out a chronology of Nyssen's works, using evidence from Gregory's life and ecclesiastical career, dates the two sermons certainly after 380 and, particularly for the second, suggests the hypothetical date of the 'Carême de 384'.<sup>43</sup> Albeit modern scholarship considered Daniélou's arguments as insufficient, any attempt to propose an alternative date for the sermons falls within the framework of 370s and early 380s.<sup>44</sup> In his 1999 NAPS presidential address, however, B. Daley suggested a significant outlook on Cappadocian beneficial project, proposing for Nyssen's two sermons a date close to, or concurrent with the foundation of the Basiliad.<sup>45</sup> I will discuss, at first, Holman's arguments about the chronology of the sermon and I shall reserve Daley's argumentation for a later discussion.

Holman wished to establish a connection between the two Gregories' texts and questioned their rapport with Basil's hospice. What is remarkable about her argumentation here is her opinion that "Gregory of Nyssa wrote his sermons

42. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 299. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 448-449.

43. DANIELOU J., *La chronologie des sermons de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, RecSR 29 (1955), 359-364.

44. BERNARDI, *La prédication des Pères Cappadociens*, 279-280 argued that the two *Περί φιλοπρωχίας* were addressed with a few days difference and proposes 382 as the date of their delivery. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 284; 300-301 suggested the years between 372 and 382, while CALVACANTI, *I due discorsi*, 175-180 the end of the 370s.

45. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 449-455. Also MEREDITH A., *The three Cappadocians on beneficence: a key to their audiences*, in M. B. Cunningham, P. Allen (eds.), 'Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics' (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 96 proposed a date between the years 368-369.

with Nazianzen's *Oratio* 14 in mind, or even in hand,<sup>46</sup> granting thereby chronological priority to Nazianzen's sermon. This hypothesis was built on P. Gallay's reasonable remark that, when one compares Nazianzen's *Or.* 14 with his *Or.* 43 "not only does Gregory say not a word of this hospice, but he categorically affirms that one sees the lepers in the streets without shelter."<sup>47</sup> As Holman correctly observed, Basil and his institution are notable only for their absence in both Gregories' *For the Love of the Poor* sermons.<sup>48</sup> She supposed therefore that Gregory might ironically be referring to Basiliads, when he disparages the practice of bundling the ill to remote and isolated areas: "But let no one say that some place far away from our life is perfectly sufficient and send them off to some frontier, supplying them with food. For a plan of this sort displays neither mercy nor sympathy but is designed, in the guise of goodwill, to banish these people [the lepers] utterly from our lives."<sup>49</sup> Gregory's scorn, together with Nazianzen's affirmation that, because of the Basiliads the destitute are now out of sight, led Holman to assume that Nyssen obviously knew his brother's institutional work, yet he condemned it, and concluded that his sermon appeals to individual participation in assisting the poor.<sup>50</sup>

However, Gregory's silence about Basil's hospital complex and Nazianzen's praise to him for removing the ill out of sight is an argument that could be also applied in the opposite direction, since there is a striking difference between the set of sermons *For the Love of the Poor* and the funeral oration (Nazianzen's *Or.* 43) to Basil: In both sermons the ill are intentionally visible before the public eye, through vivid and extensive physical descriptions. In *Or.* 43, however, Gregory of Nazianzus strongly emphasizes on Basil's efforts to make that loathsome image invisible: "there is no longer before our eyes that terrible and piteous spectacle of men who are living corpses, the greater part of whose limbs have mortified, driven away from their cities and homes and public places and

46. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 299-300. On the contrary, DALEY, *Building a New City*, 454, who built on Van Heck's abundant commentary, (*Gregorii Nysseni*, 120-123), suggested that it is Nazianzen's *Oratio* 14 who is using and developing an existing source, that is to say Nyssen's second sermon, rather than the opposite. Also, CONSTANTELOS, *Byzantine philanthropy and social welfare*, 116 suggested that Nazianzen's *Or.* 14 echoes Nyssen's sermon.

47. HOLMAN, *Healing the social leper*, 299, n. 78.

48. HOLMAN, *ibid.*, 301. Also LE COZ, *Les Pères de l'Église Grecque et la médecine*, 147.

49. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 29:25-29, 30: 1. HOLMAN, *ibid.*, 301.

50. See Holman's detailed discussion, *ibid.*, 298-302.



fountains, and from their own dearest ones, recognizable by their names rather than by their features; they are no longer brought before us at our gatherings and meetings, in our common intercourse and union[...].”<sup>51</sup> If Holman’s argumentation is correct and both Gregories delivered their sermons after Basil’s hospital complex was founded, then why there was a need to keep these people present in the memory of the congregation, through the imagery of the sermons?

There is a detail in Van Heck’s commentary that deserves, in my opinion, particular attention: The Dutch editor argued that both Gregories may have been using a passage from a now-lost letter of Basil, as their common source.<sup>52</sup> Albeit I do not agree with Van Heck’s hypothesis, in what follows it is my intention to suggest that Basil’s 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> homilies may have served as a model for both Gregories’ sermons, particularly for Gregory of Nyssa, on whom is the principal focus of this paper.

### The Cappadocian project of social welfare

The famine of 369 appears to be the occasion for Basil of Caesarea to carry out his serious efforts for the assistance and relief of the poor, the ill and the outcasts of the society, exercising political and pastoral persuasive force, which eventually resulted in the foundation of the Basilias, in 372.<sup>53</sup> As P. Rousseau

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51. *Or.* 43.63

52. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 123-124. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 454, n. 106 cites this suggestion only to reject it, while both MEREDITH, *The three Cappadocians on beneficence*, 96 and SHEATHER M., *Pronouncements of the Cappadocians on issues of poverty and wealth* in P. Allen, L. Cross and R. Cuning, (eds.), ‘Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church’ I (Queensland: Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University, 1998), 376, n. 4, implied, but not explicitly formulated. It is significant to note here that the study of all Cappadocian philanthropic sermons, as a result of a common philanthropic campaign, is a task that has gathered little scholarly attention. Meredith examines only Nyssen’s first sermon *On the Love of the Poor*, without considering any possible connection with Basil’s and Nazianzen’s similar sermons. Sheather, on the contrary, to whom I am particularly grateful for her invaluable assistance, was the first to examine the points in common between these sermons. Her remarks will be discussed below. Finally, HOLMAN, *The hungry are dying*, 12-21, offers a comprehensive account of key studies regarding the sermons discussed here.

53. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Or.* 43, 63. (PG 36, 577C-580B). ΚΑΡΑΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ Ι., ‘Ο Μέγας Βασίλειος και τὰ κοινωνικά προβλήματα τοῦ καιροῦ του, Βυζαντινά 11 (1982), 113-132.

argued, Basil's 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> homilies, likely to date before the inauguration of his benevolent institution, prepared the ground for the building of the new city and are part of Basil's larger scheme towards "a major social revolution, setting in place patterns of collaboration and of economic and political patronage."<sup>54</sup> But what is most interesting here is the fact that Basil's set of homilies contain frameworks of reference, images and techniques that recur in Nyssen's two sermons.

Basil's rhetoric has a very particular objective, to persuade the rich to open their storehouses and contribute to the beneficence of the victims of the famine. In order to succeed in his objectives he makes deliberate use of social crises: The famine that threatened his congregation with demographic alteration. He employs therefore a pictorial material drawn from the terrible condition of the poor and the hungry, which aims to persuade his hearers to move to action, to make them grieve when objects for grief heap up, or feel pity for those whom he presents as objects of pity.<sup>55</sup> In other words, Basil impresses upon the memory of his audience the tragic aftermath of the famine, placing the blame on their shoulders, for they have exceeded in wealth but fell short in love for their fellow man. If Basil's three homilies actually succeeded in persuading the rich to open their storehouses and contribute to the beneficence of the victims of the famine, in which way then did Nyssen's sermon managed to accomplish a similar task for the lepers?

In fact, Gregory's first sermon is closer to his brother's three homilies, as it reiterates paradigms, metaphors, verbal schemes and restates in a similar way

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TREUCKER B., *Politische und sozialgeschichtliche Studien zu den Basilius-Briefen* (Frankfurt am Main 1961), 29-38. PATRUCCO M. F., *Social patronage and political mediation in the activity of Basil of Caesarea*, SP 17:2 (1993), 1102-1107. ROUSSEAU P., *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1998), 133-189. GAIN B., *L'Église de Cappadoce au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après la correspondance de Basile de Césarée* (Roma: Pontificium Istitutum Orientale, 1985), 43-45 ; 271-289 ; 304-306. HOLMAN, *The hungry are dying*, 64-83. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 442-447. FINN, *Almsgiving*, 222-231.

54. *Basil of Caesarea*, 145. Both ROUSSEAU, *ibid*, 136-144 and HOLMAN, *The hungry are dying*, 73, also consider homily 9, as part of Basil's persuasive set of homilies.

55. These are the rhetoric skills that will later formulate St. Augustine's advices to Christian orators: *De doctrina Christiana* IV, 12-13. PL 34, 101-102. Interesting remarks on this aspect of Basil's rhetoric were nicely brought out by ROUSSEAU, *Basil of Caesarea*, 178-179 and 191. See also an interesting commentary in ALLEN P. – NEIL B. – MAYER W., *Preaching poverty in Late Antiquity. Perceptions and realities* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2009), 40-44.

Basil's exhortations to philanthropy.<sup>56</sup> In his second sermon however he largely builds on ideas and develops images that reveal the figural and demonstrative side of Christian discourse, stressing signs, symbols and imagery, which the Fathers of Cappadocia masterfully exploited.<sup>57</sup> The vivid and extensive physical descriptions of the lepers are probably the most distinctive features of Gregory's sermon. What is more interesting, however, is the fact that these detailed accounts of the degenerative consequences of the disease are actually visual and verbal devices of persuasion. Basil was the first of the Cappadocians who explicitly portrayed human bodies and emotions, projecting to the eyes of his audience the aftermath of his social crisis: emaciated bodies of the hungry, pale faces and the desperate farmers, who hold their knees with their hands, as a symbol of mourning.<sup>58</sup> Equally, his younger brother delivers an odious and repulsive image of the ill, mentioning that they bear pieces of wood instead of hands and feet, thus leaving strange impressions in their path. Their hands serve them as feet and rasping wheeze comes from their chest. Their knees become heels,

56. The images and the literary devices that Gregory borrows from his brother apparently suggest a direct influence and explain Meredith's, Sheather's and Daley's attempts to study the first sermon *On the Love of the Poor*, in comparison with Basil's 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> homilies. Some of Basil's themes that recur in Gregory are the following: The accumulation of wealth: HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 13:1-4. *Hom.* 6. PG 31, 272AB. References to the common nature: HECK VAN, 13:21-25; 24:4-5; 25:8-12. *Hom.* 6. 264A; 276B; *Hom.* 8. 321C. Detailed descriptions on the spenditure for material artefacts and various embellishments: HECK VAN, 15:10-25; 16:1-7. *Hom.* 7. 284C-285B. Also GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Or.* 14. 16-17 (PG 35, 877A-880B). The striking image of the latrine (ἀφροδῶν): HECK VAN, 13:8. *Hom.* 6. 273A. Finally, the powerful argument about the evanescent human nature that ends up in the grave: HECK VAN, 17:15-16; 30:19-22. *Hom.* 7. 289C; *Hom.* 8. 313C and also *Hom.* 3. PG 31, 212A. SHEATHER, *Pronouncements*, 377-390 pins down and thoroughly studies the points in common between the sermons of all three Cappadocian Fathers. However, a detailed textual comparison would be useful, in order to clearly reveal the close relations between these sermons.

57. On the figural and demonstrative forms of Christian rhetoric see: CAMERON A., *Christianity and the rhetoric of Empire. The development of Christian discourse* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1994), 47-73. SPIRA A., *Volkstümlichkeit und Kunst in der griechischen Väterpredigt des 4. Jahrhunderts*, JÖB 35 (1985), 55-73. PERNOT L., *La rhétorique dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 2000), 267-273.

58. BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 308AB; 321BC. Also see in *Hom.* 6. PG 31, 268C-269A, the tragic dilemma of a father, who was among the victims of the famine, as Basil masterfully explores the psychological shades of his inner struggle between the need for nutrition and the paternal love. A similar image recurs in: GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Or.* 14. 11 (PG 35, 869C).

their ankles and toes drag miserably and the malady slowly eats away their sensorial ability.<sup>59</sup> Nyssen's descriptions here operate as visual references, indicating to the listener that these terrible scenes are actually part of their urban landscape. With his confession that he cried because of this pitiful spectacle<sup>60</sup> Gregory transmits his personal experience –which is strikingly similar to Basil's outburst of tears when he saw the sterile fields–<sup>61</sup> and it is especially important that he introduces his imagery with the verb *ὄραξ*, or by employing similar verbs related to visual ability,<sup>62</sup> in order to communicate the terrible situation of the lepers to his audience, clearly indicating that he wants the congregation to see, as he himself sees, the social drama unfolded before their eyes.

This seems to be the reason why Gregory presents his audience with the loathsome imagery of bodies damaged from disease. He wants to preserve in the memory of his hearers the reality of the ill and he uses all his powers of thought and speech to transform their revulsion and the dread of the physical encounter, which his contemporaries apparently held for the lepers, into practical assistance to them. He thus follows a familiar to him rhetorical method, however with a different objective. In his panegyric to St. Theodore, Gregory retraced to the painted description of the torment, using this imagery as a medium to perpetuate the memory: The dreadful images of the torture preserve the memory

59. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 24:13-24; 25:5-8; 28:13-24. Also, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Or.* 14.6; 10. (PG 35, 865AB; 869A).

60. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 27:22-25. Also, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Or.* 14. 9 (PG 35, 869A).

61. BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 308A.

62. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 24:13: “ὄραξ ἄνθρωπον διὰ τῆς πονηρᾶς ἀρρωστίας [...]” 25:9: “βλέπων τὸν ἄνθρωπον οὐκ αἰδῆ τὴν συγγένειαν [...]” 25:29: “Διὰ τί τοίνυν οὐδεὶς σε τῶν φαινομένων οἴκτος εἰσέρχεται;” 26:1: “ὄραξ ἄνθρώπους νομάδας [...]” 26:12: “ἀμφίβολον τὸ φαινόμενον εἶναι [...]” 26:17: “μόνοι τοιοῦτοι πρὸς μόνους ἑαυτοὺς βλέποντες [...]” 26:22: “ὄραξ τοὺς ἀτερπεῖς χορευτάς [...]” 28:11: “ἕως γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτοὺς βλέπωσιν [...]” 28:14: “ὅτι βλέπουσιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῶν τοιαῦτα ἢ ὅτι οὐδὲ βλέπειν [...]” Additionally, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Or.* 14. 13 (PG 35, 873BD). This method of communicating to the audience a social crisis in terms of a theatrical spectacle was masterfully exploited by Chrysostom, particularly in his *In epist. Ad Philipp.* Hom. VIII. PG 62, 243, where he recounts the suffering of the lepers of his time: “you see (ὄραξ) how each one of us sickens at the hearings of these things? But if they are intolerable to hear, is the sight of them more tolerable? And if the sight of them is intolerable, how much more intolerable to undergo them.” On this, see the thorough analysis of BLOWERS P.M., *Pity, empathy and the tragic spectacle of human suffering: exploring the emotional culture of compassion in Late Ancient Christianity*, JChS 18:1 (2010), 16-22.

of the martyr to the memory of the faithful, serving as the passage from the wrenching aversion to the spectacle of a dead body to the reverence of its relics.<sup>63</sup> The situation is similar and Gregory faces the same challenge, to transform the loathing that most people naturally feel in the face of the sick, “whose frightful malady has changed them into beasts [...] whose disease has caused them to bear pieces of wood on hands and feet [...] who yesterday stood upright and looked at the sky and today bending to the earth, walking on four feet, practically changed into animals.”<sup>64</sup> Hence, he asks his audience “why we send these unfortunates away from us? and he answers admitting that no one fears the pronouncement, *Go, far from me, into the eternal fire. Of those whom you have given no aid, it is me you have failed to help.* If we believed this, Gregory continues, we would change our attitude toward the unfortunates; we would go back to them, without any trace of repugnance over caring for their illness.”<sup>65</sup>

The passage from Matthew’s Gospel (Matt. 25:35-40) that depicts the Final Judgment introduces Gregory’s sermon: “ἔτι πρὸς τῷ θεάματι τῆς φοβερᾶς τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιφανείας εἰμί, ἦν ὑπογράφει τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἔτι κατέπτηχεν ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς τὸν φόβον τῶν εἰρημένων ἀνατενίζουσα ὡς καθορῶσα τρόπον τινὰ αὐτόν τε τὸν οὐράνιον βασιλέα [...],”<sup>66</sup> reviving in the memory of his audience the emotional impact formulated either by reading the Scripture, or through iconographic representations of the Final Judgment’s terrible images. The biblical imagery soon becomes a threat and Gregory admits that “this image impresses my soul with such fear that it seems to be coming to life.” This will eventually turn to be his main axe in his effort to exhort solidarity and active support, as he points the way to elude the threat of the eternal fire: The ones who have fed,

63. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Sancto Theodoro*, GNO X.II, 63. Also, BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 19. PG 31, 508C-509A. *Hom.* 18. PG 31, 493A. I am particularly grateful to professor Vasiliki Limberis, who extensively discusses Gregory’s rhetoric in his encomium to St. Theodore, for providing me with her original communication *Performance of Pain: Salvific Catharsis in the Panegyric to St. Theodore Tiron by Gregory of Nyssa*, read at the 2013 Byzantine Studies Conference, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Her remarks were particularly important for this essay. See also Cameron, *Christianity and the rhetoric of Empire*, 141-152.

64. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 24: 13-21.

65. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 31: 11-18.

66. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 21:5-8 (italics are mine). In his first sermon, *ibid*, 9:7-23; 10:1-7, Gregory explicitly announces this figural method, in the passage were the image of the Final Judgment appears: ‘ἐγράφη δὲ τὰ πάντα ἐπιμελῶς καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἡμῖν τὸ δικαστήριον ἀνεζωγράφθη παρὰ τοῦ λόγου.’

clothed, sheltered and visited the hungry, the naked, the strangers and the sick, they have done it unto the Lord and they deserve life eternal; those who did not, they did it not unto Him, hence they shall go away into everlasting punishment.<sup>67</sup> Basil made more explicit use of that same Doomsday imagery, which masterfully developed in an almost theatrical structure,<sup>68</sup> however the biblical imagery here allows Gregory to locate the lepers within the context of Matthew's passage typology: "I think above all the victims of the terrible illness" he says. The additional allusion to the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke's Gospel (10:25-37), which is vital to his arguments, validates the biblical narrative and serves as a practical example of what one ought to do about the lepers, in order to elude the terrible threat. Either one courts condemnation by transgressing God's commandments, imitating the guilty priest and the Levite of the parable; or will be blessed from obeying them, sheltering the man mistreated by the brigands.

The bodies of the lepers therefore, are given a key role in the context of the biblical passage, either assigned with the chastisement of the reprobates who failed to feed and give shelter to the needy and the poor, either bestowing rewards to those who were merciful. The dreadful imagery of the damaged bodies, constantly and intentionally visible throughout the sermon, turns to be, in Gregory's words, "the means by which to fulfil the whole Law,"<sup>69</sup> calling his audience to throw themselves with zeal into the path of God, where they will live blessed by caring for those, whose bodies are utterly spent from suffering sickness.

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67. Basil will use Matthew's passage in his *Hom.* 6. PG 31, 277AC and *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 324A. On this, see more: RACINE J. F., *The text of Matthew's Gospel in the writings of Basil of Caesarea* (Toronto, 2000), 236-242. It is important to note here that John Chrysostom used Matthew's passage to build his exhortations to philanthropia in his 79th homily (PG 58, 717-724), and uses it again in his *De poenitentia sermo* II. PG 60, 702, where he attacks with a language similar to Basil's the insatiable thirst for wealth, as he describes the terrible scenery of the Final Judgment. BRÄNDLE R., *This sweetest passage. Matthew 25:31-46 and assistance to the poor in the homilies of John Chrysostom*, in S. Holman, ed. 'Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society' (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 127-139 thoroughly investigates the importance of Matt. 25:31-46 for Chrysostom's thought. It is interesting, finally, to mention that the same passage was a source of inspiration for the philanthropic activity of St. Theodosius, quoted by SYMEON METAPHRASTES in his *Vita St. Theodosii*, PG 114, 496D-497A.

68. BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 7. PG 31, 296BD; *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 324AB and 328B.

69. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 23:27-28; 31-32.

## Gregory of Nyssa and the Basilias

Which is the connection, therefore, between Gregory's conveyance in words of the terrible Doomsday experience, which includes the loathsome bodies of the lepers, and the Basilias?

We should take particular notice of a striking aspect in both Basil's and Gregory of Nyssa's sermons, the sense of urgency: "let us give relief right now (*vũv*); let us receive them right now; heal today" Gregory recommends, while Basil urges his audience to rush "because time flows and never waits those who come late."<sup>70</sup> Both Cappadocians plead their audience to rush and support those who are in need and it is very interesting to note that this urgency masterfully stresses the polarity between punishment and reward, discussed right above. Gregory, in the first lines of his sermon, clearly associates Matthew's passage with his contemporary occasion: "The commandment is vital especially now (*καὶ μάλιστα vũv*), with so many in need of basic essentials for survival, and many constrained in need, and many whose bodies are utterly spent from suffering sickness [...] the greater the attentions, the more vast the blessings that await the faithful servants of the commandment." And advises that "if we desire to take the Lord's blessing, let us give relief *right now*. If we want to be received by them in the eternal places, let us receive them *right now*. If we wish to heal the wounds by which our sins have afflicted us, heal *today* the ulcers that break down their flesh [...] For God makes a home for those faithful to his law but deserts the hard-hearted."<sup>71</sup> The concept of the *investissement céleste*<sup>72</sup> relieves the terrible threat of the Final Judgment, given that Gregory affirms that "all the good deeds that you have done will reap celestial fruit" while before him Basil assured that "for those who are faithful, God's grace is generous, imitating the ever moving and everlasting springs."<sup>73</sup>

70. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 33:23-29. BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 6. PG 31, 273CD. *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 324BC.

71. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 23:22-26; 32:5-7; 33:23-29. Also in BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 6. PG 31, 265C; 273C. *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 321A; 324BC.

72. PATLAGEAN, *Pauvreté*, 190. FINN, *Almsgiving*, 232-236. SHEATHER, *Pronouncements*, 383-385 where she pins down the origins of this concept. See also IHSEN B. L., *Basil and Gregory's sermons on usury: Credit where credit is due*, JChS 16:3 (2008), 420-425.

73. HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 32:1-3; 13-19. BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hom.* 6. PG 31, 273C; *Hom.* 8. PG 31, 321A.

Was the Basiliad this opportunity? Gregory of Nazianzus, in his celebrated funeral oration to his friend, portrayed the new city as “the short road to salvation, the easiest ascent to heaven” and affirmed that Basil managed to convince “those who were men [...] not to despise their fellowmen by their inhuman treatment, but to use the misfortunes of others as an opportunity of firmly establishing their own lot, and lend to God that mercy of which they stand in need at His hands (δανείζειν Θεῷ τὸν ἔλεον, ἐλέου χοήζοντας).”<sup>74</sup> If we notice that both Gregories and Basil of Caesarea involved in their discourse those who eventually found shelter and relief in the Basiliad –that is, the destitute, the beggars, the lepers or the strangers–<sup>75</sup> it seems reasonable enough to suppose that Nyssen’s sermon, along with Basil’s three homilies and Nazianzen’s *Or.* 14, operated in a well organized rhetorical propaganda, which presented Basil’s institutional project as a celestial investment, where all the audience’s good deeds –financial and practical support– will reap fruit in the treasury of heaven. Brian Daley reasonably supposed, opposing Holman’s argument about the absence of any reference to Basiliad, that “at the time Gregory’s homily was delivered, Basil’s hospice for the sick poor outside the walls of Caesarea had not yet become a reality.”<sup>76</sup> His argument that the great Cappadocian had in his camp two

74. *Or.* 43,63. PG 36, 580AB. See also *Or.* 14. PG 35, 881C; 885B; 909C. SHEATHER, *pronouncements*, 384.

75. For details about the facilities of the Basiliad, I have used the following works: CONSTANTELOS, *Byzantine philanthropy and social welfare*, 111-112 and 218-219 mentions: hospital, hospital for contagious diseases, orphanage, hostel and house for the elders. GAIN, *L’Église de Cappadoce, 277-289* mentions: hostel, hospital, poorhouse and several workshops. MILLER, *The birth of the hospital*, 111-115 mentions: well organized hospital, poorhouse, charity houses and monastery. Finally, both CRISLIP A. T., *From monastery to hospital. Christian monasticism and the transformation of health care in Late Antiquity* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 105-118 and FERNGREN, *Medicine and health care*, 124-130 mention: poorhouse, hostel, orphanage, leprosarium, house for the elders and hospital. Additionally see: LASKARATOS J., KALANTZIS G., POULAKOU-REBELAKOU E., *Nursing homes for the old (Gerokomeia) in Byzantium (324-1453 AD)*, *Gerontology* 50 (2004), 113-117. HOLMAN, *The hungry are dying*, 72-76.

76. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 454. it is interesting to note here that ARETAEUS, *On the causes and symptoms* XIII, 128, affirms, similarly with Nyssen’s ironic observation, that “many have exposed their most beloved relatives in the wilderness, and on the mountains, some with the intention of administering to their hunger, but others not so, as wishing them to die,” while from the distance of few decades later CHRYSOSTOM JOHN, *Ad Stagiriam oratio* II. PG 47, 490; *In Epist. ad Cor. Hom.* XXXVIII. PG 61, 330; *In Epist. ad Phillip. Hom.* VIII. PG 62, 243, reports



master rhetors –his brother and his close friend– who contributed to the campaign of persuasion that was eventually to result in a new philanthropic institution, magnificently illustrates what seems to be the case, since all the evidence presented so far concur to consider Gregory’s sermon as part of Basil’s efforts to get his philanthropic enterprise across.<sup>77</sup> If this hypothesis is correct, then one may suggest that both Nyssen’s sermons were originally delivered during the years that Basil was developing and carrying out his philanthropic program.<sup>78</sup>

Yet, one final question remains: Was this medical explanation an effect of Gregory’s harvesting in medical texts, or was it the fruit of a direct and experimental knowledge of the disease? The accounts of Gregory of Nazianzus and of

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that the ill were still banished from the cities, wandered in deserted areas or lodged in the open. Additionally, NEILOS OF ANCYRA, *Liber de monastica exercitatione* IX, PG 79, 729 AB reports a similar attitude towards the ill. It is quite possible therefore that Gregory’s scorn here is perhaps another way of viewing the same hypocritical attitude of treating the disease with words of compassion and administering the ill from the distance, which apparently was an ordinary practice. So BERNARDI, *La predication*, 282, who argued that Gregory might referring to a solution that was proposed by some people and was possibly in effect in various areas. Also LALLEMAND, *Références médicales*, 412 proposed a similar opinion. Furthermore, PATLAGEAN, *Pauvreté*, 111, n. 282 mentions a source of water outside the walls of Scythopolis, exclusively for the use of the lepers’ needs. Additionally, see the interesting essay of ΠΕΝΤΟΓΑΛΟΣ Γ., *Οί περιθωριακοί στο Βυζάντιο. Λεπτοί, άνιάτοι, άνάπηροι*, in C. Maltezos (ed). *‘Οί περιθωριακοί στο Βυζάντιο’* (Athens: Goulandri - Horn Foundation, 1993), 160-169.

77. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 456. It is interesting to note that DANIELOU, *Grégoire de Nysse et son milieu*, 26 suggested, rather than proved, that Nyssen’s sermons *For the love of the poor* were probably addressed “à Césarée dans l’hospice fondé par Basile.” Albeit vague, Daniélou’s argument seems to find support in the testimony of a 10<sup>th</sup> century commentator of Nazianzen’s homilies, Basil Elachistos –whose text I was unable to consult– cited in: BRUBAKER L., *Vision and meaning in ninth century Byzantium. Image as exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 132. Elachistos tells us that Nazianzen delivered his *Or. 14* at Basil’s hospital. It is all but possible to know whether Elachistos’ account stemmed from any oral or written tradition, or he merely gained such an impression from the manuscripts he had at his disposal (a possibility put forward by BRUBAKER, *Vision and meaning*, 132, n. 84). In a similar line of thought, however from a different starting point, BERNARDI, *La predication*, 104 argued that Nazianzen’s rhetorical support to Basil’s work was manifested “aux origines même de l’œuvre” as “le fruit des réflexions communes des deux amis devant l’étendue de certaines misères autour d’eux.” GREGORY THE ELDER, after all, in his *Vita S. Gregorii Theologi*, PG 35, 273C refers to Nazianzen as Basil’s “partner and companion” (συνεργός καὶ συναγωνιστής) in the project of beneficence.

78. DALEY, *Building a New City*, 454. Also HECK VAN, *Gregorii Nysseni*, 120-123 made a similar hypothesis.

Gregory the Elder that the lepers were considered as polluted along with the similar affirmations of the medical texts allow us to suggest that this medical explanation plays so prominent a part in Gregory's sermon, since it lies behind his effort to overcome any prejudice or misunderstanding regarding the nature of the disease and the risk of contagion. Furthermore, the fact that Gregory delivered a more or less complete clinical picture of leprosy to his audience, renders it hard to believe –at least in my point of view– that the store of knowledge he transmitted was based on “incidental information about a non-professional medical knowledge current in the fourth century” or on discussions he had with physicians, as Goggin and Le Coz suggested.<sup>79</sup> Such arguments are as vague and shadowy as Daniélou and Aubineau's opinions, who suppose only, rather succeeding to prove that Gregory had “une culture médicale assez poussée” or that he was “initié à la médecine pratique.”<sup>80</sup> Although modern scholarship has tried to resolve whether Gregory's medical references operate in a pastoral framework or whether they represent a more profound exploration, which seeks to understand the structural parts and the material substance of the body,<sup>81</sup> any consideration about Nyssen's association with the medical profession and any suggestion on the extent or the origins of his medical knowledge, remain speculative.

It is not my intention here to propose that Gregory's medical explanation on the causes of leprosy could reveal any further medical knowledge, a possible medical formation or direct, clinical experience with the lepers. However, if the evidence presented so far, concerning the date and the context of the sermon, are correct, and if the sermon is one of Gregory's early works, then it is conceiv-

79. GOGGIN T. A., *The times of Saint Gregory of Nyssa as reflected in the 'Letters' and the 'Contra Eunomium'* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1947), 137. LE COZ., *Les Pères de l'Église Grecque et la médecine*, 143.

80. DANIELOU, *Grégoire de Nysse et son milieu*, 51. AUBINEAU M., *Grégoire de Nysse Traité de la virginité*, Sources Chrétiennes 119 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1966), 47. Aubineau particularly refers to Nyssen's descriptions of leprosy.

81. KEENAN M. E., *St. Gregory of Nyssa and the medical profession*, BHM 15 (1944), 150-151, CUESTA, *La antropología y la medicina pastoral*, 148-153 and LALLEMAND, *Références médicales*, 401-406 argued for a pastoral character of Nyssen's medical references. On the contrary, BISHOP J., *Mind, body, unity: Gregory of Nyssa and a surprising fourth century CE perspective*, PBM 43:4 (2000), 519-529 and ROSELLI, *Il volto e le mani*. 323-340 both suggested a more elaborate outlook.

able that Basilias might have increased Nyssen's already strong interest in medicine. If this is true, then one may consider Basil's hospice as the site where Gregory observed, studied and understood the nature and the function of the human organism. My suggestion here, albeit it will undoubtedly need many corrections and elaborations, may possibly offer a first orientation towards further research about Nyssen's level of medical knowledge, or even any possibility of a practical application. It might also be a hint that will help to understand how that context motivated Gregory to formulate and develop that surprising anthropological perspective, which involved extensive and elaborate medical references and deeply influenced subsequent Christian anthropological treatises.