

# 1 Basil of Caesarea's and Gregory of Nyssa's Attitudes toward Pilgrimage

When the Lord called the chosen ones to inherit the kingdom of heaven [Matt. 25:34], he did not include the journey to Jerusalem among the good deeds.

GREGORY OF NYSSA, Letter 2.3

Gregory of Nyssa's *Letter 2*, written in the 380s C.E., contains some of the most explicit reservations concerning pilgrimage to Jerusalem ever voiced by a Christian theologian. The importance of Gregory's position on this issue extends beyond his circle and time, exercising a profound influence on the debate that raged between Catholics and Protestants from the sixteenth century on over the religious value of pilgrimage. The *Letter* was first published by Protestants, who used it to reinforce their rejection of pious acts of this sort, whereas Catholics claimed that the document was not authentic. Today, however, the authenticity of the letter is nowhere contested.<sup>1</sup>

One might conclude from Gregory's *Letter 2* that the problem surrounding pilgrimage results from the absence of any New Testament injunction to worship God in a specific place—in contrast to the Old Testament, in which there is an explicit commandment to appear before the Lord by making pilgrimage to the Temple (Exod. 23:17, 34:23; Deut. 16:16). By the early Christian period, the idea of the Temple and any compulsory communion

1. For the history of the debate over this letter and its authenticity, see B. Köting, "Gregor von Nyssa's Wallfahrtskritik," *SP* 5 (1962): 360–67; P. Maraval, "Une querelle sur les pèlerinages autour d'un texte patristique (Grégoire de Nyse, Lettre 2)," *RHPR* 66 (1986): 131–46; idem, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, 154–55; E. Pietrella, "I pellegrinaggi ai Luoghi Santi e il culto dei martiri in Gregorio di Nissa," *Augustinianum* 21 (1981): 135–51; F. Cardman, "The Rhetoric of Holy Places: Palestine in the Fourth Century," *SP* 17 (1982): 18–25; Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 117–18; R. J. Z. Werblowsky, "Jerusalem: Holy City of Three Religions," *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux* 23 (1974): 430–31; J. von Ulrich, "Wallfahrt und Wallfahrtskritik bei Gregor von Nyssa," *Journal of Ancient Christianity* 3 (1999): 87–96. For a comprehensive study on the translation, edition, and reception of this letter by Reformers and Counterreformers in France, see W. Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance* (Oxford, 1998), 94–95, 100–116.

between the believer and God in a specific location had been completely rejected.<sup>2</sup> Although Gregory drew on this general rejection to support his own position, the weakness of his argument is apparent: in the absence of an overall system of practical commandments in early Christianity, it is not at all surprising that no such commandment exists. Yet we know that the practice of pilgrimage was fully developed by Gregory's time and persisted afterward. Thus the question arises, To what extent is Gregory's *Letter 2* anchored in a purely theological conception based on the Scriptures? Were his theological claims simply an excuse for his more immediate aim, which was to curb local ecclesiastical interests and personal rivalries? Did Gregory object to pilgrimage in principle, or was his opposition directed specifically against pilgrimage to the holy places in Palestine?

Attention has been drawn to the fact that Gregory was an enthusiastic supporter of the cult of the martyrs, an indication of his support for local pilgrimage.<sup>3</sup> However, only general observations have been made regarding Gregory's sermons on the matter. Hence Gregory's well-known *Letter 2* seems to warrant a renewed reading. It would be desirable to clarify his attitude, as well as that of his brother, Basil of Caesarea, toward the holy places and to gain a clearer picture of contemporary thought on the issue. This would also help to determine at what point the relatively new religious practice of pilgrimage was adopted by the brothers and when they came to reject it or to temper it.

In examining the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea on pilgrimage to the tombs of the martyrs in Cappadocia, my aim is not to describe the cult of the martyrs or the theology of martyrdom as expressed in their writings but rather to shed light on their position with regard to Christian sacred space and local pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup> Doing so will provide the background for a look at the nature of their visit to Jerusalem and their standpoint regarding pilgrimage to the holy places there.

2. Acts 17:24; Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, Praver, "Christian Attitudes towards Jerusalem," 311–16; Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 46–64; Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*.

3. Kötting, *Peregrinatio religiosa*, 422; J. Bernardi, *La prédication des pères cappadociens: Le prédicateur et son auditoire* (Paris, 1968), 307; Pietrella, "Pellegrinaggi ai Luoghi Santi," 145–46.

4. See M. Girardi, *Basilio di Cesarea e il culto dei martiri nel IV secolo: Scrittura e tradizione* (Bari, 1990); P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), 182–89. For the development of the cult of the martyrs in Cappadocia, see B. Gain, *L'église de Cappadoce au IVe siècle d'après la correspondance de Basile de Césarée (330–379)*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 225 (Rome, 1985), 216–25; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* 2 (Oxford, 1993), 67–70

Our knowledge about the cult of the martyrs in Cappadocia in the latter half of the fourth century derives largely from sermons delivered at the commemorations of the martyrs and from scattered references in the correspondence of the Cappadocian Fathers: Gregory of Nazianzus (330–90), Basil of Caesarea (330–79), and Gregory of Nyssa (335–94). Especially important are the views of Basil and Gregory, as they were greatly interested in the cult, promoted it, and were in favor of incorporating it permanently into the religious life of their congregations. Gregory of Nazianzus also took part in celebrating the martyrs and wrote about various aspects of it;<sup>5</sup> but unlike the others he often seemed reluctant to participate in the local ecclesiastical life and did not show the same enthusiasm for promoting and institutionalizing this cult.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, he invited fellow bishops to attend the annual celebration of local martyrs in Cappadocia.<sup>7</sup> The value of his references to the cult in his *Epigrammata*, however, should not be underestimated.<sup>8</sup> A number of his poems attest to the strong relationship of Gregory's family to the cult; and several of his family members were buried near tombs of martyrs.<sup>9</sup> The poems also describe the debauchery common during celebrations of the martyrs, as well as other matters relating to the cult.<sup>10</sup> A few of his sermons mention the *martyrium* of Mamas, a famous cult site in Cappadocia, and the large numbers of pilgrims attending his festival, but his remarks are only very general.<sup>11</sup>

5. See, for instance, Gregory's orations on the Maccabean martyrs (*Oration* 15, *PG* 35:912–33) and on Cyprian (*Oration* 24, ed. and trans. J. Mossay, *SC* 284:40–85). On the role of the martyrs according to Gregory's orations, see J. C. Skedros, "The Cappadocian Fathers on the Veneration of Martyrs," *SP* 38 (2001): 299–300.

6. On the participation of Gregory of Nazianzus in the martyrs' celebrations, see, for example, *Ep.* 58, *PG* 37:116. For an extensive survey on Gregory of Nazianzus's writings, see Bernardi, *Prédication des pères cappadociens*, 98–260, especially his conclusions concerning the cult of the martyrs, p. 150.

7. *Ep.* 122 (ed. and trans. P. Gallay, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Lettres* [Paris, 1967]).

8. *Anthologia Graeca*, vol. 6: *Anthologia palatine*, vol. 8, ed. and trans. P. Waltz (Paris, 1960). On this literary genre, see *ibid.*, 16–28.

9. *Epigrams* 33, 76, 165 (ed. P. Waltz, *Anthologia Graeca*, vol. 6: *Anthologia palatine*, vol. 8 [Paris, 1960]: 45, 55, 82). See also Y. Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme: L'inhumation "ad sanctos" dans la chrétienté d'Orient et d'Occident du IIIe au VIIe siècle* (Paris, 1988), 69–73, on burial *ad sanctos*.

10. *Epigrams* 166–69 (ed. Waltz, pp. 82–83). On the robbing of tombs, *Epigrams* 117 (p. 68), 170–72 (p. 84), 180–82 (p. 87). See also Gregory's code of behavior for Christian feasts, pinpointing twenty-two kinds of enjoyment that should be avoided, *Oration on the Theophany* 38.5, *PG* 36:316a–317b.

11. *Oration* 44, *PG* 36:608a–621a. The contents of this sermon are discussed in Bernardi, *Prédication des pères cappadociens*, 251–53. On the *martyrium* of Mamas, see Sozomen, *HE* 5.2.12–14; Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, 371 and n. 71.

BASIL AND GREGORY OF NYSSA'S  
SUPPORT FOR THE CULT OF THE MARTYRS

Gregory of Nyssa and his brother Basil shared a much greater personal involvement in promoting the cult, making a number of pilgrimages to the tombs of martyrs and encouraging local Christians to participate in the rites.<sup>12</sup>

Immediately upon his appointment as bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia in 370, Basil began to work energetically on behalf of the cult of the martyrs.<sup>13</sup> However, of his many extant sermons, only four are devoted to the martyrs, all of them delivered during his tenure as bishop (370–79).<sup>14</sup> As Jean Bernardi has suggested, it is possible that Basil delivered a large number of sermons on these occasions that have simply not been preserved.<sup>15</sup>

The importance of the cult for Basil is apparent from a number of his letters.<sup>16</sup> Writing to the bishop of Pontus in 376, he asserts that those who place

12. On the role played by bishops in the fourth century in the veneration of martyrs, see MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, 119–24.

13. On Basil's life and as a leader of the Church, see P. J. Fedwick, *The Church and Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*, Studies and Texts 45 (Toronto, 1979); idem, "A Chronology of the Life and Work of Basil of Caesarea," in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, ed. P. J. Fedwick (Toronto, 1981), 1: 1–19. For a new perspective on Basil as bishop, see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*. On his local patriotism, see T. A. Kopecek, "The Cappadocian Fathers and Civic Patriotism," *Church History* 43 (1974): 298–303.

14. In *Gordium martyrem*, PG 31: 489b–508a; *Homilia* 19, In *sanctos quadraginta martyres*, PG 31: 508b–525a; *Homilia* 23, In *sanctum martyrem Mamantem*, PG 31: 589b–600b; *Homilia* 10, In *martyrem Julittam*, PG 31: 237a–261a. For a general discussion on Basil's sermons in memory of the martyrs, see Bernardi, *Prédication des pères cappadociens*, 77–85; Girardi, *Basilio di Cesarea e il culto dei martiri*; and the review by P. J. Fedwick, *Augustinianum* 31 (1991): 495–97.

15. Bernardi, *Prédication des pères cappadociens*, 78. Bernardi relies on the fact that these sermons were usually delivered by a local bishop, and it is unreasonable to suppose, for example, that during his nine years in office as bishop Basil did not deliver a single sermon in honor of Euppsychius the Martyr, whose memory was annually honored, primarily in Cappadocia. Basil referred to this cult in some letters (e.g., *Ep.* 100, 200) and even listed him among the most revered martyrs of Cappadocia (*Ep.* 252). See also J. Gribomont ("Notes biographiques sur saint Basile le Grand," in *Basil of Caesarea*, ed. Fedwick, 1: 32), who assumes that Basil categorized the corpus of sermons and chose to preserve only those that dealt with significant issues and met a high literary standard. This explains the narrow scope of this corpus in comparison with those of other writers, such as Augustine and Chrysostom.

16. Gain, *L'église de Cappadoce*, 216–25. On Basil's repeated requests to the bishops to come and participate in the martyr celebrations, see Y. Courtonne, *Un témoin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle oriental: Saint Basile et son temps d'après sa correspondance* (Paris, 1973), 356–59.

their hopes in the Lord should enthusiastically desire the cult of the martyrs (*μαρτύρων τιμαί*).<sup>17</sup> It was customary in many cities to invite important church leaders to take part in the martyr celebrations, and Basil issued many invitations to his fellow bishops and other dignitaries. He also convened synods to discuss theological questions, appointments to office, and other church matters at the time of the celebrations (*πανήγυρεις*) as a way of making the festivals “more impressive.”<sup>18</sup> In 373 he convened all the monks and bishops at the celebration of the martyr Euppsychius.<sup>19</sup> Basil himself was invited by the church of Phargamus in Armenia to participate in commemorating the local martyr.<sup>20</sup> In 374 Basil invited Amphilocius, bishop of Iconium, to visit his city during the events, and a year later he invited him to participate in a church synod, asking him to come earlier, when the inhabitants would be celebrating the festival for the martyr Euppsychius.<sup>21</sup> To Eusebius, bishop of Samosata, he wrote: “We beg you to take a seat at the synod which we convene every year on the seventh of September in memory of the blessed Euppsychius.”<sup>22</sup> A pleading tone slips into many of Basil’s invitations to bishops in other provinces, which followed similar lines; he repeatedly informs them that the celebration is held once a year by the local inhabitants. In 376 he invited members of the church in the nearby province of Pontus to honor the inhabitants of the city with their presence at the celebrations for Euppsychius and Damas, “whose memory is observed yearly by our city and all the surrounding country.”<sup>23</sup> And on another occasion his invitation to an unidentified bishop pleads: “If you are not invited you complain; and if you are invited you do not give heed. . . . And I urge you always to bear with us, but if you do not bear with us, at any rate it is not right to neglect the martyrs, in whose commemoration you are invited to join.”<sup>24</sup> These examples clearly demonstrate the importance of the

17. *Ep.* 252 (ed. R. J. Deferrari, *Saint Basil: The Letters*, LCL, vol. 4 [London, 1962], 18).

18. *Ep.* 176, 2:458; *Ep.* 100, 2:184. See also Fedwick, *Church and Charisma of Leadership*, 122–25.

19. *Ep.* 142, 2:344.

20. *Ep.* 95, 2:154. Gregory of Nyssa also attests to the participation of bishops from other cities at the celebrations, *Ep.* 1.7 (ed. P. Maraval, *Lettres*, SC 363 [Paris, 1990]: 88).

21. *Ep.* 200, 3:138. Sozomen recounts that Euppsychius was persecuted in the days of Julian (361–63), *HE* 5.11.7–8. On the celebration of Euppsychius, see H. Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyrs* (Brussels, 1912), 205; idem, “La fête des martyrs de Césarée,” *AB* 49 (1931): 41–44.

22. *Ep.* 100, 2:184.

23. *Ep.* 252, 4:18.

24. *Ep.* 282, 4:168–70.

cult of the martyrs to Basil and his untiring efforts to enhance the reputation of the local cult in the eyes of the surrounding communities.

Like his brother Basil, Gregory carried on the tradition of supporting the cult of the martyrs, as is seen in four sermons composed in their honor, three of which were devoted to the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, and the fourth to Theodore the Martyr.<sup>25</sup> These four sermons were delivered at a time when Gregory fulfilled an important role in church life in the East, his position in the local church being strengthened after his return from forced exile in 377.<sup>26</sup> The first sermon, in honor of the Forty Martyrs, is dated to 379 and was delivered in Caesarea;<sup>27</sup> the second, in honor of Theodore, was delivered in Euchaita in 381;<sup>28</sup> the remaining two were delivered in Sebastia, in Armenia Minor, in 383 at the celebration of the Forty Martyrs,<sup>29</sup> probably two years after completing his brief tour of duty in that bishopric.<sup>30</sup> Gregory's letters, all composed during his term as bishop, also preserve information about the cult of the martyrs, especially his custom of undertaking pilgrimages to the tombs of the martyrs in Cappadocia and Armenia Minor.<sup>31</sup> In *Letter 1* he writes that he joined the local people in Sebastia at the celebration of the Forty Martyrs and made pilgrimage besides to the tombs of lesser-known martyrs such as Andaemon.<sup>32</sup> The site of Andaemon's tomb

25. During the fourth century there was a wave of soldier-martyrs, among them Theodore and the Forty Martyrs. See H. Delehayé, "Euchaita et la légende de s. Théodore," in *Anatolian Studies Presented to W. M. Ramsay*, ed. W. H. Buckler and W. M. Calder (Manchester, 1923), 129–34.

26. See Maraval's overview (*Lettres*, introduction, 17–32) of Gregory's role in the synods in Antioch (379) and Constantinople (381), as well as of his involvement in restoring order in the church of Ibura in Pontus and in Sebastia in Armenia Minor. In the latter he served as a bishop, a position he was glad to relinquish.

27. In *XL Mart.*, PG 46: 773a–778b.

28. In *Theod.*, PG 46: 736c–748d.

29. In *XL Mart.*, PG 46: 749a–757a, 756d–772c. This chronology is based on that proposed by J. Daniélou, "La chronologie des sermons de Grégoire de Nyse," *RSR* 29 (1955): 346–48, 362–63; Bernardi, *Prédication des pères cappadociens*, 303–7.

30. For this period in Gregory's life, see *Letters* 17, 19, and 22 (SC 363: 214–32, 242–56, 272).

31. Maraval, *Lettres*, 15–17.

32. *Ep.* 1.5–7, SC 363: 86–88. On the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, see Maraval, *Lettres*, 86–87 n. 2. On the authenticity of this letter, see P. Maraval, "L'authenticité de la Lettre 1 de Grégoire de Nyse," *AB* 102 (1984): 61–70. Maraval, who believes that *Letter 1* was written by Gregory of Nyssa and not by Gregory of Nazianzus, among whose writings this letter was found, relies on the fact that Gregory of Nyssa participated in the cult at Sebastia. Indeed, Gregory of Nazianzus also participated in martyr celebrations in various places in Cappadocia; but Gregory of Nyssa's special relationship with Sebastia, where he served as bishop ca. 380, seems to support the attribution of the letter to him (*ibid.*, 68).

is unknown, and no information is available about this particular pilgrimage; but the martyr was apparently known locally, since two bishops were present on the occasion.<sup>33</sup>

Praise and propaganda on behalf of the cult are a primary feature in the sermons delivered by Gregory and Basil. Gregory told his audience that those who recognize the fruits of piety (τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας καρπὸν) must honor the martyrs.<sup>34</sup> By giving a detailed description of the interior of Theodore's *martyrium*, Gregory, with his impressive rhetoric, transformed his audience into historical witnesses of the martyr's struggle on behalf of the faith. For him the painting and sculptures in this *martyrium* were like a talking book, illustrating the entire gamut of tortures that the martyr endured until his death.<sup>35</sup> Using metaphors borrowed from the language of pagan athletics and warfare, Gregory exhorted his listeners to strive to receive the "prize" with which Christ rewards his believers.<sup>36</sup>

Gregory distinguishes between the martyr's body, which is treated with great honor, and the corpse of any other man, which evokes repulsion. No one enjoys being in proximity to ordinary tombs, he says, whereas "in the place in which our meeting is held and the martyr is celebrated . . . the people are happy about the impressiveness of the things they see."<sup>37</sup> With this distinction, Gregory emphasizes the special status of the martyr—"the very special dead,"<sup>38</sup> whose precious remains are buried with honor in a holy place (ἐν ἱερῷ τόπῳ) where they are preserved until the Resurrection.<sup>39</sup> Gregory refers believers' requests for protection to the martyr Theodore, since the martyrs are God's helpers (ὑποσπισταί). He encourages believers to pray

33. *Ep.* 1.7, SC 363: 88.

34. *In Theod.*, PG 46: 737b.

35. *Ibid.*, 737d, 736c. On the function of paintings as a visual text, see also Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina* 27.542–95. The connections between verbal eloquence and the visual arts are discussed by H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), 9–12. For the rhetorical genres of *ekphrasis*, esp. the descriptions of torture, see *ibid.*, 22–23, 34–42. On the role of art as a stimulant for engaging the participants in the cult of relics, see Patricia Cox Miller, "'The Little Blue Flower Is Red': Relics and the Poetizing of the Body," *J ECS* 8 (2000): 213–36. For the case of Gregory of Nyssa, see *ibid.*, 218–19.

36. So, for example, the masses that gathered in the church are described as those who responded to the martyr's trumpet call to battle (PG 46: 736c). On these metaphors in early Christian literature, see Z. Stewart, "Greek Crowns and Christian Martyrs," in *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: Antiquité païenne et chrétienne*, ed. E. Lucchesi and H. D. Saffrey, Cahiers de l'Orientalisme 10 (Geneva, 1984), 119–24.

37. *In Theod.*, PG 46: 737b–c.

38. Brown's definition: *Cult of the Saints*, 69–85.

39. *In Theod.*, PG 46: 737c.

to the martyrs and to perceive them as advocates, intercessors (*παράκλητοι*), and ambassadors (*πρεσβευταί*) from all misfortune.<sup>40</sup> He recognizes the power of the martyrs to fight enemies and demons, to bring divine grace to believers, and of course to heal.<sup>41</sup> At these celebrations, Gregory painted for his audience an image of the typical martyr common to both East and West at the time.

Gregory of Nyssa, like other Cappadocian writers, described the great multitudes that gathered at the *martyrium* of Theodore at Euchaita, and he noted at Sebastia during the festival of the Forty Martyrs that the place could not contain all those who arrived.<sup>42</sup> According to Basil, the celebration of the martyr Gordius was like a theatrical performance, with those of the inhabitants unable to get near the “stage” looking on this great spectacle from afar.<sup>43</sup> The memory of the martyr Mamas “moved the entire earth,” and all the city mobilized to participate in his celebration.<sup>44</sup> We have little information on the cultural and social profile of the pilgrims who came to the tombs of the Cappadocian martyrs, for Basil and Gregory describe them in very general terms, placing most emphasis on the numbers present—all the residents of the city and the surrounding area, as well as church leaders.<sup>45</sup> It seems that there is a connection between the martyr’s *panēgyris* and a city’s sense of identity, as attested in pagan cults.<sup>46</sup>

However, there was another side to the festivities: a fair invariably accompanied them, along with drunkenness, prostitution, and dancing. These were an integral part of the *panēgyris* to the martyrs, just as they had been part of the *panēgyris* in ancient Greek cities.<sup>47</sup> The sources repeatedly de-

40. *Ibid.*, 748a–b; *In XL Mart.*, PG 46: 788a–b.

41. *Ibid.*, 776b.

42. For Euchaita, see *In Theod.*, PG 46: 736c. For Sebastia, see *ibid.*, 749a; *In XL Mart.*, PG 46: 757a–b.

43. PG 31: 501b.

44. *Ibid.*, 592b. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Theod.*, PG 46: 736c.

45. See Chrysostom, *Discourse on Babylas* 10 (ed. M. A. Schatkin, *Discours sur Babylas*, SC 362 [Paris, 1990]: 310). See also Theodoret of Cyrrihus, *HR* 16.4 (ed. P. Canivet and A. L. Molinghen, *Théodoret de Cyr: Histoire des moines de Syrie*, vol. 2, SC 257 [Paris, 1979]: 32).

46. See, for instance, R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1986), 82–95.

47. Pausanias attests that to combine a religious festival with a trade fair was not uncommon in Greece. See, for example, his description of the Isis festival: Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 10.32.15 (ed. W. H. S. Jones, LCL, vol. 4 [London, 1965]: 562–63). On the *panēgyris* in Greece in the first centuries C.E., see R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (London, 1981), 18–34. For the transition from pagan *panēgyris* to Christian *panēgyris*, see S. Vryonis, “The *Panēgyris* of the Byzantine Saint: A Study in the Nature of a Medieval Institution, Its Origins and Fate,”

scribe the din and confusion, which at times actually prevented the speakers from delivering their sermons.<sup>48</sup> Unsurprisingly, church leaders were not always pleased by this atmosphere and did not hesitate to voice their criticism.<sup>49</sup> Basil ordered the monks not to engage in commercial activities on these occasions: "Instead of praying, many used the place and the occasion to conduct business, to set up fairs."<sup>50</sup> In the many letters in which Basil expounds on the cult of the martyrs, he makes no reference at all to the debauchery that accompanied the celebrations.<sup>51</sup> Yet it is clear that he was aware of the phenomenon, for in *Sermon 14*, delivered in Caesarea at Easter, Basil explicitly condemns the drunkenness and wild, immoral behavior. The brunt of his anger is directed against women who dressed immodestly, organized choruses at the *martyrium*, exposed their bodies, danced, and sang bawdy songs.<sup>52</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa's voice was not heard among the dissenters and those who railed against the debauchery at the martyr celebrations, but the writings of other Christian leaders indicate something of the vulgar atmosphere that permeated cult sites during the festivities. Gregory of Nazianzus repeatedly criticized the drunkenness, gluttony, and dancing that were a part of these events.<sup>53</sup> Asterius of Amaseia in Pontus, a contemporary of the Cappadocian Fathers, attacked cult participants for failing to understand the purpose of their assembly: instead of nourishing their souls and imitating the virtues of the martyrs, "you devoted all your energies to business affairs, buying and selling."<sup>54</sup> John Chrysostom in Antioch begged participants to remain sober and avoid gluttony, to return to their homes in an orderly fash-

---

in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 195–226; Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case Study of a Regional Cult?" For the *panēgyris* in the Mediterranean cities, see Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 432–34, 447–49.

48. In *XL Mart.*, PG 46: 756b–c.

49. On the problematic issue of the enjoyment of the cult of the saints in Christian circles, see P. Brown, "Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity," *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000): 1–24.

50. *Regulae fusius tractatae* 40, PG 31: 1020d. It is possible that the decadence during the martyr celebrations is what lies behind the eighth rule of Jacob, bishop of Edessa in the seventh century, prohibiting monks from participating in the vigils and in the martyr festivals. See A. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism* (Stockholm, 1960), 96.

51. Gain, *L'église de Cappadoce*, 221.

52. *Homilia 14*, PG 31: 445b–447, 460c–461d.

53. *Epigrams* 166–69, 174–75 (ed. Waltz, pp. 82–83, 85).

54. *Homilia 3*, PG 40: 196. Dagron (*Vie et miracles de Sainte Thécle*, 354) remarks that there is no mention of fairs in the *panēgyris* of Thecla. The only trade evident at this event was the sale of soap for healing (*ibid.*, 78–79). Additional information about the decadence of the martyr celebrations is furnished by Vryonis,

ion, without rioting, and not to be tempted to enter roadside inns or places of prostitution.<sup>55</sup>

It is worth noting in this context that Gregory of Nyssa, in expressing his reservations about pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the 380s, when hordes of pilgrims were arriving in the city, seized upon the decadence he saw there as added justification for his position. If divine grace dwelt in Jerusalem more than elsewhere, then, according to him, the sins of the inhabitants would not be so great; yet every type of sin prevailed there as elsewhere—prostitution, idolatry, theft, and murder.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, it would be naive to conclude that this grim picture was confined only to Jerusalem.<sup>57</sup>

• • •

Memorial churches and magnificent tombs for the martyrs defined the boundaries of Christian sacred space in Cappadocia. As Basil states, the relics of martyrs sanctify the place and sanctify those who gather there (*ἀγιάζει μὲν τὸν τόπον, ἀγιάζει δὲ τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν συνιόντας*).<sup>58</sup> The letters and sermons of Basil and Gregory attest that in the latter half of the fourth century Cappadocia abounded with the tombs of martyrs.<sup>59</sup> This network of local and regional Christian holy places replaced, to some extent, the previous network of pagan holy places.<sup>60</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa considered these sites to be holy places par excellence, as evidenced by both his terminology and his descriptions of their function as places that could meet various needs of the pilgrims through the power of the martyrs' relics. For example, he terms the tomb of Theodore at Euchaita "holy place" (*ἱερὸν τόπον*).<sup>61</sup> According to Gregory, the people

---

"The *Panegyris* of the Byzantine Saint," 210–12; Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, 241–43; A. G. Hamman, *La vie quotidienne en Afrique du Nord au temps de saint Augustin*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1985), 33.

55. *Homilia in Martyres*, PG 50: 661–66.

56. *Ep.* 2.10, SC 363: 116.

57. For this feature in sites of pilgrimage, see Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, chap. 5.

58. *Homilia in martyrem Julittam*, PG 31: 241b.

59. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 2.9, SC 363: 116. On the tombs of the martyrs in Cappadocia, see Delehay, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, 198–207. See also Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, 371–79, for a list based on literary sources from the fourth century to the Muslim conquest.

60. For a brief survey of the pagan cult sites in Cappadocia, see R. Van Dam, "Hagiography and History: The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus." *Classical Antiquity* 1 (1982): 272–308.

61. *In Theod.*, PG 46: 736c.

of Cappadocia see the house—that is, the place of assembly at the martyr’s celebration—as the temple of God (ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ ναόν) and the body of the martyr as resting in a holy place.<sup>62</sup> There is of course nothing new in the use of the term “holy place” to refer to a martyr’s tomb in the fourth century. By Gregory’s time, this term was common in the Christian literature of both the East and the Latin West, and he appears to be merely using the current terminology.<sup>63</sup> In Basil’s sermons, on the other hand, we do not find the term “holy place” used to denote the cult places of the martyrs.<sup>64</sup>

What we observe in all these examples is that Gregory systematically employs “holy place” for all the cult sites of Cappadocia. However, this is not the case in *Letter 2*, in which he expresses his reservations about pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He does not use “holy place” (ἱερός τόπος) to refer to the sites associated with the life and death of Christ, calling them “those places” (τόποι ἐκείνοι),<sup>65</sup> or the “places of Jerusalem” (Ἱεροσόλυμα τόποι).<sup>66</sup> In this letter, Gregory uses the term *θυσιαστήριον*, which may be interpreted as meaning a cult place, to designate such sites in Cappadocia, in order to prove that these places were not spiritually inferior to those of Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup> In *Letter 3*, in which he expresses a very positive attitude toward Jerusalem, he uses the phrase “sacred places” (ἁγίους τόπους).<sup>68</sup> In fact, Gregory’s ambivalent attitude and contradictory standpoints on the holy places in Jerusalem are reflected in the deliberate choice of terms in each of his letters—an indication of a certain preference for the holy places in Cappadocia over those of Jerusalem. The tombs of the martyrs created a sacred geography in Cappadocia on which he draws in his critique of the holy places of Jerusalem. Relevant to our discussion is the fact that in the author’s consciousness there existed a network of holy places in his environs that served the needs of believers. To the believers assembled in Sebastia, Gregory of Nyssa introduces the martyrs as saviors in this world and in the Resurrection to come. He imputes to the martyrs the ability to act

62. *Ibid.*, 737c.

63. H. Delehay, “Le mot *sanctus* dans la langue chrétienne,” *AB* 28 (1909): 168; Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 28–29 and n. 32, 192–93. On the current use of the term “holy places” in the Latin hagiographic literature of the fourth to sixth centuries, see Pietri, “Loca sancta.”

64. See, for example, *PG* 31: 501b, 592b.

65. *Ep.* 2.8–9, *SC* 363: 114–16.

66. *Ibid.*, 2.10, *SC* 363: 116.

67. *Ibid.*, 2.9. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 660, s.v. *θυσιαστήριον*. In his translation of *Letter 2*, Maraval (*Lettres*, 117 n. 1) remarks that the early meaning of *θυσιαστήριον* is “altar,” but on the basis of Lampe it may be interpreted also as “cult place.”

68. *Ep.* 3.3, *SC* 363: 126.

on behalf of believers in the present through relics distributed among them; according to him, almost the entire earth is blessed with the relics of martyrs.<sup>69</sup> He describes the enthusiastic believers who assemble around the tomb of the martyr Theodore, wishing only to obtain a little soil (κόμης) from his tomb.<sup>70</sup> To encourage this type of piety, Gregory tells his listeners that touching the tomb of a martyr sanctifies and blesses those who visit the site.<sup>71</sup> He takes the opportunity to praise the miracle workers (i.e., the martyrs) and to tell his audience about a miracle of healing that took place in the nearby village of Ibura through the relics of the Forty Martyrs,<sup>72</sup> proclaiming that such miracles offer clear proof of the efficacy of the martyrs' intercession (παρρησία).<sup>73</sup> Nor was the benefit to the believer from the martyrs' relics limited to this present life; it would continue in the days to come: "I also received part of the gift [i.e., the relics of the martyrs]. . . . I also laid the bodies of my parents next to the relics of the soldiers so that at the time of the Resurrection they will arise together with the saints and with their help [ἵνα ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀναστάσεως μετὰ τῶν ἐπαρρησιαστῶν βοηθῶν ἐγερθῶσιν]." <sup>74</sup> Gregory does not relate in detail exactly how the martyrs will help the believers at the time of the Resurrection. His words appear to be a brief exhortation intended to convince his audience at the site rather than a systematic treatise on the Resurrection, a subject to which he devoted other works.<sup>75</sup>

Gregory expresses his position regarding the widespread custom of burial *ad sanctos* in his day.<sup>75</sup> In his third sermon on the Forty Martyrs, he relates that his mother, Aemilia, built a church next to Ibura that was sanctified by the relics of these martyrs from Sebastia.<sup>76</sup> This is where his father was buried; his mother before her death requested that she too be buried in the family tomb,<sup>77</sup> and his sister Macrina was also laid to rest with

---

2 footnote-  
calls  
numbered  
75  
please  
advise  
aw

---

69. *In XL Mart.*, PG 46: 784a.

70. *In Theod.*, PG 46: 740a–b.

71. *Ibid.*, 745c. Cf. *Vita Macrinae* 36 (ed. and trans. P. Maraval, *Vie de sainte Macrine*, SC 178 [Paris, 1971]: 256), where Gregory informs us that at the end of the burial ceremony for his sister he knelt down on the grave and kissed the soil.

72. *In XL Mart.*, PG 46: 784b–c.

73. For this meaning of *παρρησία*, see Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. *παρρησία*, 1045.

74. *In XL Mart.* PG 46: 784b–c. Cf. Theodoret of Cyrillus, *HR* 21.30, 2:116.

75. *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, PG 46: 111a–160c; *In sanctum Pascha et in resurrectionem*, PG 46: 652d–681a. On the Resurrection in Gregory's writings, see J. Daniélou, "La résurrection des corps," *VC* 7 (1953): 154–70; *idem*, "L'état du Christ dans la mort d'après Grégoire de Nysse," *HJ* 77 (1958): 63–72.

76. *In XL Mart.*, PG 46: 784d–785a. For additional examples of the custom of burial *ad sanctos*, see Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 197–99.

77. *Vita Macrinae* 13.18–19, SC 178: 186.

her ancestors in this church.<sup>78</sup> Burial near the tombs of martyrs was common at this time among aristocratic families in Cappadocia; Gregory of Nazianzus's family built their tomb next to the martyrs'.<sup>79</sup> This new means of ensuring salvation in the days to come, which had been developed already at the end of the third century, was clearly promoted by Christian intellectuals in this period.<sup>80</sup>

John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus's contemporary, presents a similar view in his sermons composed in memory of the martyr Babylas, bishop of Antioch, who had suffered persecution in the days of Decius.<sup>81</sup> Chrysostom declares that the body of the martyr, which was an instrument of his courage and strength, remained on earth. He does not doubt that God could have treated the martyr as he did Enoch and Elijah, raising the body miraculously to the heavens. However, for Chrysostom, God grants innumerable means for man to attain salvation, and he therefore "leaves the relics of the saints with us until this day" (τὰ τῶν ἁγίων λείψανα παρ' ἡμῶν τέως ἀφείς),<sup>82</sup> or, even more precisely, "until the time of the Resurrection" (ἕως τοῦ καιροῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως).<sup>83</sup> Such thinking, of course, brought the individual closer to the local cult and, as a result, bolstered identification with the local church.<sup>84</sup>

78. *Ibid.*, 34.15–22, SC 178: 252. Regarding the structure built by Aemilia, see Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 67–68. Gregory of Nyssa calls it τὸν τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων οἶκον (*Vita Macrinae* 34.16, SC 178: 252), which may be interpreted as a church or chapel in honour of the martyrs; while in *In XL Mart.* 3 (PG 46: 784d) he calls it τῷ ἁγίῳ σηκῶ (tomb of a saint). Duval believes that what is referred to here is not a burial chapel for the immediate family, but rather a church in which the founding family reserved the right to be buried next to the relics of the martyrs. It is probable that the church was also used for burial and cultic purposes by people not belonging to the founding family.

79. See above, n. 8; Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 89–92; Maraval's preface to his translation of *Vita Macrinae*, 87–88. On Eusebius the deacon of Macedonia, who wished to be buried near the relics of the Forty Martyrs, see Sozomen, *HE* 9.2.

80. See the evidence from North Africa furnished in Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 51, 54.

81. For the precise historical circumstances under which Babylas was persecuted, see Schatkin's preface to the *Discourse on Babylas*, SC 362: 15–19.

82. *Ibid.*, 65.5–13, SC 362: 174.

83. *In Julianum martyrem* 4, PG 50: 672. According to Chrysostom (*Discourse on Babylas* 90, SC 362: 212), the martyr's deeds are proof of the Resurrection: "If someone does not accept the Resurrection, he should look at the deeds of the martyr, which shine greater after his death." On the eschatological aspects of the cult of the martyrs in the early centuries, see M. Van Uytfanghe, "L'essor du culte des saints et la question de l'eschatologie," in *Les fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (IIIe–XIIIe siècles)*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 149 (Rome, 1991): 91–106.

84. On this aspect of the cult, see Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 41–42.

It is clear that during the years in which Basil and Gregory had central roles in the Cappadocian church—that is, between the early 370s and the mid-380s—the promotion and institutionalization of the cult of the martyrs was an integral part of their religious activities. The cult was the responsibility of local church leaders, and this explains their high degree of personal involvement as well as their preaching to encourage greater participation by believers. As a result of the strengthening of the local cult, the authority and reputation of these leaders were enhanced in the eyes of the local people and those in neighboring cities. They also gained greater influence over the local population, because when the masses assembled at the *martyrium*, the bishops took the opportunity to preach the principles of their faith. According to Basil, the goal of the martyr cult was to protect and strengthen the faith of believers against the various heresies.<sup>85</sup> As Monique Alexandre has observed, contemporary theological debates occupied considerable space in the sermons on the Forty Martyrs.<sup>86</sup> At the end of the fourth and fifth centuries, the deeds of the martyrs were repeatedly cited in Christian apologetics to prove the truth of the religion and its superiority over paganism. The voice of the Oracle of Apollo at Daphne was silenced when the relics of the martyr arrived in the city, and this victory of the martyr was a victory for Christianity.<sup>87</sup> Gregory's sermons, however, lack this apologetic dimension; he limits himself to a description of the acts of the martyrs, citing them especially for propagandistic purposes against domestic adversaries. At the end of the fourth century, the Cappadocian writer Asterius of Amaseia indicated what he felt to be the important aims of the *panēgyris* for the martyrs: the performance of the rites, as well as the opportunity to study Christian doctrine from the lips of the masters participating in the festival. In his terminology, the martyr celebration was a communal place of learning for the soul (*κοινὰ παιδαγωγεία τῶν ψυχῶν*).<sup>88</sup>

85. Basil, *Homilia* 19, PG 31: 521b.

86. M. Alexandre, "Les nouveaux martyrs: Motifs martyrologiques dans la vie des saints et thèmes hagiographiques dans l'éloge des martyrs chez Grégoire de Nysse," in *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa*, Patristic Monography Series 12 (Philadelphia, 1984), 55. And similarly with regard to Gregory of Nyssa's hagiographic compositions, *ibid.*, 46–50; F. Vinel, "Sainteté anonyme, sainteté collective? Les quarante martyrs de Sébastée dans quelques textes du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Du héros païen au saint chrétien*, ed. G. Freyburger and L. Peront, Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 154 (Paris, 1997), 125–31.

87. Chrysostom, *Discourse on Babylas* 73, SC 362: 188–90. See also Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8. On the miracles performed by martyrs as proof of the apostles' and Christ's miracles, see Chrysostom, *Discourse on Babylas* 73, 90 (SC 362: 190, 212); also the translators' comments, *ibid.*, 46–48.

88. *Homilia* 3, PG 40: 196a–b.

Statements by Gregory and Basil on preaching Christian dogma on these occasions are by no means as clearly formulated as those uttered by Asterius of Amaseia. However, it seems that their support for the local cult of the martyrs was also designed to serve the interests of local church politics.<sup>89</sup> In fact, by such support they channeled the sentiments of the believers toward a defined location, the tombs of the martyrs in Cappadocia, thus supporting and encouraging local pilgrimage. With this in mind, let us now examine their position vis-à-vis pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM:  
THE JOURNEYS OF BASIL AND GREGORY

*Basil of Caesarea's Journey to Palestine*

Vague information about Basil's journey to the East, including Palestine, is preserved in his *Letter* 223, written in 375—some twenty years after the journey took place.<sup>90</sup> The letter does not contain any historical information concerning his travels; rather, Basil describes the deep impression made upon him by the monks he met in Alexandria as well as other places in Egypt, and in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The monastic way of life Basil encountered in those places aroused his astonishment and admiration. He was deeply impressed by the fervency of their prayers and their extreme asceticism, "as if passing their lives in alien flesh." For Basil, these "strangers and foreigners on the earth" (Heb. 11:13)—manifesting by their deeds the scriptural image of citizenship in heaven (τὸ πολίτευμα ἔχειν ἐν οὐρανῶ; cf. Phil. 3:20)—were models to be emulated.<sup>91</sup>

Basil's succinct reporting, however, leaves many questions unanswered. What was the time frame of this journey? What were the circumstances

89. Bernardi, *Prédication des pères cappadociens*, 307.

90. *Ep.* 223, 3:286–312. On Basil's visit, see also J. T. Rivers, "Pattern and Process in Early Christian Pilgrimage" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1983), 297–307. On the basis of Basil's *Letter* 42—in which he warned a monk against traveling from town to town—Rivers concludes (*ibid.*, 306–7) that Basil's attitude toward pilgrimage and the holy places was ambivalent.

91. *Ep.* 223, 3:294. In *Ep.* 2 (1:14–16) to Gregory of Nazianzus, written in 358 concerning the monastic way of life, Basil advises viewing biblical figures (e.g., Joshua, Job, David, and Moses) as models worthy of imitation by monks. Just as artists paint from a model, so those who are interested in attaining perfection must gaze upon the lives of the saints as if they were statues, so to speak, that move and act. For this idiosyncrasy of hagiographic literature, see Satran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine*, 103–5.

that brought him to the East? Can we conclude from his letter that he also visited the holy places in Jerusalem?<sup>92</sup>

No definitive answer can be given, but some light is shed by *Letter 1*, written in 357, in which Basil does describe the circumstances that brought him to the East.<sup>93</sup> In 356, after his five-year stay in Athens, where he acquired the Greek *paideia*, the young Basil returned to Cappadocia. *Letter 1* relates that he wished to study under Eustathius, a former bishop of Sebastia who was well known for his extreme asceticism.<sup>94</sup> Learning that Eustathius was at the time living in Syria, he set out for that country;<sup>95</sup> however, on reaching Syria in 357, he was informed that Eustathius had gone to Egypt. So Basil set out once more, only to be disappointed yet again. He writes little about the journey itself and only in the most general terms, and thus many details remain obscure.<sup>96</sup>

Modern scholars have had disparate reactions to this account, ranging from a complete rejection of the historicity of Basil's description to a total acceptance of his words at their face value. Yves Courtonne, for example, sees the entire description of the journey as a "charming literary fiction," but he produces no evidence for such an assertion.<sup>97</sup> Other scholars believe that Basil did actually travel to all these countries in his futile search for Eustathius.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, the goal of his travels is evident, as stated in *Letter 223*. He desired to learn the monastic way of life most suitable to the "words of the Gospel," and his journeying to the most famous monastic centers of his time was an intellectual pursuit undertaken to acquire the monastic *paideia*—such

92. This is Rivers's conclusion ("Pattern and Process," 297), but he provides no clear proof.

93. *Ep. 1*, 1:2–6.

94. On Eustathius, see Sozomen, *HE* 3.14; J. Gribomont, "Eustathe le philosophe et les voyages du jeune Basile de Césarée," *RHE* 54 (1959): 115–24; idem, "Eustathe de Sébaste," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 4: 1708–12; idem, "Saint Basile et le monachisme enthousiaste," *Irénikon* 53 (1980): 123–44; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 72–76, 239–45.

95. I adopt here the chronology suggested by Fedwick ("Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil," 1: 3–19), which for the most part follows that of his predecessors. On the journey, see *ibid.*, 6; *ibid.*, 2: 481.

96. For a discussion of this episode, see Gribomont, "Eustathe le philosophe"; Courtonne, *Un témoin du IVe siècle oriental*, 423–29.

97. *Ibid.*, 426.

98. S. Elm, "Virgins of God": *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 60–61, following Fedwick, "Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil," 3–19. So too, Rousseau (*Basil of Caesarea*, 72–73) has no doubt that Basil traveled even though the references and time frame are vague.

a pursuit being quite common in Basil's day.<sup>99</sup> Those arriving in Egypt and Palestine from the second half of the fourth century onward include Egeria, Melania the Elder, Cassian, Jerome, Evagrius Ponticus, Palladius, and many others. Gregory of Nazianzus alluded to the motive for Basil's travels as "not alien to his project of philosophy."<sup>100</sup> It should be remembered that Basil's own reason for his journey was to seek a satisfying way of life, and indeed he afterward withdrew to his birthplace in Annisa to live in seclusion for five years (359–64).<sup>101</sup> Only subsequently did he become one of the architects of the monastic movement in Asia Minor and one of the most influential figures of monastic culture in the East and West alike.<sup>102</sup>

Returning to the question of whether Basil took the opportunity while on his journey to visit the holy places of Jerusalem, we have to bear in mind that he never drew up a complete itinerary of his stay in the East. In *Letter* 223, he wrote of Palestine and other countries, but only in a general way. Furthermore, Palestine did not feature at all in *Letter* 1, in which he listed the countries he visited in his search for Eustathius. Palestine is actually mentioned in *Letter* 223 only when Basil enumerates the virtues of the monks in various centers in the East. This discrepancy in the two letters is difficult to explain and results in only the vaguest information about Basil's experiences in the East.<sup>103</sup> Should we then conclude that these two letters describe two different journeys? There is no evidence to support such an assumption or the inference that Basil traveled to Jerusalem on any other occasion.<sup>104</sup>

99. On this kind of travel in search of moral inspiration, see below, Chapter 4.

100. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 43.25 (ed. and trans. J. Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 42–43*, SC 384 [Paris, 1992]: 182).

101. On this chronology, see Fedwick, "Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil," 6 and n. 22; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 73.

102. Rufinus translated the rules into Latin at the end of the fourth century, *PL* 103: 487–557. See Gribomont, "Notes biographiques," 1: 40–43. On the wide influence of Basil's writings and their translation into many languages, see P. J. Fedwick, "Translations of the Works of Basil," in *Basil of Caesarea*, ed. Fedwick, 2: 439–512. Dating Basil's ascetic works raises complex chronological problems. See a summary of the various scholarly opinions in Fedwick, "Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil," 8–9, 14; Gribomont, "Notes biographiques," 32, 40–43; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 190–232, 354–59.

103. See, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 43.25, SC 384: 182.

104. See *Ep.* 45, which was found in a manuscript among Basil's letters. The author writes to an unidentified monk advising him on the monastic way of life. He states that he lives in Jerusalem, that there they fast together for weeks, and that he even went into seclusion in the city (*Ep.* 45, 1:276). But a long stay by Basil in Jerusalem does not correspond with what we are told about him in *Letters* 1 and 223. Many scholars now believe, primarily on philological grounds, that this letter was not written by Basil. See, for example, Gribomont, "Notes biographiques," esp.

Another difficulty arises indirectly from *Letter 207*, written (as was *Letter 223*) in 375 to the clergy of Neocaesarea. Basil wrote *Letter 207* primarily to justify his lifestyle to those who opposed it, and he cited the conduct of monks from other countries as a model: "And now I hear that in Egypt there is a virtue of this sort among the people, and perhaps [there are] also several in Palestine who conduct their lives successfully according to the Gospel [*κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πολιτεῖαν*], and I hear that there are some blessed and contented people in Mesopotamia as well."<sup>105</sup> One might ask why Basil saw fit to write that he had heard (*ἀκούω*) about the monastic way of life in these countries when he could have referred to personal experience. As he wrote in *Letter 223*, "I have found many in Alexandria . . . and others in Palestine." In other words, it is strange that Basil did not exhaust all his evidence against those who defamed him, preferring to support his statements with hearsay rather than with what he had witnessed with his own eyes. Furthermore, in *Letter 207* his tone is tentative: "And perhaps [there are] also several in Palestine" (*Καὶ τάχα τινὲς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς Παλαιστίνης*). This hesitancy contrasts oddly with his more affirmative stance in *Letter 223*.

In sum, it can be accepted that Basil did visit Palestine as described in *Letter 223*—at least we have no compelling evidence against this interpretation. But why Basil was silent about the holy places and pilgrimage to Palestine—these subjects are not treated in any of his writings—remains a puzzle. The province of Palestine was not unknown to him. In letters to Epiphanius the bishop of Salamis and to the monks Palladius and Innocent, written around the year 377, we learn that Basil was well aware of the theological debate that had broken out among the monks of the Mount of Olives; in fact, he had been asked to mediate the dispute.<sup>106</sup> If visiting the holy places in Palestine held religious significance for him, it is hard to understand why he did not hint at this in his works. Of course, a number of other contemporary sources inform us about visits to Palestine of well-

---

25, where this letter is listed among those whose authenticity is uncertain. Amand de Mendieta ("L'authenticité de la lettre 45 de la correspondance de Basile de Césarée," *SP* 10 [1970]: 44–53), is of the opinion that the author of *Letter 45* was probably a monk who lived in Jerusalem in the fourth or fifth century.

105. *Ep.* 207, 3:184.

106. *Ep.* 258, 4:34–46; *Ep.* 259, 4:47–48. On the historical background of the controversy and the figures involved, see the brief but enlightening comments in L. Perrone, "Vie religieuse et théologie en Palestine durant la première phase des controverses christologiques," *POC* 29 (1977): 234–35.

known individuals whose own writings make no mention of their travels. For one, Evagrius Ponticus, who belonged to the same intellectual circles as Basil, maintained a similar silence. Despite the fact that Evagrius sojourned near the holy places in Jerusalem for several months, no reference to his stay is found in his works.<sup>107</sup> Apparently, for Basil and Evagrius visiting the holy places in Jerusalem was not a part of their agenda. Can it therefore be concluded that this silence represents a deliberate belittling of the status and importance of pilgrimage to Jerusalem and its holy places? Despite the weakness of any *argumentum ex silentio*, the question resurfaces time and again in this study, emerging from a paradox: on the one hand we have an abundance of fourth-century sources describing the phenomenon of pilgrimage and the many traditions that evolved in connection with Palestine's holy places; on the other hand, we encounter a near total silence on the subject on the part of notable Christian thinkers who were known to have been in Palestine as visitors or even actively involved in its ecclesiastical affairs.

#### *Gregory's Visit to Jerusalem: Pilgrimage or Diplomatic Mission?*

While Basil's visit to Jerusalem has aroused little scholarly attention, Gregory of Nyssa's occupies an important place in the history of late-antique pilgrimage, especially with regard to his own views on the subject.

Gregory refers to his journey to Jerusalem in three separate works: *Letter 2*, *Letter 3*, and his hagiographical composition the *Life of Macrina*.<sup>108</sup> Before embarking on a detailed discussion of these works, it is important to note their inherent contradictions with regard to the purpose of Gregory's visit, his views on pilgrimage to the city, and his attitude toward the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. The differing emphases placed by contemporary scholars on each of the three works, and indeed their partial use of them, have led to diverse assessments of Gregory's visit and his standpoint on the subject of pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Gregory's views are especially evident in *Letter 2*, characterized by his clear reservations about pilgrimage and his sharp criticism of the citizens of Jerusalem. However, comparing it with *Letter 3* and the *Life of Macrina* reveals a more complex and ambivalent attitude—one that raises two inter-related questions. First, to what extent was Gregory in *Letter 2* expressing a fundamental theological position regarding pilgrimage as a pattern of re-

107. This issue is discussed at length in Chapter 4, below.

108. Gregory refers once more to his journey to the East in *Ep.* 28.4 (SC 363: 308), solely as a chronological milestone.

ligious behavior? And second, to what extent do his statements echo his dispute with the Church in Jerusalem? To answer these questions, it is necessary to consider the reasons that brought him to Jerusalem in 381.<sup>109</sup>

Clues to the purpose of Gregory's journey are present in the *Life of Macrina*, composed after his visit and no later than 382–83.<sup>110</sup> In this work, Gregory reminds his unidentified correspondent that he has not forgotten their meeting after his visit to Jerusalem, which was "for the purpose of prayer [κατ' εὐχῆν], in order to see in these places the signs of the Lord's sojourn in the flesh."<sup>111</sup> Scholars have had difficulty construing the expression κατ' εὐχῆν in this context. Usually, the term εὐχή means a prayer, a wish, or a vow. Maraval's translation of the *Life of Macrina* at first preferred "following a vow."<sup>112</sup> More recently, however, he has retracted that interpretation and changed his translation to "for the sake of prayer."<sup>113</sup> Maraval bases his later choice on similar expressions in the pilgrimage literature, in which prayer in a specific place marks the act of pilgrimage; he relies on the expression εὐχῆς ἕνεκεν (for the sake of prayer), which appears in Palladius's *Historia Lausiaca*, as well as the similar Latin expression *orationis causa* from the *Itinerary* of Egeria.<sup>114</sup> In accordance with this interpretation, in my view the fact that Gregory in his preface to the *Life of Macrina* mentions his visit only in passing—as a chronological landmark in his itinerary—lends considerable weight to the argument that he perceives the purpose of his journey to be mainly devotional, as understood from κατ' εὐχῆν.

In *Letter 2* Gregory mentions other reasons for going to Jerusalem. The letter was written to a certain Quinstor, otherwise unknown but most prob-

109. Kötting ("Gregor von Nyssa's Wallfahrtskritik," 360) is inclined to accept that Gregory arrived at the end of the 370s, following the synod in Antioch in 379. Maraval has retracted his earlier statement (*Vita Macrinae*, 61–66) that Gregory visited Jerusalem at the end of the 370s and that the synod in which he participated is one that took place in Antioch in 379. According to the new chronology proposed by Maraval, Gregory seems to have participated in the synod in Constantinople in 381 and was then sent to Arabia. See P. Maraval, "Lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse dans le débat christologique," *RSR* 61 (1987): 74–89; idem, *Lettres*, 32–34. This suggestion had already been made in Daniélou, "L'état du Christ," 69.

110. See Maraval's chronology in his preface to *Vita Macrinae*, 67.

111. *Vita Macrinae* 1.7–9, SC 178: 138.

112. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 580 s.v. εὐχή; Maraval, *Vita Macrinae* 1.6–13, SC 178: 139; Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 117.

113. Maraval, *Lettres*, 37 and n. 2; idem, "Égérie et Grégoire de Nysse, pèlerins aux lieux saints de Palestine," 328.

114. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 46, p. 136; Egeria, *Itinerary* 17.1, 31.1. Eusebius (*HE* 6.11.1–2) used the same term (εὐχῆς) for describing the visit of Alexander of Cappadocia to Palestine in the third century.

ably the abbot of a small monastic community.<sup>115</sup> In this letter, Gregory sets forth theological and ethical arguments asserting that pilgrimage to the holy places of Jerusalem is pointless and advising the monks against this type of devotion. Aware of the contradiction between his own visit and his line of argument, he admits that some might wonder, "Why did you not adopt this rule for yourself, if there is no purpose in being there?"<sup>116</sup> Gregory responds by claiming that he was summoned to Jerusalem to mediate a conflict that had erupted there while he was on a church mission in neighboring Arabia.<sup>117</sup> But as noted earlier, he gives no precise date for his visit. He stresses his political role by noting the assistance he had received from the emperor himself, who had provided Gregory and his entourage with transportation and various conveniences unusual for travelers of that time.<sup>118</sup>

Presenting the visit as purely diplomatic, devoid of the dust of pilgrimage, contradicts what he wrote in the *Life of Macrina*. Scholars have attempted to resolve the discrepancy by arguing that the phrase *κατ' ἐρχήν* merely bespeaks Gregory's aspiration or desire;<sup>119</sup> hence one hypothesis is that Gregory accepted this mediatory mission precisely because he wished to visit the holy places of Palestine. Another view is that Gregory was unenthusiastic about the mission and merely acceded to those who had invited him to mediate their dispute,<sup>120</sup> from which it would appear that Gregory's visit to the holy places was completely incidental to his diplomatic mission. Such a view seems far-fetched, since it disregards the continuation of Gregory's own statement in the *Life of Macrina*: "in order to see in these places the signs of the Lord's sojourn in the flesh" (*ἐφ' ᾧ τε τὰ σημεῖα τῆς τοῦ κυρίου διὰ σαρκός ἐπιδημίας ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἰδεῖν*).<sup>121</sup> So while there is no doubt about the mission Gregory was asked to undertake, it remains to be clarified whether the visit had an underlying religious motivation. Another opinion, ignoring Gregory's stance in the *Life of Macrina*, maintains

115. As assumed by Kötting ("Gregor von Nyssa's Wallfahrtskritik," 361), who relied on the fact that Gregory directed his letter primarily to those in monastic circles (*Ep.* 2.4–7). This assumption also rests on Gregory's *Ep.* 2.8, in which he exhorted his correspondent, "advise the brothers." See also Maraval, *Lettres*, 107 n. 2.

116. *Ep.* 2.11, SC 363: 116.

117. *Ep.* 2.12, SC 363: 118.

118. *Ep.* 2.13, SC 363: 118. On the conditions of travel in this period, see D. Gorce, *Les voyages, l'hospitalité et le port des lettres dans le monde chrétien des 4e–5e siècles* (Paris, 1925); L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (London, 1974).

119. G. Pasquali, "Lettere di Gregorio di Nissa," *SIFC* 3 (1923): 118; Pietrella, "Pellegrinaggi ai Luoghi Santi," 138.

120. *Ibid.*, 144, 150.

121. *Vita Macrinae* 1.9–10, SC 178: 138.

that the visit was solely a church mission.<sup>122</sup> Maraval, for his part, presents the discrepancy without attempting an explanation. He does away with the difficulty by tempering Gregory's words in *Letter 2*, noting that this letter was directed largely at monks and virgins.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, given that Gregory of his own accord made a pilgrimage to the tombs of the martyrs in Cappadocia, and that he expressed joy at seeing the holy places in Jerusalem (*Letter 3*), Maraval asserts that Gregory did not reject pilgrimage outright, thus seeing the contradiction in the triad as considerably less blatant.

In my opinion, the two stated purposes of Gregory's visit, though different, do not contradict each other, and one should therefore not minimize the religious motivation. It was the polemical nature of *Letter 2* that led its author to suppress his religious motivation. If he did indeed undertake the journey for a combination of the two motives, then it follows that there is a great gulf between Gregory's behavior as a pilgrim in Cappadocia and his theological ideas regarding pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Determining the purpose of Gregory's visit is not the only problematic issue arising from a comparison of the three works under consideration. A difference in tone may be detected in *Letter 2* as compared with *Letter 3*.

#### GREGORY'S AMBIVALENCE REGARDING THE HOLY PLACES IN JERUSALEM

In *Letter 3*, written immediately upon Gregory's return to his homeland, most likely in 382, it is possible to discern a positive tone toward the holy places in Jerusalem and those he met there.<sup>124</sup> He writes enthusiastically to the three unidentified recipients: "When I saw and felt the holy places, I became filled with such a great joy that words cannot describe it" (*Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν εἶδον μὲν καὶ αἰσθητῶς τοὺς ἁγίους τόπους . . . τοσαύτης ἐπληρώθην χαρᾶς, ὥστε ὑπὲρ λόγον εἶναι τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τὴν διήγησιν*).<sup>125</sup> Meeting good people in the city and seeing signs of the Lord's grace toward them gave him great happiness. Gregory attests that he encountered souls in Jerusalem in whom the spiritual signs of the Lord's piety were so evident that one might have thought Bethlehem, Golgotha, the Mount of Olives, and the Anastasis dwelt within their hearts.<sup>126</sup>

122. Kötting, "Gregor von Nyssa's Wallfahrtskritik," 361, 364.

123. Maraval, *Vita Macrinae* 1.6–10, SC 178: 138 n. 2.

124. *Ep.* 3.1, SC 363: 124.

125. *Ep.* 3.3, SC 363: 126.

126. *Ep.* 3.1, SC 363: 124.

This delight, however, was accompanied by feelings of bitterness that caused him to return home with a heavy heart.<sup>127</sup> To his great disappointment, his Christological views had been rejected by certain individuals in Jerusalem, whose names he does not reveal. (Nor does he comment on their opposing doctrines.) This vague reference to a theological debate has been the subject of several studies.<sup>128</sup> Various theories have been proposed as to the identity of Gregory's opponents, the nature of the debate, and the accusations directed against him.<sup>129</sup> One might assume that the bishop of Jerusalem, Cyril, was one of those in opposition. Had the local bishop agreed with him, Gregory would presumably have mentioned this fact in order to strengthen his own position.<sup>130</sup> The importance of this point will be explained in due course.

*Letter 2* omits any mention of the joy Gregory felt upon seeing the holy places in Jerusalem, and the terms "sacred place" (ἅγιος τόπος) and "holy place" (ιερός τόπος) do not appear. Writing in a different tone, with a negative description of the city, and adding his reservations about visiting it, he asks what one would gain from such a visit. One would think that the Holy Spirit dwells only among the inhabitants of Jerusalem and is incapable of reaching Cappadocia.<sup>131</sup> If there were some advantage to this act, he argues, it would not bring spiritual harm (ψυχικὴν βλάβην) to those who follow the ascetic life (τὸν ἀκριβῆ βίον).<sup>132</sup> Yet Gregory describes in great detail how such journeys are harmful to the monastic way of life, particularly to women, who require the assistance of the opposite sex during their journey. Moreover, the decadence of the inns in the cities of the East makes the journey undesirable for monks and virgins alike.<sup>133</sup> In this context, he writes

127. *Ep.* 3.4, SC 363: 126.

128. See Maraval, "La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse"; and briefly idem, *Lettres*, 36–37.

129. I. Grego ("San Gregorio Nisseno pellegrino in Terra Santa: Lo scontro con i giudeo-cristiani," *Salesiaannum* 38 (1976): 109–25) has suggested that Gregory's words are directed against the Jewish Christians who lived in Jerusalem. Such an assumption has no solid ground and has already been rejected by Maraval ("La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse," 86 and n. 49). O. Irshai, in "Historical Aspects of the Christian-Jewish Polemic Concerning the Church of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 2: 84 n. 86, has also rejected the possibility that in the second half of the fourth century a Jewish-Christian community existed in Jerusalem and congregated on Mount Zion. However, as Maraval has demonstrated, the liturgy pertaining to the place in the years 381–384, evident in Egeria's descriptions, proves that Mount Zion was one of the liturgical stations of the church in Jerusalem: Egeria, *Itinerary* 39–40, 43.

130. Maraval, "La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse," 88; idem, *Lettres*, 37.

131. *Ep.* 2.8, SC 363: 114.

132. *Ep.* 2.4, SC 363: 112. See also Maraval, *ibid.*, n. 1.

133. *Ep.* 2.5–7, SC 363: 112–14.

that if divine grace were indeed greater “in the places of Jerusalem,” sin would not be so rife among the inhabitants. He follows with a grim description of Jerusalem as a city of sin and conspiracies, in which all types of evil may be found: prostitution, theft, murder, idolatry, and incest.<sup>134</sup>

Some scholars have accepted Gregory’s admonitions to ascetic circles in *Letter 2* as his predominant view and have not given much attention to the contradiction between *Letter 2* and *Letter 3*.<sup>135</sup> This partial treatment does not address the problems that arise in comparing the three sources cited here. Apparently, the hostile attitude that Gregory encountered in Jerusalem accounts for his sharp criticism of the city and its inhabitants; and the mutual hostility could explain, although only in part, the contradictory attitudes of the two letters.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, this explanation can be accepted in its broad outlines, but we should not underestimate the polemical nature of *Letter 2*. It is necessary to examine the set of theological and moral arguments that Gregory advances in venting his anger toward the city and its inhabitants. What were the distinctive features of the author’s arguments, and to what degree did they reflect his fundamental view? Of even greater import in this context is the question: Were these arguments perhaps directed against the views of Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, on the role of the *culte de mémoire* and sacred geography?

At the outset of *Letter 2*, Gregory expresses doubt that seeing Jerusalem, “where one can see signs of the Lord’s sojourn in the flesh, is part of religious piety [εὐσέβεια].”<sup>137</sup> Note that while Gregory raises this issue with regard to the holy places in Jerusalem, he does not similarly reject the cult of the martyrs. On that issue, his position is quite clear: those who wish to see the fruits of piety (εὐσέβεια) must follow the cult of the martyrs.<sup>138</sup>

The absence of such devotional acts in the canon (kanwvn) is a central point in Gregory’s argument against pilgrimage, based on the fact that when the Lord calls the elect to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, he does not count the journey to Jerusalem among the good deeds.<sup>139</sup> Nor, Gregory maintains,

134. *Ep.* 2.10, SC 363: 116.

135. For such an approach, see Pietrella, “Pellegrinaggi ai Luoghi Santi,” 150; Kötting, “Gregor von Nyssa’s Wallfahrtskritik,” 362, Wilken (*Land Called Holy*, 118) believes there can be no doubt that Gregory had reservations about pilgrimage, but he emphasizes that they were directed primarily toward monks and virgins.

136. Maraval, *Lettres*, 37. On the opposing positions taken in the two letters, see *ibid.*, 121 n. 1.

137. *Ep.* 2.2, SC 363: 108. On this term and its connotations in Gregory’s thought, see Maraval, *Lettres*, 109 n. 4.

138. *In Theod.*, PG 46: 737d.

139. *Ep.* 2.2–3, SC 363: 110.

was it included among Christ's instructions to his disciples (Matt. 5:3–11); were there any advantage to the practice, this is not how Christians would choose to fulfill the instruction. Rather, he says, pilgrimage causes "spiritual harm" to those who have chosen the ascetic life. This fundamental and original claim—not found in the writings of any other Christian thinker examined here—cannot be easily dismissed. Yet despite the lack of any instruction in the New Testament about pilgrimage, the fact remains that the practice did develop, and Gregory would certainly have witnessed its scope while in Jerusalem. He undoubtedly realized that his argument was insufficient to oppose the growing tradition.

In *Letter 2* the question of the divine presence in a defined earthly place naturally takes center stage in Gregory's attempt to demonstrate the insignificance of making pilgrimage to Jerusalem. By asking in this context if God dwells in one place on earth more than in any other, he raises a highly sensitive issue. The attribution of the divine presence to a specific place is precisely what defines a holy place, and the encounter with the divine in such a space is the very essence of pilgrimage. Gregory answers his own question by declaring unequivocally that there is no contemplative value in seeing these places. If indeed it were possible to prove the divine presence by visible signs, one could conclude that God dwells in Cappadocia more than elsewhere, since the region abounds in cult sites.<sup>140</sup> The clear-cut conclusion is that one may praise and glorify the Lord anywhere, and a change of place does not necessarily bring one closer to God. Paraphrasing 2 Corinthians 6:16 ("For we are the temple of the living God as God said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people")—a key text in this debate—Gregory asserts that the Lord will reach the one whose soul is found worthy to dwell and walk with him. In contrast, if the "inner man" is full of evil thoughts, "even if you are on Golgotha and the Mount of Olives, and even if you are at the Anastasis, you are far from receiving Christ within you."<sup>141</sup> For Gregory the sites in Jerusalem associated with the life of Christ are entirely dissociated from the alleged preference of God to dwell there. He is convinced that Jerusalem holds no advantage over any other region of the world; moreover, because of its sins, the city is actually unworthy of the divine presence. Drawing on

140. *Ep.* 2.9, SC 363: 115–16.

141. *Ep.* 2.16–17, SC 363: 120. For the holy places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the fourth to sixth centuries, see Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, 252–57, 265–66, 272–73; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*.

Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:8, he tells his correspondent to advise the brothers "to leave their body in order to walk toward the Lord, and not [to leave] Cappadocia in order to walk toward Palestine."<sup>142</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa was aware that a complete rejection of Jerusalem might appear to contradict the Lord's command in Acts 1:4 not to stray from Jerusalem: "While staying with them, he ordered them not to be far from Jerusalem, but rather to wait there for the promise of the Father." To prevent any criticism, Gregory notes that the statement was made before the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples—the Lord had commanded them to remain in the same place until "they be endowed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).<sup>143</sup> Consequently, Jerusalem, where the Holy Spirit descended, did initially play a role in Christian history; thereafter the city's role ended, since the Holy Spirit is not confined to a particular place but "blows wherever it lists" (John 3:8). Obviously, for Gregory Jerusalem was not a territory of grace. The extent to which believers in Cappadocia would participate in divine grace depended on the degree of their faith (cf. Romans 12:6) rather than on travel to Jerusalem.<sup>144</sup> With this, Gregory emphatically challenged the special status allotted to the holy places in Jerusalem throughout Christian history.

A similar rejection of the religious importance of historical sites is hinted at in Gregory's polemical treatise *Contra Apollinarium*, written in the 380s.<sup>145</sup> Gregory attacks Apollinarius for separating what cannot be separated:<sup>146</sup>

I do not understand who is with us, because he places his body in heaven and, on the other hand, he says that the Lord is with us. . . . Regarding ourselves, I claim that Jesus ascended to heaven and he who ascended is with us and cannot be separated. Just as he is found in us, he is present in each and every one, especially. . . . In the same way he passes through all regions and all the places of Creation, and he appears in a uniform fashion everywhere in the world.

142. *Ep.* 2.18, SC 363: 122.

143. *Ibid.*

144. *Ep.* 2.19, SC 363: 122.

145. *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45: 1123–70. Daniélou ("L'état du Christ," 68) dated the composition to 382. Maraval ("La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse," 79) agrees that Gregory wrote the composition ca. 386 or 387 on the basis of the scanty information known to him about this heresy before 386.

146. *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarem* 2, PG 45: 1268b–1269a. H. U. Balthasar, in *Présence et pensée: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1988), 147–48, points to a direct connection between this doctrine and Gregory's *Letter* 2 against pilgrimage to holy places.

Obviously, the historical sites connected with Jesus' life are insignificant, and pilgrimage is thus superfluous. The fundamental question whether God's presence is confined to one specific place was not new in the fourth century. As scholars have shown, that question was raised earlier by Philo, Cicero, and others.<sup>147</sup> In the fourth century, however, the question of the divine presence was specifically connected with pilgrimage and places associated with the earthly life of Jesus. It appears that the pilgrims themselves feared that their act of pilgrimage might be interpreted as evincing a belief on their part that the divine presence was confined to a certain corner of the world.<sup>148</sup>

Gregory, as we have seen, uses traditional theological conceptions anchored in the New Testament that essentially deny the role of earthly Christian sacred space and reject the importance of Jerusalem and its holy places for the Christian faith. It should be noted, however, that the alternative he proposes is not at all traditional. *Letter 2* does not uphold the value of the heavenly Jerusalem over the earthly city, based on Hebrews 12:22 and Galatians 4:26.<sup>149</sup> Nor does Gregory draw on the exegetical tradition of such thinkers as Origen and Eusebius.<sup>150</sup> Instead, he substitutes a new network of holy places associated with the cult of the martyrs in Cappadocia, of which he and Basil were leading supporters. With this, he strips Jerusalem of its historical uniqueness and discloses his own preference for local pilgrimage to the tombs of the martyrs of Cappadocia.

Gregory holds that the holy places in Jerusalem have no value as testimony to the truth of the Christian faith and the divinity of Jesus:<sup>151</sup>

For us, we believed the fact that Christ who appeared on earth is the true God before we came to these places, just as after [we saw them] our faith did not increase or decrease. We knew the Incarnation through the mediation of the Virgin before we saw Bethlehem; we believed in the Resurrection before we saw the tomb; we believed in

147. Cardman, "Rhetoric of Holy Places," 19 and notes there; Davies, *Gospel and the Land*, 185–94; Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 292 n. 36, where he mentions further bibliography.

148. See, for example, Theodoret on Symeon the Elder's pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, *HR* 6.8.

149. The bibliography on this subject is vast. See the comprehensive study by Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 46–64. On Origen's interpretation of Jerusalem in the Scriptures, see *ibid.*, 65–78. See also Davies, "Jerusalem and the Land"; *idem.*, *Gospel and the Land*, 195–200; Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*.

150. For Eusebius's attitudes regarding Jerusalem and the holy places, see Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?*; Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 78–100; *idem.*, "Eusebius and the Christian Holy Land"; Rubin, "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre"; Cameron and Hall, *Life of Constantine*, 273–85.

151. *Ep.* 2.15, SC 363: 121.

the truth of the Ascension without seeing the Mount of Olives. From this visit we gained only one advantage: we found proof from comparison that our own [holy sites] are holier than those in foreign places.

Obviously Gregory did not endow pilgrimage to Palestine with contemplative value; for him seeing the holy places, which is the essence of the religious experience of pilgrimage, was of no importance for the Christian faith.<sup>152</sup>

This opinion was certainly not universal in Gregory's day. The most prominent figure giving weight to and promoting the holy places of Jerusalem as a means to strengthen Christians' faith—in what might be termed the "theology of landscape"—was Jerusalem's Bishop Cyril, whom Gregory would probably have met during the Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>153</sup> Gregory's *Letter 2* possibly echoes a direct or indirect debate between the two, and a brief account here of Cyril's attitude toward the role of the holy places seems in order. It may shed some light on Gregory's attitude in *Letter 2*, explain some of the contradictions in his opinions, and elucidate the reason for his ferocious verbal attack on the people of Jerusalem.

#### CYRIL AS PROMOTER OF JERUSALEM

In the mid-fourth century, the bishop of Jerusalem had good reason to be frustrated. He lived in an era when Christianity had already marked its triumph by locating its collective memory in his city and sanctifying its near landscape, with masses of pilgrims flocking to the city's grandiose new churches. In such an atmosphere he might well have expected the status of his city to be enhanced; yet its universal ecclesiastical status remained inferior. Indeed, the seventh canon of Nicaea (325), while decreeing the succession of honor of the bishop of Jerusalem, still acknowledged Caesarea as the metropolitan see in Palestine. Unable to tolerate Jerusalem's subordination to Caesarea, Cyril launched a bitter struggle for his see's primacy in Palestine.<sup>154</sup> Drawing on the city's heroic past, he declared his bishopric an apostolic see.<sup>155</sup>

152. On the visual experiences of pilgrims in late antiquity, see Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, 102–33.

153. For the list of bishops who participated in the Council of Constantinople, see C. H. Turner, "Canons Attributed to the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381," *JThS* 15 (1914): 168–69.

154. For Cyril's conflicts with Caesarea, see Rubin, "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre"; idem, "The Tenure of Maximus, Bishop of Jerusalem, and the Conflict between Caesarea and Jerusalem during the Fourth Century," *Cathedra* 31 (1984): 31–42.

155. Sozomen, *HE* 4.25.

Tirelessly and without sophistry he simultaneously promoted Jerusalem and advanced his own influence and prestige. As emerges clearly from his writings, ecclesiastical politics, theology, visual culture, legend, and deliberate falsification were all harnessed to the ostentatious advertisement of his bishopric. As his ultimate weapons Cyril chose the impact of the surrounding religious landscape as well as the weighty symbolism of the True Cross—the legend of a priceless discovery that originated in the city during his episcopate.<sup>156</sup>

At the beginning of a career marked by many vicissitudes, Cyril of Jerusalem composed one famous epistle—the *Letter to Constantius*—and eighteen *Catechetical Lectures*.<sup>157</sup> Together these constitute the bulk of his meager literary legacy.<sup>158</sup> In his *Letter to Constantius* Cyril describes the “strange phenomenon” that occurred in Jerusalem on 7 May 351: a luminous cross appeared in the sky above Golgotha and extended as far as the Mount of Olives for more than a day. Besides revealing his eschatological scheme and the role of the Jews in it,<sup>159</sup> the letter makes its political agenda apparent. As has been convincingly argued by Jan Willem Drijvers, in reporting this event in a letter to the emperor Constantius, Cyril had a deliberate goal in mind: “Cyril’s purpose in sending the letter was evidently to negotiate a power relationship between Jerusalem and the emperor in order to obtain benefit and privileges, such as a favourable position for Jerusalem and its episcopal see in the conflict with Caesarea.”<sup>160</sup>

This agenda is similarly promoted in Cyril’s *Catechetical Lectures*, de-

156. J. Drijvers, “Promoting Jerusalem: Cyril and the True Cross,” in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Watt (Leiden, 1999), 91–92.

157. On Cyril’s *Letter to Constantius*, see O. Irshai, “Cyril of Jerusalem: The Apparition of the Cross and the Jews,” in *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews*, ed. O. Limor and G. G. Stroumsa (Tübingen, 1996), 85–104 which includes earlier bibliography on Cyril’s life and writings. See also Drijvers, “Promoting Jerusalem.”

158. On Cyril’s life and works, see Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?* 31–34; Irshai, “Historical Aspects of the Christian-Jewish Polemic,” 2:87–90. On redating the *Catechetical Lectures* to 351, see A. Doval, “The Date of Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catecheses*,” *JThS*, n.s., 48 (1997): 129–32. Regarding attribution of the five *Mystagogic Lectures* to Cyril, see E. Yarnold, “The Authorship of the *Mystagogic Catecheses* Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem,” *Heythrop Journal* 19 (1978): 143–61. For the main arguments that have been raised against the attribution of the *Mystagogics* to Cyril, see E. Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (London, 2000), 24–32; Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?* 410–11.

159. For the eschatological dimension of the *Letter*, see Irshai, “Cyril of Jerusalem.”

160. Drijvers, “Promoting Jerusalem,” esp. 87.

livered in the Church of the Anastasis. In these he analyzes the main events in the life and death of Jesus, drawing on geography and the testimony of the Bible, and he highlights the importance of the earthly Jerusalem for the Christian faith. In his teaching, defined as a “testimonial Christology,”<sup>161</sup> he does not seek to convince his audience through profound theological argument but points to the abundant concrete evidence to be found in his city and its environs—evidence clearly visible from the window of the church in which he was preaching. For Cyril, viewing is believing; throughout the series of lectures, he repeatedly emphasizes that proof of the truth of Christianity and the divinity of Jesus as learned from the Scriptures is to be found “among us” (*παρ’ ἡμῶν*) and that the central events of sacred history occurred “here” (*ἐνταῦθα*), in Jerusalem. This motif not only reflects his desire to teach the importance of the historical Jerusalem as the ground of the Christian faith but also indicates his aim to establish the city’s special status and stress the privilege of being in the city.<sup>162</sup>

*Lecture 10.19* lists the biblical testimonies related to the life of Jesus. One series cites the miracles of Jesus; another points to the places—such as the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee—where Jesus and his disciples spent their days.<sup>163</sup> Cyril points to the tangible evidence rediscovered in Jerusalem itself: the holy wood of the Cross, “which is seen among us to this day,” bears witness, and from this place now almost fills the world, by means of those who in faith take portions from it.<sup>164</sup> And he goes on: “Gethsemane bears witness. . . . Golgotha, the holy hill standing above us here, bears witness to our sight: the Holy Sepulchre bears witness, and the stone that rests there to this day. . . . The Mount of Olives bears witness, that holy mount from which He ascended to the Father.”<sup>165</sup> Cyril truly mines the geographical scene to provide religious testimony for the newcomers

161. The term is borrowed from L. Perrone, “‘Four Gospels, Four Councils’—One Lord Jesus Christ: The Patristic Developments of Christology within the Church of Palestine,” *Liber Annuus* 49 (1999): 372–77. On the scriptural witnesses, see P. Jackson, “Cyril of Jerusalem’s Use of Scripture in Catechesis,” *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 438–442.

162. Walker (*Holy City, Holy Places?* 332–33) discusses this matter.

163. *Catech.* 10.19, PG 33: 685a.

164. Similarly *Catech.* 4.10, 13.4 (PG 33: 469a, 777). On the finding of the Cross, see Drijvers, *Helena Augusta*; S. Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross Was Found* (Stockholm, 1991). For the text and translation of the Syriac legend, see H. J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Drijvers, *The Finding of the True Cross: The Judas Kyriakos Legend in Syriac* (Louvain, 1997). Some aspects of this incident in the fourth century and its relation to pilgrimage to Jerusalem are discussed in Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 38–49; Smith, *To Take Place*, 81–83.

165. *Catech.* 10.19, PG 33: 688a.

to his church, together with the biblical memories. In the words of Lorenzo Perrone, Cyril's attitude recalls the idea of the holy places as a "fifth gospel."<sup>166</sup>

In *Lecture* 13.9–22, Cyril finds in the words of the prophets an endless reservoir of proofs for the Crucifixion, but the tangible evidence is in situ. This place—Golgotha—he calls the "center of the earth" (τῆς γὰρ γῆς τὸ μεσώτατον ὁ Γολγοθᾶ), making sure to add that these are not his own words but those of the prophet.<sup>167</sup>

Cyril's proofs for the Resurrection of Christ are deeply rooted in the Scriptures.<sup>168</sup> However, his genius here lies in reinforcing his listener's faith by pointing to the evidence of "the place itself," which can still be seen, as well as "this house of the holy Church," which Constantine built and in which Cyril himself preaches.<sup>169</sup> He draws on the miracles of Jesus, then returns to his reservoir of geographical proof, emphasizing the importance of Jerusalem as the place of the Resurrection. Since another crucial event for Christians, the Nativity, took place outside Jerusalem, Cyril belittles it by noting that although Jesus descended from heaven in Bethlehem, "he returned to heaven from the Mount of Olives." He manipulates his biblical quotations; it is crucial for Cyril to establish a hierarchy of events whereby those occurring in Jerusalem are shown to be more significant. He repeatedly claims that the sites of the Resurrection and the Ascension themselves form part of the proof of the reality of those events, and he stresses the advantage of being near those holy places: "Others only hear, but we see and touch."<sup>170</sup> Turning to the teaching about Jerusalem as the place in which the Holy Spirit descended, Cyril does not overlook Jesus' instruction to the disciples to remain in the city until that event (Luke 24:49).<sup>171</sup>

Two opposing tendencies can therefore be traced in the fourth century with regard to Christian religious landscape. Cyril asserts that physical proofs in the immediate environs can be used to convince unbelievers and

166. Perrone, "Four Gospels, Four Councils," 377, no. 45.

167. *Catech.* 13.23 (PG 33: 801c), 13.28 (PG 33: 805b). On the very idea of *Omphalos* and for further bibliography, see P. Alexander, "Jerusalem as the *Omphalos of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept*," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality*, ed. Levine, 104–19; Irshai, "Historical Aspects of the Christian-Jewish Polemic," 2: 87 n. 201. This issue at a later period is discussed in Schein, "Jerusalem in Christian Spirituality," 252–54.

168. *Catech.* 14.8, PG 33: 832b.

169. *Ibid.*, 14.22–23, PG 33: 856a.

170. *Ibid.*, 13.22, PG 33: 800b. Walker (*Holy City, Holy Places?* 332) points to Cyril's disregard of John 20:29.

171. *Catech.* 16.9, PG 33: 929b.

to strengthen the belief of the faithful.<sup>172</sup> In other words, he is developing a collective sense of identity based on the visual. Gregory of Nyssa, on the other hand, rejects such arguments outright, claiming that his faith was neither strengthened nor weakened as a result of seeing the sites associated with the life of Jesus. Cyril's representation of the holy places of Jerusalem as a primary tool for religious teaching highlights the vast gulf between his own approach and Gregory of Nyssa's. For Cyril, history, myth, and geography are intertwined; he is exploiting the memory of the past and the local setting—both the visual and the imaginative—to prove the truth of Christianity, thus he consistently promotes the idea of earthly sacred space on his home ground, in Jerusalem. For Gregory of Nyssa, the truth of Christianity is not a matter of geography. Though represented in purely theological guise, neither view is in fact divorced from the issue of ecclesiastical power. There is no proof of any face-to-face debate between the two, and the fact is that Cyril's *Catechetical Lectures* were written some thirty years before Gregory's arrival in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he likely made his position known to Gregory during the latter's stay in the city, or in the year 381 at the Council of Constantinople, in which both bishops participated. The reason for Gregory's conflict with church leaders in Jerusalem is rather obscure to us now, but the above discussion points to *Letter 2* as being directed in part against the views of Cyril, who was probably among Gregory's opponents in Jerusalem.

At first glance, Gregory's statements on pilgrimage would appear to be of a purely theological nature, unrelated to any disagreement with Cyril. But three main arguments lead one to conclude that in *Letter 2* personal motivation and involvement creep into his arguments:

1. Gregory's staunch support for local pilgrimage in Cappadocia and his religious motivation for visiting Jerusalem as expressed in the *Life of Macrina* attest that he himself adopted the practice of pilgrimage.
2. The striking contrast between the negative attitude toward the people of Jerusalem in *Letter 2* and his reported joy at seeing the holy places in *Letter 3* attests to a certain ambivalence.
3. The fact that Gregory, in rejecting the religious significance of pilgrimage, does not limit himself to theological arguments but rather combines them with harsh criticism of the contemporary city and its inhabitants shows the extent of his personal involvement. Indeed, *Letter 2* does not deal with the significance of pilgrimage within the

172. *Ibid.*, 10.20, PG 33: 689a.

framework of a theoretical discussion. Given that Gregory's reaction to the practice of pilgrimage followed upon his visit to Jerusalem, we should not divorce the content of *Letter 2*, including its theological dimensions, from its historical context and the hostility Gregory encountered there. It is worth noting that the originality of Gregory's position, and his deviation from the classic set of arguments, resides not in his views on the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem but rather in his promotion of the local network of holy places in Cappadocia. In fact, in opposing Jerusalem, Gregory ingeniously uses the traditional Christian notion of sacred space for his own apologetic purposes.

I see *Letter 2* not as a systematic theological treatise against the practice of pilgrimage but as a polemic against the claim for the superiority of Jerusalem based on the pedagogical role of its holy places, a conclusion that reduces the apparent contradiction between Gregory's attitudes toward local pilgrimage and toward pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It seems clear that Gregory's theological arguments against Jerusalem were advanced largely to undermine the standing of Cyril, the city's bishop, whose aim was to establish the special status of the church in Jerusalem, with himself at its head, on the basis of the geographical proximity of the holy places.

Such a conflict of beliefs on the function of the holy places as that between Gregory of Nyssa and Cyril of Jerusalem was by no means unique in late antiquity. The end of the fourth century and the entire Byzantine period witnessed growing competition between local cults and the holy places in Jerusalem. Gregory of Nyssa, however, was one of the forerunners in this debate, and one of the most radical proclaimers against the holy places of Jerusalem.

#### THE PRIMACY OF THE EAST

Whereas Gregory of Nyssa adamantly denied any link between Palestinian geography and the Christian faith, Gregory of Nazianzus, at about the same time, in much broader terms, was rejecting the entire imaginative geography of the Roman and Christian world and the claims built by various regions upon it. Eloquently and with harsh irony, Gregory argued against "a flock of jackdaws . . . a mob of wild young men, a new kind of gang" joined by "the respected council of elders" who made the claim to the preeminence of the Diocese of Oriens—that is, Antioch. Gregory probably encountered this claim during his stay in Constantinople, an extremely difficult sojourn

that lasted approximately two years (379–81).<sup>173</sup> It is important to note in this context that Gregory's position regarding the question of ordination to the bishopric of Antioch and the objections made by the Egyptian bishops to his election to the bishopric of Constantinople—on the ground that the Nicene canons had forbidden transfers from one bishopric to another—were the immediate reasons for his untenable situation in that city.<sup>174</sup> Plagued by misfortune and deeply hurt, he decided, probably after six months as bishop of Constantinople, to resign during the ecumenical council (381)—all of which he described in *De vita sua*.<sup>175</sup> In response to the claim of his opponents he wrote:<sup>176</sup>

Matters should move along the same course as the sun,  
 Taking as their starting point the place where God  
 Shone forth for us in human form.  
 What? Let us learn not to honour the sun's circular course,  
 But to believe that the incarnate Christ is the first fruit  
 Of our whole race. "But he took this place as his starting point,"  
 Someone might perhaps say, "where there was greater shamelessness,  
 So that he might also easily be put to death there;  
 Thence comes the resurrection, thence also our salvation."  
 Should not those who think like this yield  
 Before those who, as I said, hold the correct views?  
 It was clear from this how utterly arrogant they were.

Certainly, this claim concerning the primacy of the East, granting a supreme role to its geography, is most striking. We are not dealing here with a question of the religious value of holy places or of pilgrimages to certain *lieux de mémoire*. Rather, Gregory is unmasking a sweeping claim to ecclesiastical power on the basis of religious geography, which he utterly rejects. Indeed, in another context he proclaims: "Nature has given us not two suns, but two Romes, beacons of the whole world, one ancient power and one new [Rome and Constantinople]. . . . In their beauty they are equally balanced."<sup>177</sup> In his conception of ecclesiastical power, Jerusalem holds no

173. On Gregory's sojourn in Constantinople, see R. Van Dam, "Self-Representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus," *JThS*, n.s., 46 (1995): 132–42.

174. Socrates, *HE* 5.7–8; Sozomen, *HE* 7.7. For the course of events at Constantinople in which he was involved during the years 379–81, see Bernardi, *La prédication des pères cappadociens*, 226–35; idem, "La composition et la publication du Discours 42 de Grégoire de Nazianze," in *Mémorial Dom Jean Gribomont* (Rome, 1988), 131–43; White, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, xvi–xxiii.

175. I am grateful to Peter Brown for drawing my attention to this text.

176. *De vita sua* 1680–1702 (ed. and trans. White, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 132–35).

177. *De vita sua* 562–67 (ed. and trans. White, pp. 52–53).

place. Who exactly in the East was claiming that it did? Our evidence permits no more than speculation. However, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, who participated in the Council of Constantinople—and was listed first among the bishops from Palestine—would have supported those holding such a view. Gregory of Nazianzus, for his part, totally rejected the idea of religious landscape, asserting that no advantage whatsoever inhered in specific geography. Thus the debate at the end of the fourth century centered not merely on the religious function of the holy places but rather on the extent to which a local leader could build on the local territory of divine grace in order to transform it into a territory of power.