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**PNEUMATOLOGICAL RESEARCH ACCORDING TO THE THIRD HOMILY OF *DE ORATIONE DOMINICA* OF GREGORY OF NYSSA**

1. **The text of the III homily on the Holy Spirit**

In the third homily of the *Commentary on Our Father* of Gregory of Nyssa’s well-known exegetic-homiletic work briefly presents the teaching on the Holy Spirit. In particular, the question is discussed in the context of the second request, where St. Gregory explains the meaning of the Lord’s Kingdom (βασιλεία).

Interest attaches to the logical ἀκολουθία followed by Gregory’s discourse in part two of the third homily. This discourse is basically of polemic nature, being directed against the Pneumatomachi, who deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The first argument, invoked by Gregory in this polemic, is *Thy Kingdom Come*¹ of the second request, as quoted from the Gospel according to Luke

‘Ἐλάσσετο τὸ πνεῦμα του τὸ άγιον ἑρ᾽ ἡμᾶς καὶ καξιορίζετο ἡμᾶς.’² Identifying the Holy Spirit with the Lord’s Kingdom, Gregory points out that whom Luke calls the Holy Spirit is referred to as “Kingdom” by Matthew (στὸ γὰρ Λουκᾶς μὲν πνεῦμα άγιον λέγει, Ματθαίου δὲ βασιλείαν ὄνομασε).³

Gregory of Nyssa is the only Church Father to quote this version of the Gospel according to Luke.⁴ He draws a significant conclusion from this

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1 Matth. 6.10
3 De oratione dominica, 39,21 ff.
4 See Walther G., Geschichte der griechischen Vaterunser-Exegese, Leipzig 1914, 37.
text of Luke against the *Pneumatomachoi: Kingdom and deliverance from debts* - both are features attesting to divine nature, which cannot be characteristic of created and humiliated nature. In Gregory’s words, the Holy Spirit is divine power and kingdom; it governs, not being governed by another: (ἀλλὰ μὴν βασιλεία τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀγιὸν· εἰ δὲ βασιλεία ἔστι βασιλευεῖ πάντως, οὐ βασιλεύεται.)⁵ On the other hand, purifying from sins is divine action; therefore, the unity of power and activity (δύναμις καὶ ἐνέργεια) is proof of one nature. On the basis of the Gospel according to Luke⁶ and Paul’s letter⁷, Gregory concludes that the second and third hypostases of the Trinity have the same activity: forgiving sins and deliverance from evil.⁸ The coming together of power and action proves the unity of nature (φύσις) of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Gregory has recourse to arithmetical logic: if the nature of the Father and the Son is the same, and that of the Son and the Holy Spirit is also single, therefore the nature of Trinity is single. If two is identical with the third, they cannot differ from one another. From arguing the consubstantiality of the Trinity, Gregory passes on to a brief discussion of the distinctive properties of the divine persons. The property of the Father is "to be ungenerated" (ἀγέννητος), the property of the Son is "only-begotten" (μονογενὴς)⁹, and of the Holy Spirit" to be proceeded" (ἐκπορευέται)¹⁰. These features are characteristic only of each of them; therefore, the one nature should also be preserved and the hypostatic properties should not be confused with one another.¹¹

Those words are presented in the third homily of Gregory of Nyssa that have given rise to a heated discussion among theologians, lasting from the 13th century to the present day. This phrase reads as follows: τὸ δὲ ἄγιον πνεῦμα καὶ ἔκ τοῦ πατρὸς λέγεται καὶ [ἐκ] τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐναὶ προσμαρτυρεῖται (Callahan, 43,1-2).

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⁵ De Or. 41,4-6.
⁶ Luk. 11.2
⁷ Hebr. I,3
⁸ De Or. 41,1-3.
⁹ ΑΛΛΑ μὴν τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο καὶ τῷ μονογενεὶ προσμαρτυρεῖ ὁ ἀπόστολος·
Καθαρισμὸν, φησί, τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθετεν ἐν δεξίᾳ τῆς μεγαλοπύνης τοῦ πατρὸς.
¹⁰ De Or. 42,22
¹¹ De Or. 42,26.
¹² De Or. 42,17: τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευέται.
¹³ De Or. 42,25: ἃν καὶ τὸ κοινὸν φιλαχθεῖ καὶ τὸ ἰδίον μὴ σύχθει.
Some western scholars find in these words the idea of filioque, which will be discussed in more detail below. Here let us focus our attention on the context in which Gregory mentions this phrase. As noted above, Gregory speaks of the distinctive properties of the divine persons, and it is obvious that he assigns great significance to the demonstration of their difference. He asserts: Each property assigned to a divine person cannot be transferred to another. The common nature is preserved, on the one hand, and it is impermissible to confuse hypostatic properties, on the other.

The hypostatic property of the Son is defined as "only-begotten of the Father" (ὁ γὰρ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς)\(^\text{13}\), which is attested by the Scripture.\(^\text{14}\) The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is of the Son as well. By quoting the letter to the Romans\(^\text{15}\) Gregory notes that the Holy Spirit is of Christ, and not vice versa: it cannot be said that Christ is from the Spirit. Both this passage and the discourse preceding the moot phrase show clearly that Gregory considers the Father as the origin of the procession of the Holy Spirit: οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὄν καὶ Χριστὸς ἐστιν πνεῦμα.\(^\text{16}\) A little above, the same view of procession from the Father is clearly given: καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται.\(^\text{17}\) Thus, the phrase in question should be interpreted precisely in this context.

Following the discussion of the single nature of the Trinity and the hypostatic properties of the persons, Gregory reverts to the polemic with the Pneumatomachoi.

The opponents of the Holy Spirit perceived a humiliating of the honour of the Holy Spirit in the word “come” (“thy Kingdom come”). In response to the assertion that this may be a predicate of divine nature, Gregory quotes David’s appeal to God, in which he begs: “come and save us.”\(^\text{18}\) Gregory asks the question: If this appeal of David is not diminutive for God the Father, why should it be disparaging for the Holy Spirit?

Towards the end of his discourse Gregory returns to the question of the forgiving of one’s debts. Mark’s 2, 7: τίς δύναται ἀφιέναι ἀμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἰς ὁ Θεὸς is for him evidence of the entire action of the Trinity.

\(^\text{13}\) *De Or.*, 42,36
\(^\text{14}\) *I Joh.*, 4,9
\(^\text{15}\) *Rom.*, 8,9; εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, ἕτος οὐχ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ.
\(^\text{16}\) *De Or.*, 43, 3-5
\(^\text{17}\) *De Or.*, 42, 16-17
\(^\text{18}\) *De Or.*, 43, 20 ; cf. 79, 3.
2. Gregory’s Text and the Theological Problem of Filioque

Now let us touch in more detail on which phrase the majority of western theologians perceive the teaching of filioque. In their view, Gregory went further in his *pneumatological* quests than did the other Cappadocian Fathers, for he dwelt more precisely on the inner Trinitarian interrelations. As they assert, we do not find the idea of filioque in formulated form in Gregory of Nyssa, but his statement ἐκ τοῦ νιόθ comes very close to this idea.

The above-quoted phrase of the 3rd homily, found in the manuscript tradition of Gregory’s *Commentary on Our Father*, acquired special significance in the 13th century in the heated theological debate around filioque. According to the historical sources, a certain Michael Escamatismenos (13th) scraped ἐκ out of Gregory’s text with a knife. This fact was acknowledged by Greeks who sided with Latins, which was ultimately confirmed officially by the Synod of 1280. The Western scholars today too advocate the view that ἐκ initially did exist in Gregory’s original text.

The well-known scholar of Gregory of Nyssa Werner Jaeger devoted a special study to this issue. He is interested in researching what actually belongs to St. Gregory, thus showing less interest in dogmatic controversies. Jaeger argues that ἐκ τοῦ νιόθ is a later interpolation into Gregory’s text in support of the idea of filioque, and that it did not exist in the original text. In his view, this was a dogmatic interpolation, based on political causes of the church. Originally, ἐκ was added in the manuscript by the opponents of Photius in the 9th century, and it was this interpolation that the above-mentioned Escamatismenos scraped out with a knife. The publisher of Gregory’s critical text Johann Callahan introduced significant corrections into Jaeger’s conception. According to his study the preposition ἐκ is attested back in the 5th-6th c manuscripts, including in Syriac transla-

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22 Alexopoulos Th., 63.
23 ibid., 142; also Callahan J., Gregorii Nysseni Opera, GNO VII/II, Leiden 1992.
24 Jaeger W., Gregor von Nyssas Lehre vom Hl. Geist, Leiden 1966, 139.
25 ibid., 137.
tions as well. Callahan believes that the confusion took place very early — back in the 5th century, and that it must have been the scribe’s interpolation, who inserted ἐκ either by mistake or deliberately. Proceeding from this point of view, Callahan placed the ἐκ in the critical text established by him in brackets.

In connection with the procession of the Holy Spirit with Gregory we in general find the following statement: ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ γενός ἐκπορεύεται. And this was the generally accepted formula with Holy Fathers, pointing to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father through the Son. Later the West interpreted διὰ as ex patre filioque. Jaeger accounts for the fact that the Council of Constantinople did not enter διὰ τοῦ γενός in the Creed by their desire to avert wrong interpretation of διὰ τοῦ γενός that could represent the Holy Spirit as created (κτίσμα) by Christ. Because of the complex dogmatic question connected with ἐκ and διὰ, the Greek scholar Savvatos considers it necessary to make a thorough study of these two prepositions with Gregory of Nyssa, in particular the passages that contain discourse about the Holy Spirit. This, in his view, would greatly facilitate the solution of the problem.

In parallel to the third homily of the commentary of the Lord’s Prayer, there are several passages in Gregory’s works that were frequently quoted by the champions of filioque in the Middle Ages. One of them is Gregory’s work Θεογνωσία. Along with others, this work is cited by a 13th century Greek churchman of Latin orientation, Konstantin Melitiniotes. The passage quoted by the latter from Θεογνωσία to prove Gregory’s filioque teaching, reads thus:

τοῦτο δ’ ἔνεχα χάρι καὶ Πνεῦμα στόματος ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ λόγον στόματος εὑρε-κεν ὁ Δαυίδ, ἵνα τὴν ἐκπορευτικὴν ἱδιότητα τῶ Πνεύματι μόνῳ προσοψάν πιστώσηται.

26 Callahan J., GNO VII/II, XIV
27 Ibid., XIII
28 Jaeger W., 153.
29 Savvatos Chr., Ἁναφορέξ κατὰ τὸν ΠΓ αἰώνα στὸ Βαβύλλων γιὰ ἀλλοιωτείς ἔργον καὶ χωρίων τὸν ἄγιον Γρηγορίον Νέστι έν in: ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ, 66, 1995, 118.
30 This question is studied by Th. Alexopoulos in his monograph, whose findings are doubtless noteworthy. See Th. Alexopoulos, Der Ausgang des thearchischen Geistes, Eine Untersuchung der Filioque-Frage anhand Photios „Mystagogie”, Konstantin Melitiniotes „Zwei Antirrhetici” und Augustins „De Trinitate”, Göttingen 2009.
31 ibid. 65.
"that is why David spoke of the soul of the mouth rather than the word of the mouth to prove that the property of procession is ascribed only to the soul."

Konstantin charges the antifilioque champions (Antifilioquisten) with distorting the text deliberately by replacing τὸ Ἁγνόμαζε with the word τὸ Πατρί. By this they wished the procession of the Holy Spirit to be the prerogative of the Father alone and to show that the Son does not participate, along with the Father, in the procession of the Holy Spirit.\(^{33}\) Notably enough, controversy around this passage continued to the 14\(^{th}\) century. Gregory Palamas too dwelt on this passage, explaining that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father and that this property does not extend from the Father to the Son.\(^{34}\) Konstantin Melitionites considers another passage in the text of Gregory of Nyssa to be an antifilioque interpolation. He refers to the following sentence from Contra Eunomium: καὶ ἐν τῷ τινὶ αἰτίαν τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἐκ τοῦ Ἱερὸν τῶν ἁλων ἔχειν.\(^{35}\)

We should concur with Alexopoulos on that even this sentence is an antifilioque interpolation; this fact by no means reveals anything in favour of the pro-filioque circles. A little above this section, Gregory speaks of the hypostatic properties of the persons of the Trinity and their difference:

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\(^{33}\) Ibid., 65; cf. Antirr. II 264, 2-6.


\(^{35}\) The complete text containing this sentence is the following: [τὸ πνεῦμα] τὸ πατρί κατὰ τὸ ἀκτιστὸν συναπτόμενον, πάλιν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὸ μὴ πατήρ εἶναι καβάπτερ έκείνως, διαχωρίζεται. τῆς δὲ πρὸς τοῦ κυόν κατὰ τὸ ἀκτιστὸν συναπέθεος [καὶ ἐν τῷ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν ἁλων ἔχειν] ἀφίσταται πάλιν τῷ ἰδιαύαντι, ἐν τῷ μὴ μονογενῶς ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑποστήκαι, καὶ ἐν τῷ δι’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ κυόν περιγένεαι. Πάλιν δὲ ποὺς κτίσιως διὰ τοῦ μονογενῶς ὑποστάτης, ως ἄν μὴ κοινωτήτα ταῦτα ταὐτάν ἔχειν νομίζῃ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ διὰ τοῦ κυόν περιγένεαι, ἐν τῷ ἀτρέπτῳ καὶ ἀναλλοίωτῳ διαχωρίζεται τὸ πνεῦμα ἀπό τῆς κτίσεως. CE I (GNO I 108,14-109,5; cf. Th. Alexopoulos, 68).

[The Holy Spirit is connected with the Father by being uncreated, while it differs from it by not being the Father as He is. As to its link with the Son, is that it is uncreated and that it enjoys the ground to exist from God; it stands out by the property that it originated from the Father not as an only-begotten and by it becoming manifest through the Son. Inasmuch as the created through the only begotten exists (so that no one will come to think that the Spirit has anything to do with it, for the Spirit becomes manifest through the Son) the Spirit differs from the created by being constant and unalterable].
each person has his feature with which it differs from the other. The above mentioned passage coincides by its content and discussion with that of the third homily of the Lord’s Prayer. There too, as we have seen, Gregory names the "only-begotten" as the hypostatic property of the Son. In this section, too, the decisive sentence is: ἐν τῷ μὴ μόνογενῷ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑποστήματι [originates from the Father not only as the only-begotten], points to the Father as the origin of the Spirit. As to the next sentence [τὸ πνεῦμα] διὰ τοῦ νιόν περιφέρεται [The Spirit is manifested by the Son], which would seem to sound like filioque, here talk is about the divine dispensation, that is the manifestation of the Trinity in the created world, rather than intra-Trinitarian interrelationship.

In this context I would like to quote the view of the well-known Greek theologian Georgios Mantzaridis in connection with filioque. He considers the confusion of questions of theological and oeconomic order as the source of the idea of filioque: "when theology is discussed within the framework of oeconomy". In this case a confusion of the power and action of the persons of the Holy Trinity with their hypostatic properties takes place. It was this that happened with Augustine. He united theology and oecumeny, believing that the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son to the created world reflected the intra-Trinitarian relationship of the Trinity as well. By this, he identified the activity of the Holy Spirit with its procession, which is actually linked to divine essence. Thus, a confusion occurred of hypostatic and Trinitarian, or more precisely intra-Trinitarian, properties (which constitutes a hypostatic relationship of the persons of the Trinity) with the extra-Trinitarian relationship, that is the relation of the consubstantial trinity with the outer, created world, which happens by one action and one power. In the opinion of Mantzaridis, Augustine’s concept that the Son also takes part in the procession of the Holy Spirit shows Augustine’s absolute ignorance of the Trinitarian teaching of the fourth-century Fathers, namely the Cappadocians.

36 Ἡ γὰρ ἐπισεροφυμένη ἐκάστη τῶν ὑποστάσεων ἰδιότης τρανός καὶ καθαρός τοῦ ἐτέρου ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐτέρου διάσπησιν. CE I (GNO I 107, 23-24; cf. Th. Alexopoulos, 69). [The property that characterises each hypostasis, differentiates obviously and clearly one from the other].


38 Ibid., 41.

39 Ibid., 43.
Indeed, Gregory’s works demonstrate that he definitely differentiates the intra-Trinitarian interrelations, which constitute the οὐσία of the trinity and the activity of consubstantial Trinity with respect to the world, that is the Divine ἐνέργεια. Some extant historical documents also deny the possibility of filioque belonging to Gregory’s thought. In the first place, this is the fact that the 7th world council in 787 conferred the honorary title ‘Father of Fathers’ on Gregory of Nyssa, the second, the truly impressive scale of acceptance of Gregory’s works in the theological church writings.

3. Gregory’s Pneumatology and the Constantinopolitan Creed

The 14th century Byzantine writer Nicephorus Callistos states that Gregory of Nyssa expanded the Creed of Nicaea, which shows obviously the great authority of St. Gregory in the teaching on the Holy Spirit. The second world council relied heavily on Gregory’s pneumatology by giving the definitive formulation of the Dogma of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Article Three of the dogma coincides precisely with Gregory’s pneumatological teaching.

As noted by Jaeger, Gregory relies on predicates that are important in the philosophical argumentation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It is the very same predicates that emerge in the brief article on the Holy Spirit: ‘Lord’ (κύριον) and life-giving (ζωοποιόν) and ‘proceeding from the Father’ (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον). It should be noticed also that the ‘glory’ (δόξα) and ‘worship’ (προσκύνησις), emphasized in Gregory’s teaching, which should be expressed with respect to the Holy Spirit, sounds similarly in the Constantinopolitan Creed: τῷ πατρὶ καὶ νῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον.

Who recognizes the divine and governing nature of the Holy Spirit thereby acknowledges its glory (δόξα), power (δύναμις) and worship (προσκύνησις). Gregory rejects the subordination (ὑποχείριον, ὑπῆκοον) of the Holy Spirit on the Father or the Son as well as its mediatory (ἐν μεσορίῳ) state between God and man. Adversus Macedonianos, 102 ff.

40 Jaeger W., Gregor von Nyssas Lehre vom Hl. Geist, 70.
41 Cf. Adversus Macedonianos, De spiritu sancto, GNO III/I.
42 See Jaeger W., 66
43 Ibid., 68
44 Adversus Macedonianos, 102 ff.
concept to ὁ χῶροιν and χωρεῖον. As to the predicate ἔφοβοιν Gregory defines it as ‘the grace of baptism’.46

There is a strong logical link between the predicates found in Gregory’s pneumatological teaching, and the grammatical structure of the words of the Creed corresponds to this logical προτάσσειν. 47

Finally, I want to note once more that in his third homily Gregory of Nyssa makes a brief reference to his pneumatological conception, which he discusses more extensively in his other works: this is assertion of the divinity of the Holy Spirit according to the one activity and one nature of the Trinity, as well as the question of the interrelationship of the individual and differentiating properties of the divine persons. It is hard to combine this discourse48 with the theological question of filioque and to search for the latter as authentic in Gregory’s thought. Therefore, the content of the moot phrase found in the manuscript tradition should be assigned to the order of text history. It is not surprising that this textual evidence would claim proper attention during the heated dogmatic polemic between the churches. Within the Orthodox tradition, however, which never abstained from its evaluative attitude49 to Gregory of Nyssa, we find a different historical reality: the Orthodox Church is grateful, among other things, to Gregory of Nyssa for the formulation of orthodox teaching on the Holy Spirit, considering him over the centuries to be an unshakable authority on this issue.

45 Adversus Macedonianos, 104 f.
46 See Jaeger W., 69; Adversus Macedonianos, 105 ff.
47 See Jaeger W., 69.
48 See above Callahan, 43, 1-2 cf. 42, 16-17 and 43, 3-5.
49 I have in mind the stand of the Orthodox Church with regard to Gregory when, owing to the doctrine of apokatastasis taken over by him from Origen, in 1081 he failed to earn – next to Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus – the title of great enlightener.