One of the most exciting new developments in the study of early Christianity is the increased attention being paid to individual theologians in the full context of their own thought and of their intellectual and social milieu. Lloyd Patterson’s Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom and Life in Christ, is a premier example in this regard. Patterson’s study is now the most comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of this important figure, who contested and yet also validated the legacy of Origen, and thus helped to set the parameters of the great fourth-century dogmatic debates. Although it has long been recognized that these debates yielded the orthodox or catholic doctrine of the Trinity as the definitive Christian understanding of God, what was once regarded as a matter of formulaic, conciliar definition from Nicea to Constantinople, reinforced by selected proof texts from individual theologians, is now being thoroughly re-evaluated. Just what constitutes the “Nicene” faith? Who or what is responsible for establishing it? How did this take place? Along with continued progress in social-historical research, the close study of individual theologians, such as Patterson has done on Methodius in the late third century, will shed new light on the crucial fourth century as well. Fourth-century scholars would

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2 For example, Khaled Anatolios, Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought (London: Routledge, 1998) has added to our understanding of this major Nicene figure and his systematic theology, and John McGuckin’s St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001) has greatly advanced the study of Gregory, Basil and the work of the Council of Constantinople.
do well also to follow Patterson’s cue and give further attention to the influence of Origen on fourth-century theology, not so much in the actual debates over Origen as in the work of orthodox theologians like Athanasius, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus.

In the final stage of the Trinitarian developments of the 370s and 380s, the Cappadocians, not surprisingly, stand out as ideal candidates for this sort of re-evaluation. Particularly in light of the unsatisfactory treatment of the Holy Spirit by the Council of Constantinople, we are forced even more to turn to the theologians themselves for further insight into the nature of Nicene Trinitarian orthodoxy. The immediate debates surrounding the council focused particularly on the nature of the Spirit, which divided Nicene theologians like Basil and Eustathius of Sebaste, who otherwise agreed on the divinity of the Son, while the specter of Eunomius and other non-homoousians lingered on to a lesser extent with respect to the status of the Son. Gregory of Nazianzus, our most immediate witness to the council, played the leading role in articulating what would become the orthodox doctrine of the Spirit, and consequently of the Trinity as a whole.3

Gregory begins his systematic treatment of the Holy Spirit in Ora-tions 9–12, which he delivered at the time of his episcopal ordination in 372. In these sermons he boldly asserts his full Trinitarian program, in which the Spirit’s identity as God and its consubstantiality with God the Father play an essential role. Gregory’s work on the doctrine of the Spirit continued beyond the Council of Constantinople into his retirement to Cappadocia,4 making for roughly a decade of concentrated theological work. His most significant and sustained treatment of the Spirit comes in Oration 31, the fifth Theological Oration, which he delivered in the late summer of 380 before the council was convened, a piece which H.B. Swete lauded as “the greatest of all sermons on the doctrine of the Spirit.”5 Yet while the oration’s importance has long been recognized, the main thread of Gregory’s argument, and con-

3 On Gregory’s theological leadership in the doctrine of the Spirit, and his ensuing conflict with Basil, see now McGuckin, St Gregory, 204 ff. Cf. Michael Haykin’s view that the two Gregorys concluded the Pneumatocochian debates, in which Athanasius and Basil had been the main contestants (The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatocochian Controversy of the Fourth Century, [Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 27; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994]).

4 See, for example, Carm. 1.1.3.

5 The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers (London: Macmillan, 1912), 240. Haykin calls it “the climax and conclusion of [Gregory’s] dialogue with the Pneumatocochian of Constantinople, the best known of