

Demons, evil and liminality in Cappadocian theology

MORWENNA LUDLOW

ABSTRACT

Despite the growing literature on demons in Late Antiquity, there has been no detailed study of demons in Cappadocian theology. This paper argues that demons occupy a liminal place in Cappadocian cosmology: demons were personal, rational beings, who were created good, fell from their original state and became locked into an irreversible habit of willing evil, which contradicted but parasitically co-existed with their nature as part of God's good creation. This liminal status explains demons' use in Cappadocian theology not only to illustrate the power and nature of evil, but also as an exaggerated representation of humans' own condition: especially in preaching and hagiography demons served to highlight the way in which human sin contradicts humans' original creation and to warn humans against the possibilities of locking themselves into a permanent habit of sin.

INTRODUCTION

Demons have increasingly become the subject of scholarly investigation for those interested in late antique religion and in this paper I wish to extend the inquiry to Cappadocian theology. Because of the extent of the Cappadocians' writings and because they write about demons in various contexts (such as cosmology, eschatology and pastoral theology) the Cappadocians' works offer a valuable resource for the deeper understanding of this topic. Nevertheless, this aspect of their theology has not received very much detailed attention – perhaps because it has not coincided with the dominant directions of research on the Cappadocians and perhaps also because demonology has been felt to be difficult to reconcile with the picture of Basil and the two Gregories as sophisticated, urban writers.¹ Most readers of their works will have noticed that the Cappadocians wrote about the devil

and demons; indeed, the specific characteristics of demons meant that “demonic” language played a role in the Cappadocians’ rhetorical construction of their world, particularly with regard to how they portrayed their enemies. But the question is: is such language *merely* a rhetorical construction or does it reflect a fundamental belief in the demonic? If so, what is this belief? What theological implications did it have, for example, for their doctrine of creation and understanding of evil?

This article will try to show not only that the Cappadocian fathers did believe in demons, but that this belief was an integral part of their doctrinal system and played an important role in their pastoral and polemical theology. The discussion will begin with an analysis of the Cappadocians’ cosmology; it will then proceed to an examination of the Cappadocians’ use of the concept of demons in the personal and political spheres. Although the Cappadocians often express themselves in rhetorical, narrative, poetic or other literary forms, I hope to show that “demonic” language cannot be reduced to a mere literary trope. I will argue that their thoughts about demons offer some interesting perspectives on the concept of liminality – a concept which has already been used very effectively to think about late antique concepts of the demonic, although not with specific detailed reference to the Cappadocians.²

DEMONS IN CAPPADOCIAN COSMOLOGY

On a first reading, demons appear much less vividly in the writings of the Cappadocian fathers than they do, for instance, in the works arising out of Egyptian monasticism. Indeed, it might be tempting to assume from some of the Cappadocians’ writings that for these sophisticated, highly-educated men, a “demon” was merely a figure of speech. Thus, when Basil personifies misfortune as a demon in his letters, it is hard to believe that he really thought that a demon directly caused so minor an event as his failing to

meet one of his correspondents or so major an event as the death of a friend's son.³ His comments seem merely to be an artful revivification of the dead metaphor in Greek which – if read literally – would attribute both good fortune (*eudaimonia*) and bad fortune (*kakodaimonia*) to the influence of a *daimon*, a divine or quasi-divine power.⁴ As Robert Gregg remarks in his sensitive account of the *consolatio* form in the Cappadocians' writings, the invocation of demons as the cause of bad fortune “attests more to the power of the genre's conventions that it does to an intellectual lapse on [their] part.”⁵ Furthermore, the Cappadocians refer to both mental illness and epilepsy (“the demonic disease”) as demonic, without appearing to commit themselves necessarily to the direct (or sole) causation of these conditions by a demon.⁶

However, it would be incorrect to conclude from such examples that the Cappadocians had no belief in demons – that is, a belief in autonomous rational beings who possessed a will which was used for bad purposes and who perhaps had a kind of body, albeit a body unlike that of any other creature. Such a belief would not be uncharacteristic of the age they lived in. Peter Brown's work on “popular” piety has shown the prevalence of the belief in demons in late antiquity and the inaccuracy of assuming that such a belief was merely the preserve of those of lower social status.⁷ Indeed, he argues that one reason for Christianity's success was, in effect, that it took a belief in demons seriously and offered to do something about them.⁸ Recent research has shown that a belief in demons was by no means restricted to the undereducated, lower class monks in the Egyptian monastic communities.⁹ There is no reason to suppose that the same argument could not apply to apply to the monasteries and cities of Cappadocia (after all, Evagrius, one of the major architects of eastern Christian beliefs about demons, was profoundly influenced by both Basil and Gregory of Nazianus¹⁰). Furthermore, medical historians have noted how late antique medicine seems to have wavered between the Galenic interpretation of mental illness or

epilepsy as an imbalance in the humors and an interpretation which attributed the conditions to demons. Occasionally, doctors adopted a compromise, hypothesizing that demons exploited weakness in their victims by entering those whose humoral balance was already disturbed.¹¹ In other words, in late antiquity it was not the élite doctors who took a purely naturalistic, Galenic, line and their more superstitious patients who spoke of demons: rather, there was increasingly “no clear-cut division between religious and naturalistic healing in late antiquity.”¹² Even Robert Gregg, whose comments on Cappadocian references to the demonic were noted above, warns that to regard talk of demons as *merely* a nod to a literary convention would be to ignore “the ‘collapsibility’ of Greek and Jewish-Christian demonologies into one another.”¹³

Prima facie, then, it seems possible, even likely, that the Cappadocians believed in demons. This hypothesis is supported by a closer look at their comments about cosmology. As the Cappadocians have left no sustained prose discussion of the place of demons in their theology, it is a case of patching together clues from various sources. However, the general cosmological picture that I will draw in this section is, I will argue, supported by the Cappadocians’ more specific comments about demons with regard to personal human behavior which I will analyze in later parts of this article.

The Cappadocians appear to have followed the basic pattern of belief about evil spirits which had been set out by Origen (most notably in his *On First Principles*¹⁴). According to this belief, God created two kinds of rational being: humans and angels. Both are embodied, although angels (and thus demons) seem to have a different, finer kind of embodiment than humans.¹⁵ One of the angels, Satan, fell and dragged others with him, setting in train a race of fallen angels, the demons, who not only epitomized sin, but plagued human beings, encouraging them to follow them in sinfulness.¹⁶ As Gregory of Nazianzus writes:

[Satan] did not slip alone, but after arrogance destroyed him
there fell with him a multitude, as many as he'd schooled in evil. . .
Therefore there sprang from them evil beings on earth,
demons, minions to the murderous king of evil:
languors, shades, ill-boding phantasms of the night,
liars and revilers, instructors in sin,
bamboozlers, souses, seducers, party-animals. . .¹⁷

In this cosmology, although Satan is the commander of the demons' army¹⁸ and is sometimes seen as giving rise to a race of demons, he is no sense their creator (just as Adam was held to be the father of the human race, but not its creator). The Cappadocians emphasize firmly that Satan is part of God's creation and not a rival *creative* power to God, although, as we shall see, there were other senses in which Satan and his demons were rivals of God.¹⁹

Because they hold that demons and Satan alike were created by God, the Cappadocians believe that these evil beings are ultimately under God's power. Although they admit that demons currently have some power on earth (a theme to which we will return), they assert that Christ's death on the cross was both the means of their defeat and a sign of their final, eschatological capitulation to God – this theme is described with particular vividness in Gregory of Nyssa's *Easter Sermons*.²⁰ The Cappadocians believe that Scripture refers frequently to God's defeat of demonic powers, not only in the book of Revelation, but also – more elliptically – in books like Exodus, the Psalms and even the Song of Songs.²¹ With regard to the New Testament, Gregory of Nyssa takes Philippians 2:10-11 to declare that all rational beings will eventually bow before the name of Jesus – that is, angels “in heaven,” humans “on earth” and demons “under the earth.”²²

The three Cappadocian fathers agree that eventually all demons will capitulate to God, but there are different nuances to their understanding of God's eschatological victory:

Gregory of Nyssa (following Origen's universalism) emphasizes a final harmony in which all rational creation praises God, a view which clearly implies, even if it does not explicitly state, that in the end even demons will be transformed and redeemed.²³ Basil, who rejects Origen's universalistic eschatology and whose theology often has a sterner edge, seems to think that far from being reconciled with God, angry demons will be used by God at the eschaton as the agents of his eternal wrath. Thus he declares that at the "fearful and intolerable tribunal of Christ" the wicked are accompanied by "certain horrible and dark angels. . . flashing fire from their eyes and breathing fire because of the bitterness of their wills, and with a countenance like the night because of their dejection and hatred of man."²⁴ Basil also suggests that souls will be examined by Satan himself.²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus raises both the possibility that demons give humans something to strive against in this life so that humans might be purified and the suggestion that demons are God's agents of punishment in hell:

[Christ] provoked a dreadful struggle between Lucifer and humanity, that he might incur further shame, inasmuch as he was warring against a weaker opponent, whereas his human adversaries, striving through the exercise of goodness, might gain their everlasting glory, being purified like gold in the melting-pots of life. Perhaps also might Lucifer, for all his stubborn resistance, hereafter pay his penalty, his substance consumed, when there is requital by fire, though indeed he was to a great degree subdued before in the persons of his harried minions.²⁶

Despite these differences, all three Cappadocians believe that God has ultimate power over demons. Their writings convey not so much a *desire* for the victory of one power (God) over another, rival, power (the devil and his demons), but rather a *confidence* that in the end God

will order all things as God wills, precisely because God created all things and because all things – including demons – derive their being and power from God.

Despite this ultimate submission of all things to God, the Cappadocians agree that demons still have a real influence on the world, even after the victory of the cross. Gregory of Nazianzus assures his reader that “Had he willed it, [Christ] could have annihilated Lucifer immediately,” even though, in fact, the devil has been permitted to enter a “struggle” with his “human adversaries.”²⁷ His comment, quoted above, that the devil was “to a great degree subdued before in the persons of his harried minions,” perhaps also suggests the idea that this age is an interim period between a decisive battle (the crucifixion and resurrection) and the final completion of the demons’ defeat.²⁸ The complicated imagery and narrative of the book of Revelation might be interpreted to support such an idea (even though the Cappadocians, like Origen, rejected strict millenarian interpretations).

The Cappadocians seem to think it is impossible, however, for humans to know exactly why God should have allowed the existence of evil even after the victory of Christ’s resurrection: in the extract above Nazianzen suggests that God uses demons as a means of enabling humans to “gain their everlasting glory” through striving against temptation; Basil comments that demons’ power in this world is an effect of the restriction of their power to this world because of their exclusion from heaven.²⁹ But neither is presented as a definitive answer. In fact, the general idea that evil is for some reason expressly permitted by God is for the Cappadocians not an idle speculation but a response to a real problem: humans’ continued experience of evil in the world. It is, that is, a second stage of their theodicy. They first explain the existence of evil in a good world created by God by the idea that both demons and humans fell away from the God by their own free will.³⁰ After the fall, humans continued to sin, although they could chose good instead of evil. The assumption of the Cappadocians’ cosmology, however, appears to be that demons have locked themselves into

a habit of vice, such that they cannot choose the good.³¹ Secondly, the Cappadocians appear to explain the *continued* existence of evil in the world after the resurrection by the fact that even though they cannot choose the good, God has allowed demons the freedom to carry out their evil will.³² (They might thus be seen to possess a kind of freedom of action, if not a genuine freedom of will). Demons make use of this relative and restricted freedom to abuse human freedom: as Basil puts it, “the demons, who are enemies of all that is good, use for their own ends such [human] free acts as they find congenial to their wishes.”³³ Hence, evil continues to exist after the resurrection because God allows demons to continue to will evil and humans to cooperate with demons in carrying evil deeds out.

Is it possible mentally to bracket out all references to “demons” (i.e. autonomous rational individuals) in Cappadocian cosmology and to replace them with references to “forces of evil”? In the first place, simplicity argues for the assumption that Cappadocians did *mean* demons when they wrote about “demons.”³⁴ Furthermore, although it might be difficult to understand why God should allow demons a free rein even after the resurrection, at least the Cappadocians could explain this phenomenon in terms of God continuing to allow rational beings a limited exercise of their freedom. But replacing talk of demons by talk of impersonal “forces of evil” would raise problems for their theodicy: if Jesus really defeated the “forces of evil” on the cross, what would evil be doing still working in the world? More fundamentally, what would that evil be?

Both Gregory of Nyssa and Basil agree that evil does not exist as an independent force or power in the universe; rather, evil is a characteristic of a rational being’s choice to turn against God. To the extent that it exists, it exists in the will that chose it.³⁵ This is an adaptation of a negative theory of evil – the idea that, metaphysically speaking, evil has no existence in itself but exists only insofar as it is a privation of the good.³⁶ Since Gregory of Nyssa, for example, thinks of evil “as a spurious existence clinging to being in dependence

on the powers of the created will”, he describes evil in humans with various metaphors which suggest that evil is parasitic on human nature: evil is “a false growth, rootless and unsown,” or “an intestinal parasite,” or a corrupting element which has tainted precious metal.³⁷ But human nature is in itself a part of God’s good creation, so if evil exists as a result of human willing then it exists only insofar as it parasitic on or a privation of something that is good. Evil is evil precisely in that it is a perversion of that which is good.

Although this is an adaptation of the idea of evil as the privation of good, one must be very careful how one understands it. It appears *not* to be the case (for Gregory of Nyssa at least) that evil is thought of in strictly quantitative terms.³⁸ Gregory seems not to think that human beings start off one hundred per cent good, and that for each percentage point of evil they allow to exist in their wills they become correspondingly one per cent less good. Rather, his metaphors suggest a more complex notion, by which the will is conceived as a receptacle which “contains” any evil it commits.³⁹ In this view, evil is a privation of the good that the will could have done and it corrupts the workings of the will so that it is a privation of the good the will should do in the future; but it is not possible to set out an account in which each unit of evil cancels out a unit of good. Rather, Gregory’s point seems to be that the evil *co-exists* with the potential of the soul for good – just as the parasite co-exists with its host or the base metal adds corrupting matter to, but does not take anything away from silver or gold. In another particularly vivid series of images in his work *On Perfection*, Gregory writes that “the person containing each of the opposites [light and darkness] becomes an enemy to himself, being divided in two ways between virtue and evil (διχῆ μερισθεὶς πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν), and he sets up an antagonistic battle line within himself.”⁴⁰ This is because, following Paul in 2 Cor 6.14, Gregory asserts that there can be nothing in common (no κοινωνία) between light and darkness: there is a “distinct and irreconcilable contradiction” (ἄμικτος καὶ ἀμεσίτευτός ἐστιν ἡ ἐναντίωσις) between them; there is “an opposition of

the parts drawn up against each other” (τῆ τῶν ἀντιστοιχούντων ἀλλήλοις ἐναντιότητι); it is “impossible and inconsistent” (ἀμήχανός καὶ ἀσύμβατος) for there to be κοινωνία between them.⁴¹ The co-existence of evil with good does not make evil any less evil (as it would if good and evil were assessed quantitatively), but makes it *more* evil. Gregory admits – in fact he emphatically asserts – that the co-existence of good and evil is a paradox, but his point seems to be that it is precisely the shock of that co-existence which makes evil *evil*: it ought not to be.⁴² To put it another way, there is co-existence, but not κοινωνία between good and evil in the human soul.

By extension from these reflections on evil in humans, one can surmise that the Cappadocians thought that evil came to exist in demons’ wills when they chose to oppose God. Since each being was originally created good, evil is a “fall” of a rational will away from God. All the Cappadocians agree that demons are either good angels who fell or are the offspring of a good angel who fell.⁴³ In other words, the Cappadocians did not construe evil as a rival metaphysical power to God, a power that has existence in and of itself, which to the Cappadocians would entail a Marcionite/Manichaean view of the universe. Rather, by seeing evil as a characteristic of the choices of rational beings – both demons and humans – the Cappadocians are offering an explanation for the continued imperfection of the world, without denying divine love or power.

But an interesting outcome of this position is that, in one sense, demons are not *completely* evil, because evil needs some good in which to exist. Even though their wills are utterly evil because they are absolutely turned against God, there is a sense that these wills exist only insofar they are parasitic on a rational nature which is in a minimal sense good (because it is created and because it exists). Thus, I suggest, for the Cappadocians demons occupy a liminal space: their wills are utterly opposed to God and thus evil, and yet these wills exist in a nature which is part of God’s good creation. They are “between good and

evil”,⁴⁴ not in the sense that they are mid-way between both, but in the sense that their existence paradoxically seems to entail the co-existence of both. They are *not* “quite good”, or “a bit evil”. There is no sum which could express the relative proportion of good to evil. Demons are “between good and evil” in the sense that they are a uncoalesced mixture of the two: they are a hybrid; neither one thing nor the other.⁴⁵ In this theology, evil is evil precisely because it is a denial, contradiction or rejection of the good – not because it is the use of a neutral capacity for good instead of evil.⁴⁶

In the following parts of this paper more evidence will be examined to support the claim that demons are liminal in-between or hybrid being is a credible construal of the Cappadocians’ theology. Here it is worth noting that the idea of the demons’ paradoxical existence between good and evil resonates with (and perhaps further elucidates) some claims made by Dale Martin in his book *Inventing Superstition*.⁴⁷ Martin argues that in late antiquity Christianity developed a conception of demons which was different from both popular pagan religion and earlier philosophical paganism. He begins by tracing one pagan philosophical trajectory of thought according to which *daimones* were thought to be divine, superior to humanity and incapable of anything truly evil. Apparent malevolence was to be explained in various ways all of which rested on the fundamental conception of an ordered universe.⁴⁸ This trajectory existed alongside a more popular world-view in which *daimones* were believed – like humans – to be variously benevolent and malevolent.⁴⁹ Popular religion, which held that the *daimones* should be feared and appeased, was regularly condemned by philosophers as *deisidaimonia* or *superstitio* – “superstition” here relating not to an irrational belief in the supernatural (for Martin rightly argues such a concept is anachronistic), but to an irrational failure to accept the fundamental harmony of the cosmos. On this account, the popular fear of demons is explained by philosophical writers as a failure

to see the bigger picture: apparent harm is in fact to be explained in terms of the good of the whole.⁵⁰

In late antiquity, however, this picture became more complex, and Martin uses the example of Porphyry and Iamblichus as evidence of philosophers who believed in *daimones* both beneficent and malevolent.⁵¹ Christians, on the other hand, seemed to accept the belief in demons, but Martin argues they added a novel element: the notion of *daimones* being “completely evil.” He asserts that in late antique Christianity, besides God and his angels

there is also evil directly attributable to an entire force of the universe in temporary opposition to God – daimons and those under their influence.

Daimons, which include the gods of the nations are completely evil; they are fallen angels exercising their wills against God. Christians must choose either the perfection of the latter or the destruction of the former.⁵²

It is not just the case that all demons are evil, but that they are all *completely* evil: they do not waver between beneficence and malevolence like Porphyry’s and Iamblichus’s *daimones*.⁵³

Martin’s discussion of Christianity focuses on Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea. Our reading of Cappadocian cosmology above complements his account, but offers an opportunity to nuance or spell out what it might mean to assert that for Christians in late antiquity demons were “completely evil.” As Martin argues, in late antiquity there were (at least) two ways of measuring individuals against one another: there was an ontological scale and an ethical scale.⁵⁴ Philosophical pagans (especially, those from the Platonic and peripatetic schools) tended to assume that a being high up on the ontological scale was also high on the ethical scale: for example, the more divine you were, the more supremely good and the more real you were. Those at the top of the scale also tended to be immaterial (or more immaterial), more rational and more powerful. Christianity upset this parallel arrangement of the two scales, by arguing that there were beings who were “completely evil”

(that is at the bottom of the ethical scale), whilst at the same time being ontologically superior to humans. “Ontologically superior” here seems to mean more powerful and being composed of a finer substance, but Martin seems particularly concerned with the notion of the demons’ power.⁵⁵

Martin is right, I think, to argue that the Christians’ concept of demons created a tension between ontological superiority and moral inferiority and this is a very fruitful way of helping one to understand Christians’ complex attitudes to demons: it highlights the point that there is something inherently paradoxical about demonic existence. What I would add to Martin’s account, however, is the point that, according to the logic of the Cappadocians’ theology, demons were also *good* to the extent that they were superior ontological beings (rational, powerful, etc.). Consequently, to say that demons are *completely* or *purely* evil is an judgment on their wills which are utterly opposed to God, but not a judgment on their fundamental make-up or nature. In other words, the tension is perhaps even more profound than Martin’s description suggests. The concept of goodness applied to demons ontologically is not that which describes their moral choices (which are always evil), but derives from the Cappadocian doctrine of creation: anything that exists is good, in that it was created by God. This goodness of creation is particularly evident in the power, rationality and fine constitution of the angels (including those who fell).⁵⁶

From a modern perspective where “good” is used primarily to describe ethical choices it is perhaps odd to make this distinction between ontological and ethical goodness, but understanding such a distinction is necessary in order to make the tensions in the Cappadocian notion of demons fully apparent.⁵⁷ Not only are the Cappadocians saying that demons have wills which are completely opposed to God and are more powerful and with a finer substance than humans (Martin’s point), they are also saying that demons are evil (as to their completely habituated use of their wills against God) *and* possess a good created nature.

On this account, the fact that they are so evil is not just in tension with their superior nature, but it *contradicts* it: they are a living paradox. Their state excites moral outrage and fear precisely because their use of their wills for evil contradicts the sheer goodness of their original state and the potential of their natural state for the good.

Another way to put this is that the Cappadocians' theory of evil illustrates a move in late antiquity (which Martin documents) from what one might call a quantitative to a qualitative or relational concept of good and evil. A being is no longer good/evil according to its distance from the divine, but according to its acceptance or rejection of its creator (a point Martin expresses with his notion of the ethical). But a being is *also* good in its relationship to the divine by virtue of its creation: it is good as to its ontology (a point which I have suggested can deepen the paradox Martin identifies still further). Even though a rational being might reject its creator with its will, it remains related to God ontologically because, in Cappadocian theology, God remains eternally lord of all the created world.

In sum, the Cappadocians seem to think that demons are not “completely evil” ontologically-speaking, because as created beings they are by definition good and because evil is parasitic on or a privation of the good. Demons are, however, held to be “completely evil” in the sense that they have wills which are completely opposed to God (and this seems to be the sense in which Martin uses the expression “completely evil”).⁵⁸ This opposition to God makes demons dangerous. Furthermore, their superior power and their peculiar constitution (being material but invisible) means that they are peculiarly able to draw humans away from God as the demons plummet on their downward trajectory. Thus, as I will argue in more detail below, for the Cappadocians demons are not just a source of what one might call cosmic danger (*kakodaimonia*, e.g. unexpected death, disease, famine or earthquake), they are also a source of *moral* danger through their working on human minds.⁵⁹

There might be a further sense in which demons were thought to be “completely evil”: that is, the idea that they are irreversibly evil and irredeemable, a characteristic which increases the danger they pose to humans.⁶⁰ As I have suggested above, in my comments about eschatology, this is an idea which appears to have been held by Basil, but denied by his brother, Gregory of Nyssa. For Basil the paradox between the demons’ natures (created good) and their wills (fixated on evil) remains in eternity – even though God appears to utilise it for his own ends to punish humans. For Gregory, it seems, the paradox is unsustainable eschatologically, for he clearly seems to suggest that in the end all rational beings will be saved, precisely because God will be able to purify their good natures of the indwelling and corrupting impurities, however severe they are.⁶¹

DEMONS AND PERSONAL TEMPTATION

The Cappadocians’ response to the current presence of evil in the world was often not theoretical (a theodicy), but intensely practical. This theme is particularly prominent in Basil, whose oeuvre contains a large number of pastoral and ascetic writings (including, for example, pastoral comments in his letters and sermons). Whilst firmly emphasizing that the devil and his demons are part of God’s creation, Basil develops the ancient theme of the “two ways”: in the present era, good things come from God and bad things – especially the temptation to sin – from demons.⁶² This idea of the two ways is developed in different ways, some more abstract, others more figurative. Sometimes Basil psychologizes the two ways, so that they are envisaged as two faculties or powers (*dunameis*), “the one wicked drawing us along to their own apostasy, the other more divine and good, leading us up to the likeness of God”.⁶³ At other times, the “two ways” are pictured as two paths, one broad, one narrow, each with its own guide, “a wicked demon” or “a good angel”:

there are two ways opposed to each other, the one wide and broad, the other narrow and close. And there are two guides, each attempting to turn the traveler to himself. Now, the smooth and downward sloping way has a deceptive guide, a wicked demon, who drags his followers through pleasure to destruction, but the rough and steep way has a good angel, who leads his followers through the toils of virtue to a blessed end.⁶⁴

Humans are led along “the smooth and downward sloping way”⁶⁵ through being tempted towards passion. The Cappadocians’ writings offer evidence that Christians thought that the choice between the two paths was most urgent at the moment of death: Gregory of Nyssa’s account of Macrina’s death-bed prayer perhaps alludes to this belief (she prays that an angel of light will lead her to a place of refreshment and that the “jealous one” should not bar her way). So also, perhaps, does Nazianzen’s prayer that an angel of light (and thus not a demon) should “snatch” his deceased mother Nonna to safety.⁶⁶

This idea of the two ways and their corresponding guides or powers (guardian angels and demons) might on a superficial reading seem to imply that there was a rival cosmic power on the same level with God. That this is not the case for Basil and the other two Cappadocians has become evident from the survey of their cosmology above: God is held to be the sole creative power and the creator of the devil and his demons. It is because God has allowed them temporarily to employ their power in the world that humans have the choice between these two ways. Dale Martin helpfully suggests there is a model of patronage at work in this kind of idea: in this Christian view of the cosmos there are *temporarily* two cosmic powers and all humans must choose one as their patron. Indeed, Martin argues that Christianity’s success was bound up with its offer of a patron who would protect his clients against the ravages of the rival power.⁶⁷ This idea seems particularly prominent in the writings of Basil.⁶⁸

It must be admitted, however, that much of the use of this theme of the two ways is fairly conventional and it is difficult to extract from it a clear doctrine of the role of demons. More promising is literature explicitly dealing with the moral life. Although the demons' "art" (*didaskalion*) of vice finds plenty of variety,⁶⁹ the Cappadocians associate it especially with three vices: envy, anger and deceit.

The emphasis on deceit is evident from early Christians' interpretation of the Bible: in their view it was Satan who lied to Eve; his promises to Jesus too were specious. But Basil also warns – in a nice example of the "patron" model – that in the present age the devil "deceives the victims of his plots into thinking that they should flee to him as protector," when in fact what all demons want is "our destruction."⁷⁰ Gregory of Nyssa clearly states that demonic forces bend humans to their will by making evil things seem good so that they are freely chosen.⁷¹ Indeed, he argues, demons work generally by persuading humans to make superficial judgments: by teaching humans to rely merely on evidence which lies on the surface, the demon in fact prevents humans from properly employing their freedom of choice.⁷² Gregory of Nazianzus seems to have a very similar notion of the cognitive effects of demonic power: "Demons tricked a human being to search for divinity precipitously and incorrectly. They offered a light 'deceitful and meddling . . . quite contrary to the true light, though pretending to be that light, that it may cheat us by its appearance (τῷ φαينوμένῳ)' „⁷³

With regard to the second vice, envy, Gregory of Nazianzus reports that it was this that caused Satan's fall:

First of all Lucifer, raised on high (for he aspired to the royal honor of the mighty God, though already granted outstanding glory), lost his radiant splendor and fell to dishonor in this world, becoming total darkness in the face of God (ὄλον σκότος ἀντὶ Θεοῦ). Although of light composition, he yet slipped to this lower earth, from where he displays his hatred against the wise

and, fired by anger at his own ruin, tries to turn all others from the path which leads to heaven. He has no wish that the beings fashioned by God should approach the place from where he fell. He conceived a desire to share with mortals the darkness of his sin. Therefore, the envious one cast out of paradise also the beings who sought glory equal to God's.⁷⁴

While Gregory Nazianzen suggests that the devil fears that humans will in the future succeed in rising while he failed, Nyssen implies that the demons' assaults on humans are provoked by what they see as the special favors already given by God to human nature.⁷⁵ Basil argues that envy was the specific means by which the devil carries out his warfare on humanity: being unable to fight with his own resources, it consistently co-opts human beings into carrying out its evil intentions.⁷⁶ The demons who discovered envy, pass on their discovery (*heurēma*) to humans and thus in effect enroll them into their army.⁷⁷ Basil implies that humans have a choice whether to give way to envy or not, but he is also aware, from a pastoral perspective, that some people become so enslaved by passions like envy that they unwittingly become the dupes of demons.⁷⁸ Thus while the Cappadocians use this Christian story about an original envy to keep alive or perhaps to transform the common belief that misfortune is caused by spirits that envy someone's previous good luck, they also treat the vice of envy as a serious moral danger, originating from the devil, but infecting humankind. It must be resisted.⁷⁹

Anger, the third key vice, seems to be associated with demons partly because – as both Gregory of Nyssa and Basil remark – someone who is in thrall to rage looks as if he is demon-possessed: “do you see how the symptoms of demon-possession are manifested in those in a grip of rage?”⁸⁰ Gregory's description suggests a comparison with someone afflicted by epilepsy (the “demonic disease”): whether he thinks that the disease is directly caused by a demon or not, he carefully notes that someone who is ill is an unwilling victim of

his uncontrollable and violent bodily movements and is thus deserving only of pity. People who are angry, however, even though they have been attacked by the “demon of rage” (ὁ δὲ τοῦ θυμοῦ δαίμων) are complicit with the demon: they allow themselves to become angry; it is a “voluntary evil”; they willingly imitate and aim to surpass the anger of the one with whom they are arguing.⁸¹ Even though Basil uses the language of anger entering one’s soul and of anger overcoming one, he is clear that the angry person is ultimately responsible for giving way to it.⁸²

All three vices exemplify the quality which the Cappadocians see as epitomizing what is wrong with demons’ relationship with humans – that is, their skill at a kind of false mimicry.⁸³ Their *deception* of humans involves them mimicking the truly good by showing humans something whose goodness is only skin-deep; *envy* encourages humans to aspire to be something which they are not and cannot be; *anger* causes them to imitate and replicate the anger of an opponent even when there is no rational cause. This kind of mimicry, the bringing about of something which simultaneously is and is not what it seems to be, typifies the liminal or hybrid state in which demons are thought to dwell: just as demons epitomize the evil use of something good and thus sit uncomfortably in between good and evil, so things both are and are not the way that the demons claim them to be. One might be tempted to say that demons makes things *appear* one way, when actually they *are* another, but the situation is perhaps a little more complex. If, in ancient ethics (especially Aristotelian ethics) something is good according to its context, it is possible that something could be good in one context, but not in another. The demons’ deception thus lies not in making something that is obviously bad obviously good, but in confusing human minds about the context: is this the kind of context that makes this kind of action a good or a bad one?

The examples of envy and anger might also suggest that the Cappadocians’ belief that such passions were caused by a demon placed passions on the boundary between one’s self

and the “other.” The psychological fact that the onset of a passion was often experienced as coming from outside, together with the fact that the gospels depicted Satan tempting Christ, allowed monks to understand temptation as a universal human experience. This helped them avoid extreme self-denigration. Furthermore, the (not necessarily self-conscious) process of externalizing passions by personifying them as demons helped monks to develop strategies for countering them.⁸⁴ On the other hand, the recognition that one either could, or could not, give way to passion/a demon and let it take root in one’s soul still left room for moral responsibility. Believing a passion to be a demon did not absolve one from blame if one gave in to it; rather it provided one with an enemy to face and counter-attack. Basil describes the interplay between human moral vulnerability and responsibility when he reports the way in which anger is experienced as “attacking us from without.”⁸⁵ Demons “make. . . the eyes of envious persons serviceable to their own purposes;” so, Basil counsels, use reason to curb anger before it gets a hold; refrain from capitulating to envy lest one “makes oneself a tool for the dread demon.”⁸⁶ He is impatient with excuses: someone who blames his rage on the person who provoked him is no less contemptible than “an adulterer who passes on the blame to his mistress, alleging that she led him into sin.”⁸⁷

Thus Basil and indeed the other Cappadocians portray demons as “waging furious war on humanity” – a war from outside which must be resisted by reason. However, they also picture passions as arising from *within* a person’s own soul and for this they use the language of demons taking up residence there: a demon can be “an inhabitant” (*enoikos*) of one’s soul, a demonic “flat-mate” (*sunoikos*) of one’s own self.⁸⁸ Demons can even be brought to birth, alien-like, within us.⁸⁹ These very physical picturings of demonic possession remind the reader of the ever-present danger of demons – the way they operate is more like a fifth columnist, rather than an attack on an open front. Nevertheless, even this more insidious

form of attack does not absolve people from blame: they simply need to be very aware of their vulnerability.

Another theological resonance of the Cappadocians' language about indwelling demons is the way in which they either implicitly or explicitly set it against the idea of *divine* indwelling. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus writes:

if he [the devil] finds in you a place [the soul], swept and garnished indeed, but empty and idle, equally ready to take in the one or the other (τούδε ἢ τούδε) who shall first occupy it, he makes a leap into it, he takes up his abode there (εἰσώκισθη). . . And therefore the possession (ἡ κατάσχεσις) is more secure to him who dwells there (τῷ οἰκῆτορι).⁹⁰

Here Gregory seems to be creatively drawing not only on the common notion of demonic possession, but also on the Pauline idea of being a temple in which *God* can dwell (see 2 Cor 6.16: “What agreement has the temple of God with idols (εἰδῶλων)? For we are the temple (ναὸς) of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them (ἐνοικήσω) and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ ”).⁹¹ Gregory implies, therefore, that either God or the devil (τούδε ἢ τούδε) can dwell in someone. A similar idea is expressed in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (in which Solomon is a type of Christ):

If you had once been the “tents of Kedar” because the ruler of the powers of darkness dwelt in you (τοῦ ἐνοικήσαι ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους). . . you will become the “curtains of Solomon,” that is, you will become the King's temple (ναὸς) with King Solomon dwelling (ἐνοικήσαντος) in you.⁹²

The fact that demons are able to attack humans both from inside and outside furthermore suggests that they have a peculiar constitution: they have material bodies but of such a fine “stuff” that they are invisible and can easily inhabit other bodies, whether human

or animal or inanimate. The Cappadocians write little specifically about demons' bodies, but their general discussion of the demonic seems to bear out the conclusions drawn by Gregory Smith who shows convincingly that demons were assumed to have bodies in late antiquity, although "few temptations have been as attractive (or productive) as the psychological interpretation of demons, especially Christian ones."⁹³ Rightly reminding us that "being invisible. . . is not the same as being immaterial," Smith's argument shows how the theory of a fine or special demonic body enabled writers to fit demons into a nexus of medical, psychological and spiritual explanations of human behavior.⁹⁴ In other words, talk of demons was not (as a modern reader might assume) a last-ditch or non-philosophical recourse to supernatural causation which could explain the otherwise inexplicable; rather it was part of a "natural" explanation of things (or, better, an explanation in terms of the created order).⁹⁵ Furthermore, although, as I have shown, the Cappadocians do use the language of demons being "inside" and "outside" their victims, one should perhaps be a little wary of transposing our very clear modern conception of what it inside and outside the self to late antique concepts of the person. Rather than being an oddity or a challenge to a Christian sense of a clear boundary between one's self and everything which is external to oneself, perhaps Cappadocian conceptions of the working of the demonic actually provide further evidence for a more "porous" concept of the self in this milieu.⁹⁶

Consequently, the belief that demons have bodies, but of a strange intangible kind, and the belief that they are both "inside" and "outside" humans, are both reflections of the Cappadocians' beliefs about the deceptive liminality of the demonic: demons are created but sometimes behave and try to act as if they were not. This false and hopeless attempt to usurp divine privilege was the cause of their fall and, as we shall see, is the basis of their most wide-ranging deception – pagan religion.

EXORCISM

Although the Cappadocians think that God has allowed demons a temporary continued ability to plague humans, these theologians also emphasize that demons can be resisted with God's power. This power can become effective especially in those who fast, and pray; it has its most dramatic effect in those who utter the name of Christ in exorcism.

Basil advises that fasting and prayer are effective against demons.⁹⁷ The Psalms too are a "citadel against the demons" (ψαλμὸς δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον), the recitation of the 90th Psalm, for example, having an almost amulet-like power to ward off the "noon-day demon" (δαιμονίου μεσημβρινού).⁹⁸ Of similar power are baptism (more specifically the chrism given at baptism) and the sign of the cross.⁹⁹ Of most potency, however is the name of Christ: on the lips of martyrs, it causes angels to rejoice, but "wounds" demons.¹⁰⁰

Human power over demons is used by the Cappadocians as a sign both of God's lordship and as an indicator of an individual's own spiritual character. Hence, the fact that Jesus casts out demons is proof of his full divinity: the Cappadocians stress that in exorcising he acts with the Father and the Spirit (who is therefore also fully divine).¹⁰¹ Saints who cast out demons, on the other hand, do so in the name of Christ or by the power of the Spirit: in hagiographical literature, demons are portrayed as obeying the ministers of God. For example, Gregory of Nyssa depicts Gregory Thaumaturgus as having complete power over demons, the saint even on one occasion proving his point by commanding demons to re-enter a pagan shrine which he had just exorcised! In this case, surely recounted by Gregory with a smile, the Wonderworker demonstrated the extent of his authority to the stunned priest (who had himself just failed to make the demons re-enter the shrine) not by any elaborate theurgic ritual, but more prosaically by the writing of a note: "Gregory to Satan: enter!"¹⁰²

Interestingly, Gregory of Nyssa does not just attribute power to exorcise demons to the great saints of the past, but also to his siblings Macrina and Basil, although the low profile given to

such exorcisms, may suggest a caution deriving from an anxiety not to be associated with Messalianism.¹⁰³

These examples may help one to explain a little more carefully the way in which demons are temporarily both in and out of divine control. As we saw above, all three Cappadocians think that, eschatologically, demons will submit utterly to God; in the meantime, they, like humans, have been allowed some use of freedom and rationality. It seems from the examples studied here that it is when humans *freely cooperate with the demons* that the demons have temporary power in the world: in Basil's words, "the demons. . . use for their own ends such *free* acts as they find congenial to their wishes."¹⁰⁴ This is exemplified both in the private sphere – when someone allows himself to be taken over by envy or anger – and in the public sphere – when communities allow themselves to be deceived into the worship of demons. In both cases humans are deceived, but there is a strong presumption that they are culpable for, or implicated in, their own deception. The Cappadocians' virtue ethic incorporates the idea that humans can compromise themselves morally in such a way that in the long run they find it almost impossible to resist evil/demons. Therefore, just as Aristotle's drunk man is responsible for his unwitting actions because he allowed himself to get drunk, there seems to be an assumption in Cappadocian theology that humans have a duty, by working towards virtue, not to make themselves ready victims for the demons.¹⁰⁵

Conversely, it is when humans *freely cooperate with God* that the divine power is able to prevail. This is illustrated most dramatically in the case of exorcism, where it is God's power that defeats the demon but always through some kind of human agency, even the minimal act of uttering the name of Christ. But it is also evident in the moral sphere, when Christians are urged to use pray and ask for God's grace, or warned not to be taken in by heretics: none of these injunctions make sense without the sophisticated notion of humans

working with God (*sunergeia*) which is a hallmark of Cappadocian theology.¹⁰⁶ To this extent, then, humans do have a choice between God and demons: for the Cappadocians it is a choice not only of which patron one should submit to or obey, but also in a more profound sense of which power one allows to work through one. Thus stories of exorcism are used by the Cappadocians as an expression of the kind of theodicy we noted above: even though one cannot explain why demons have been given room for maneuver, one can draw from the stories assurance that God (through his agents) is ultimately master over them. Stories of saints like Gregory Thaumaturgus are not just stories about the past, but pointers towards an eschatological victory still to come. However, the stories also call the audience to participate in God's work and to resist the work of the demons in their own small, personal way: there is a strong ethical as well as eschatological dimension to them.

Finally, examples of exorcism are used by the Cappadocians not only to say something about divine power and human agency but also to illustrate an further paradox: despite being masters of deception, demons know the truth about God. Thus Gregory of Nazianzus states that "the demons knew that He who drove them out was God, for they were persuaded by their own experience" and Gregory of Nyssa cites the case of Legion (Mark 5, Luke 8) to show that "the voice of the demons says 'We know who you are, the Holy One of God'."¹⁰⁷ Basil declares against Eunomius that even "the devils themselves do not deny that God exists."¹⁰⁸ The case of exorcism thus illustrates my earlier argument. To know God, one must have a faculty which is in some ways functioning properly: it cannot be *completely* evil; in allowing the demon to know God it is functioning as God intended it; it is part of God's good creation operating – in this limited way – well.¹⁰⁹ So the fact that demons know that God alone is God, yet choose to deceive humans as to that fact, is a further example of demons' liminal position in Cappadocian theology: demons are not completely evil in an ontological sense, but are certainly working in complete opposition to God. Ethically, then,

one would want to say they are completely evil. But this has personal as well as cosmological implications. Since the Cappadocians emphasize that a rational being could know God and yet refuse to worship him, stories of demons are used by the Cappadocians to draw humans' attention to the real *possibility* and *danger* of falling, especially, perhaps, for those who thought they were safe. Thus when their cosmology grapples with the idea that a perfect being might fall, it is directly connected to the problems of sin in everyday life:

I fear to ascribe sin to the attendants of the pure one who rules on high, them who are a form of being sated with light, in case I should somehow pave a way to evil for still more beings.¹¹⁰

DEMONS AND "PAGAN RELIGION"¹¹¹

The important role which demons play in Cappadocian theology can be seen not only in their concept of the history of salvation (a cosmological perspective) and their reflections on vice and temptation (generally, a personal or private perspective), but also in their comments on paganism (what one could see as a public or political perspective). Above we discussed the question of why God allowed demons to continue to act after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In the public sphere, however, the same general question finds a more precise focus: the issue of why God allowed demons to continue to act was connected to the question of why God allowed the continuation of pagan religious practices.

The identification of pagan gods with demons picks up a theme used by earlier Christian writers such as Justin Martyr and Origen.¹¹² The Cappadocians justify the equation in several ways. Firstly, as Gregory of Nazianzus points out, the pagans frequently referred to their own gods as *daimones*.¹¹³ Secondly, the Cappadocians cite Ps. 95.5 (LXX): "all the gods of the nations are demons" (πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν δαιμόνια). They gloss this verse by asserting that demons have fooled human beings not only into serving them, but also

into calling them “gods” when they are neither God, nor his agents.¹¹⁴ In particular, the Cappadocians associate this demonic deception with idolatry.¹¹⁵ The problem is, as Basil puts it bluntly, that “whenever [the mind] yields to those who deceive it [i.e. the *daimones*], having obscured its own judgment, it becomes involved in strange fancies. Then it even thinks that wood is not wood but God; and it considers that gold is not money but an object of worship.”¹¹⁶ Even worse is the association of idol-worship with the offering of sacrifice.

Gregory of Nyssa asks:

For who is there that does not know that every part of the world was overspread with demoniacal delusion which mastered the life of man through the madness of idolatry; how this was the customary rule among all nations, to worship demons under the form of idols, with the sacrifice of living animals and the polluted offerings on their altars?¹¹⁷

The Cappadocians were also concerned with the place of augury in Roman religion. Gregory of Nyssa is typical in explicitly claiming that all the means by which certain persons claim to predict the future – “through divination by the examination of livers, or by watching the flight of birds, through omens, through the summoning of ghosts, through astrology” – all these are deceptions controlled by demons.¹¹⁸ This argument is crucial to understanding Christian attitudes to pagan religious practices in late antiquity: they do not pursue a reductionist argument that, because “wood is wood,” pagan worship involves nothing beyond the visible. Rather, the Cappadocians argue that pagans worship spiritual beings, but that they misidentify who they are (thinking they are gods, not demons) and incorrectly assume they are permanently located in or associated with certain material objects. Pagan religious practices are either totally unreliable or appear to “work” because the demons respond to theurgy and allow priests to predict the future frequently enough in order to make their general deception credible.¹¹⁹ Once again, then, we find the notion of a deceptive mimicry:

the demons pretend to be divine when they are not and pretend to offer their devotees good when all they can give is evil.

The Cappadocians provide several vivid warnings against trusting the demons' apparent beneficence. Gregory of Nyssa's encomium on Gregory Thaumaturgus gives dramatic narrative form to the warning that if demons respond to prayers, it is not to a good end. Nyssen describes how, at a feast in honor of a "local demon" (δαίμονι τινι τῶν ἐγγχωρίων) virtually the whole population gathered in the city's theatre for a celebration involving a play.¹²⁰ So great was the crowd jostling for the best view that the actors were inaudible and the whole production was halted. In exasperation a general cry went up from the crowd: "Zeus, give us more room!" Gregory Thaumaturgus immediately dispatched one of his disciples, warning them that they did not know what they were asking for – but to no avail, for soon the city was engulfed by a terrible plague which created plenty of space in the city, by decimating the population.¹²¹ Gregory of Nyssa thus implicitly contrasts the pagan "gods" who gave people what they want, even if it is bad for them, with the Christian God who will not give people what they ask for if it is harmful.¹²²

Whilst demons are connected with pagan religion primarily in terms of this kind of deceit, the Cappadocians also use the well-worn Christian argument that, as Nazianzen puts it, "the 'gods' and 'demons' (as they themselves style them). . . stand convicted by their own theologians of being affected by evil emotions, of being quarrelsome, of being brimful of mischief in all its varieties."¹²³ In other words, the traditional myths as recounted by "theologians" such as Homer and Hesiod, depict the "gods" as instantiating the passions with which – as we saw in the previous section – Christians thought demons tempted humans.

The Cappadocians frequently connect pagan gods not only with vice but with a mixed or hybrid nature and they refer to pagan beliefs and practices to reiterate this point. Thus Gregory of Nyssa, for example, distinguishes the Christian Son of God from pagan divinities

in that Christians hold that the Son *is*, rather than merely *participates in*, the divine. In one of his books against Eunomius Gregory writes:

So it is that those who string together myths in verse depict people such as Dionysius, Heracles, Minos and others like them from the bonding of spirits with human bodies, and elevate such people above the rest of men by reason of the superiority which comes from participation (*metousia*) in the higher nature. This word [*metousia*] therefore should be passed over in silence, as originally a proof of folly and impiety. . . ¹²⁴

Gregory's argument here has several strands. First, he asserts that a hero like Hercules is at most only half-human and half-divine, even according to the claims of the poets who praise him. Secondly, since there can be no degrees of divinity in Christian theology (one of the overarching themes of *Against Eunomius*) Hercules is, in fact, not divine at all, but a created demon. Thus, the poets' stories of hybrid demi-gods fall short of the truth (for Christians, there can be no such thing as a demi-god), yet nevertheless do reflect something of demons' hybrid or in-between nature. Thus Gregory certainly thinks that the myths reflect the idea that demons occupy an odd "in between" cosmological space, as we saw illustrated above. Not only are they "between good and evil", but they act as if they were god(s), when they are not. ¹²⁵

Gregory of Nyssa claims that the demons'/pagan gods' nature is illustrated not only by stories of couplings between gods and humans, but by tales and artistic representations of strange animal-human hybrids. He draws attention, for example, to the bizarre paintings and sculptures of Egyptian religion:

they say that their fantastic mode of compounding their idols, when they adapt the forms of certain irrational animals to human limbs, is an enigmatic symbol of that mixed nature which they call "dæmon," and that this is more subtle

than that of men, and far surpasses our nature in power, but has the Divine element in it not unmingled or uncompounded, but is combined with the nature of the soul and the perceptions of the body, and is receptive of pleasure and pain.¹²⁶

Again, this argument is more complex than it might at first seem. Gregory here repeats the idea that the representations of the gods, although essentially false, do at least contain a grain of truth in revealing the objects of pagan worship as having a nature which is in between or hybrid – that is, in his terms, demonic. But his reference to an “enigmatic symbol” might refer specifically to the kind of philosophical justifications of polytheistic religious practice found in writers such as Iamblichus, who rejected any simplistic equation of material images with the divine, but argued for their vital role in ceremony as symbols of, or objects that could be infused with, the divine.¹²⁷ If this is so, Gregory’s response is noteworthy. He does not argue that the Egyptian idols are mere matter, empty of any power or signification. Rather, he agrees that they *do* symbolize something (and elsewhere implies demons can indwell temples, if not idols¹²⁸), but radically disagrees with Iamblichus on the question of whether the beings that the images symbolize are worthy of veneration.

Finally, Gregory of Nyssa comments not only on the compound nature of pagan *daimones*, but also on their plurality: when deceptive *daimones* presented themselves in various visible forms, he asserts, the Egyptians reckoned each form to be a separate god.¹²⁹ Gregory actually defines pagan superstition (*deisidaimonia*) as the worship of *many* gods/*daimones* (as opposed to atheism, which is the worship of none).¹³⁰ The Cappadocians play on the common Greek cultural association of plurality with imperfection when they write about pagan religion, for instance complaining that pagan religious practices derive from very many different ethnic and geographic roots (so they are not even truly “Greek” or

“Roman”).¹³¹ Furthermore, the error of a plurality of gods is taken to lead inevitably to plurality of opinion:

The difficulty is that the pagans hold radically opposed views on the same subjects, like children playing in the marketplace or men who are really possessed by evil spirits (ἢ ἀνδρῶν κακοδαίμωνων ὡς ἀληθῶς) – not like people who are in conversation with men of reason, worshippers of the Word.¹³²

The dissension amongst worshippers implicitly matches the “quarrelsome” nature of the gods themselves which was noted above. In a more humorous vein Gregory of Nyssa ridicules birth myths about gods by comparing the parent god to a sow who farrows multiple piglets.¹³³ Such comments often function at a rhetorical rather than a philosophical level, not least because the Cappadocians want to avoid condemning multiplicity *per se*, because as Christians they regard the visible, multiple, material world as good. Nevertheless, they do seem to express the idea that the plural is not worthy of worship. They are careful to construe their doctrine of the Trinity in such a way as to avoid the idea that Father, Son and Spirit can be counted in the way that three created objects could be counted.¹³⁴ Similarly, they want to avoid the idea that the three persons mediated between the pure single nature of the divine and the multiplicity of the world in a way not altogether different from the way in which some devout pagan philosophers regarded the pantheon gods as mediations between the world and a single divine principle. This may be why, in his poem on demons, Gregory of Nazianzus is emphatic that the God he worships is “one.”¹³⁵

Thus, in claiming that “all the gods of the nations are demons,” the Cappadocians are able to pursue three main lines of argument. First, they claim that demons are deceptive, for they claim to be gods (or at least, worthy of worship) when they are not and they promise benefits to their devotees which they do not deliver. Second, demons are not only deceptive,

but viciously passionate – another reason why they are unworthy of worship. Thirdly, although the more sophisticated accounts of polytheistic religion argue that the material objects used in worship are symbols of something other than themselves, Gregory of Nyssa asserts that really this symbolic representation reveals the pagan gods or *daimones* for what they really are: created, mutable, hybrid, in between heaven and earth, plural and causing of division. Far from attacking polytheism by *denying* the existence of any invisible being other than God, the Cappadocians attack it by admitting the existence of such beings, but denying they are worthy of worship.¹³⁶

Naturally, the construction of the category of the demonic as hybrid, deceptive and dangerously liminal, served a very useful purpose for the Cappadocian fathers: they were able to use this category in quite a sophisticated way against their theological enemies (both Christian and not) so as to accuse them of spreading not only error, but confusion, deception, division and danger. But although one can detect a sophisticated rhetorical strategy here, it is important not to regard the identification of paganism with the demonic as *mere* rhetoric. Given the arguments that I have outlined above, it is reasonable to assume that a belief in demons was not just useful but vital for the Cappadocians' attack on contemporary pagan religion.

CONCLUSION

This outline of demons' place in Cappadocian theology indicates, I suggest, several reasons why demons were so feared and why they were such a powerful tool in Christian discourse. Firstly, reminders of their original angelic nature with its rationality and fine substance stressed demons' power: they were not just evil, but influentially and dangerously so. Secondly, their paradoxical nature, in which evil came to exist even in what was truly good, illustrates the sheer offence of the nature of evil itself: the choice of evil was seen not

as a choice of one of two things of the same kind, but as the rejection, the denial, the abnegation of a pre-existing good – which continued to exist even in the face of its rejection. Demons were evil because they were the most excellent part of rational creation and fell – and yet they *remained* part of rational creation. Thirdly, the demons’ liminal position in this respect reflected the dangers of human existence. The Cappadocians, like other Christians, believed that the current state of human existence contradicted their original creation and that henceforth humankind existed as a tension between good and evil. The drama of the demons’ creation and fall, therefore, showed that they were to be feared not just because they were powerful, but precisely because their predicament was an exaggerated version of humans’ own (although unlike the heroes of a tragic drama, they were fully responsible for their freely-chosen fate). In preaching, then, demons served as a warning, because their situation – being rational creatures who were locked into a habit of evil choices and who were yet given the freedom to carry those choices out – signalled the possibility that humans too could lock themselves into their own lives of sin. Finally, the demons’ actions as well as their nature were hybrid and again this fact was taken to be an exaggerated reflection of the possibilities of human behavior, both public and private, individual and corporate: in Cappadocian pastoral theology it seems that the most acute moral danger was something which masked evil behind an apparent good; something which falsely mimicked the good; something which arose when a good thing was done for an evil end. They thought that the danger of evil was at its most potent when evil was mixed with good. This did not produce a fifty-fifty blend of mediocrity, but an outrage: the continued presence of evil within the good. For the Cappadocians, demons and their works were a vivid reminder of this fact.¹³⁷

Morwenna Ludlow is Lecturer in Patristics in the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Exeter, UK.

¹ Dayna Kalleres remarks *a propos* of Gregory Nazianzus that “in light of Gregory’s two accepted roles as rhetor and as theologian, it is with little surprise that any evidence suggesting the Cappadocian’s involvement with anti-demonic incantations has been downplayed” (Dayna S. Kalleres, “Demons and Divine Illumination: A Consideration of Eight Prayers by Gregory of Nazianzus,” in *VC* 61 (2007), 160). One can appropriately apply to the other two Cappadocians her comment that scholars reading Nazianzen have tended to focus on either theology (“Trinitarian doctrine or. . . his invocation of Platonic conceptualities filtered through an Origenist system”) or the writer’s “self-identification as a member of the educated elite” (*ibid.* 160, n.9).

² See especially Rebecca Lyman, “2002 NAPS Presidential Address: Hellenism and Heresy,” *J ECS* 11.2 (2009): 209–22; Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The trickery of the fallen angels and the demonic mimesis of the divine: aetiology, demonology, and polemics in the writings of Justin Martyr,” *J ECS* 12.2 (2004):141-71.

³ See Basil *ep.* 1.28; *epp.* 2 and 3 to Nectarius and the wife of Nectarius, respectively, on the death of their son. c.f. Gregory of Nazianzus, *ep.* 195.6.4.

⁴ On the convention in pagan epitaphs of attributing death to “the jealous one,” see G. Bartelink, “BASKANOS designation de Satan et démons chez les auteurs chrétiens,” *OCP* 49/2 (1983): 399-401, noting how Gregory of Nazianzus adapted the theme.

⁵ Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy. Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories*. Patristic Monograph Series, no.3 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975):150-151.

⁶ Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG29:280:23-24; Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* III, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (henceforth GNO) II:6:55:7.

⁷ See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, a biography* (London: Faber, 1967), 41: “Augustine grew up in an age when men thought that they shared the physical world with malevolent demons. They felt this quite as intensely as we feel the presence of myriads of dangerous bacteria.” See also, e.g. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 114-15.

⁸ Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 54.

⁹ See e.g. David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: spiritual combat in early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), e.g. 9-11

¹⁰ See e.g. Brakke, *Demons*, 49; Kevin Corrigan does not discuss the Cappadocians’ concept of demons, except very briefly in passing (114), but discusses many other resonances between Gregory of Nyssa’s and Evagrius’ thought: *Evagrius and Gregory. Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Farnham, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

¹¹ Michael Dols, “Insanity in Byzantine and Islamic Medicine,” *DOP* 38 (1984), 145, especially footnote 79, citing Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 97-98

¹² Dols, “Insanity,” 145; see also Vivian Nutton, “From Galen to Alexander, Aspects of Medicine and Medical Practice in Late Antiquity,” *DOP* 38 (1984): 9: it was *Christianity* which “introduced, or re-introduced, into medicine the idea of demons and demoniac possession.... in late antiquity, medical men were willing to consider the intervention of demons and spirits as a cause of disease, and disease as some form of divine punishment for sins, far more openly than they had done in the time of Galen.”

¹³ Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy*, 151. Gregg continues (same page): ‘satanic powers were lively realities to the patristic church, and it was no difficult work for Christian thinkers to

recostume the likes of ὁ φθόνος for their own cosmological dramas. Specifically, the cursings of an envious spirit or malicious demon would have a clear authenticity in the thought of those responsive to the biblical tradition, even if their utterances retained a distinct Hellenic flavour.”

¹⁴ See especially Origen, *princ.* 1.4-8; 2.9-10; 3.2.

¹⁵ On this theme in the fathers see Gregory A. Smith, “How thin is a demon?” in *JECS* 16.4 (2008): 479-512 and (on Evagrius) Columba Stewart, *Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus* *JECS* 9:2 (2001): 176, n. 14: beings’ “bodily compositions are predominantly fire (angels), earth (humans), and air (demons)” – but air (*pneuma*) is not immaterial. Some statements from the Cappadocians seem to suggest that demons have light, airy bodies (see e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, *carm.* 1.1.7 tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana* 6.56-66: Καὶ κοῦφός περ ἔων χθαμαλήν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ὄλισθεν; “Although of light composition, he yet slipped to this lower earth”); but some modern authorities think that at least Basil and Gregory of Nyssa denied that demons had bodies: see A. Kallis, “Geister (Dämonen); C. II. Griechische Väter” in Theodor Klauser et al. (edd.), *RAC* 9, (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1976), 703-4. This issue requires further research, not least on the question of what was meant by “a body”/ “embodiment”.

¹⁶ See e.g. Gregory of Nyssa *anim. et res.* PG 46:72:12-19 (NPNF 5:444).

¹⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7.68-69, 73-77, tr. Peter Gilbert, *On God and Man: The Theological Poetry of Saint Gregory Nazianzus* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 60. It is possible, although not entirely clear, that the phrase “there sprang from them evil beings on earth” refers to the fallen angels’ coupling with the daughters of men to produce an unnatural “inbetween” race; if so, Gregory would be following a Christian re-reading of “The myth of the watchers” in 1 Enoch 7, itself an interpretation of Gen 6.1-4. On earlier Christian use of this myth see Reed, “The trickery of the fallen angels,” 141-71.

¹⁸ See e.g. Gregory Nyssa *res.* 4 (*In sanctum et salutare pascha*) GNO 9:311:14; *hom. in Cant.* GNO 6:166:5 and 421:9-10, Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7.70.

¹⁹ See e.g. Basil *hex.* 6.1.34-8.

²⁰ e.g. Gregory Nyssa *res.* 1 (*De tridui spatio*) GNO 9:298:19 – 303:12 and *res.* 4 (*In sanctum et salutare pascha*) GNO 9:311:9-11. See also Basil *Eun.* 2.27, PG 29:636A-B.

²¹ On Exodus see e.g. Gregory of Nyssa *v. Mos.* passim; on the Psalms, Gregory of Nyssa *Ps. titt.* e.g. GNO 5:126:18 and 140:8; Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG 29:325:7-10; 416:46 – 417:3; 476:7-10; Gregory of Nyssa *hom. in Cant.* GNO 6:141:10 – 142:4; 143:1-4; 166:5-7; 421:8-13.

²² Gregory of Nyssa *an. et res.* PG 46:69:27 – 72:30 (NPNF 5:444).

²³ See e.g. Gregory of Nyssa *an. et res.* PG 46:72:19-25 (NPNF 5:444). For two opposing interpretations of Nyssa's views see Giulio Maspero, *La Trinità et l'uomo* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2004), 176-200 and Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal salvation: eschatology in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner* (Oxford: Clarendon Pr, 2000), 78-85.

²⁴ Basil *hom. in ps.* PG 29:369:7-11, tr. A. C. Way, *Saint Basil: Exegetic Homilies*, FC 46 (Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1963), 263

²⁵ Basil, *hom. in ps.* PG 29:232-33, tr. Way *Basil: Exegetic Homilies*, 167-68, "The noble athletes of God, who have wrestled with invisible enemies their whole life, after they reach the end of life, are examined by the 'prince of the world.' You may learn this from the Lord himself who said concerning the time of his passion, 'Now the prince of the world is coming, and in me he will have nothing' (John 14:30). He who had committed no sin said that he had nothing," cited by Nicholas Constatas, " 'To Sleep, Perchance to Dream': The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature," *DOP* 55 (2001), 105.

²⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7, tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana* 6.88-95

²⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7, tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana* 6.84-5

²⁸ See Alden A. Mosshammer, “Evil”, in L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa VC Supp.* 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 330 for a similar idea in Gregory of Nyssa with regard to the gradual eradication of evil.

²⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7, tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana* 6.88-95; Kallis, “Geister (Dämonen)”, 704 citing Basil *hom.* 9.9, PG31:352A.

³⁰ Kallis, “Geister (Dämonen)”, 701 citing Basil, *hom.* 9.4, PG31:341B and Gregory of Nazianzus, *or.* 39.7, PG36:341B.

³¹ Kallis, “Geister (Dämonen)”, 701 citing Basil, *Homiliae* 9.8 PG31:345D

³² See Vasiliki Limberis, “The eyes infected by evil: Basil of Caesarea’s homily, On envy,” *HTR* 84/2 (1991), 167.

³³ Basil *hom.* 11, PG 31:380:38-40, tr. M. Monica Wagner, *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works* FC 9 (Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1950), 470.

³⁴ See the method employed by Smith: “How Thin Is a Demon?” 482-83: “In the discussion below this serves as a kind of methodological point of departure: when reading or thinking about ancient demons, begin by taking what is said about their nature and activity as literally, as physically, as possible. Of course, even a perfectly sensible literal reading need not exclude metaphor; quite the contrary, but the reverse is truer still, and easier to forget.”

³⁵ Mosshammer, “Evil”, 326-27, citing Gregory of Nyssa *hom. in Eccl.* GNO 5:406:7 – 407:15; *virg.* GNO 8/1:299:12-14; *beat.* GNO 7/2:129:19-22 and Basil *In Hexaemeron* PG29:37C-D.

³⁶ Mosshammer, “Evil”, 327, citing Gregory of Nyssa, *or. catech.* GNO 3/4, 24ff, which appears to be using the concept of *steresis* from Aristotle, *Categories* 12A.

³⁷ Mosshammer, “Evil”, 328, citing Gregory of Nyssa, *Pss. titt.* GNO5:155:5-50; *hom. in Eccl.* GNO5:384:3-15. Base metal: see *hom. in 1 Cor. 15:28* (*In illud: tunc et ipse filius*) GNO3:2:13:22 - 14:7.

³⁸ Although I concede that some of his metaphors do give that impression; see, notably, *hom. opif.* PG44:201B-C. On this passage, see Mosshammer, “Evil”, 329 and Ludlow, *Universal salvation*, 88.

³⁹ Mosshammer, “Evil,” 328.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *perf.* GNO8/1:180:17-20.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *perf.* GNO8/1:180:7-17.

⁴² On this point see Mosshammer’s interesting discussion of Gregory’s discussion of the paradox by which the tree of life and tree of death are both said to occupy the centre of the Garden of Eden – a statement which is mathematically impossible according to the laws of geometry, but which is possible in so far the tree of life exists by nature and the tree of death by privation: Mosshammer, “Evil,” 329, citing Gregory of Nyssa, *hom. in Cant.* GNO 6:348:12 – 351:1.

⁴³ See Kallis, “Geister (Dämonen)”, 701, citing Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 39.7, PG36:341B; Basil *hom.* 9.8, PG31:345D.

⁴⁴ See *carm.* 1.1.7.87, tr. Gilbert, *On God and Man*, 60 (ἀλλὰ μέσον μεθέηκεν ὁμῶς ἀγαθῶν τε κακῶν τε). When, in this poem, Gregory of Nazianzus asserts that Christ could have destroyed the devil immediately, he then says that God “set him loose halfway, between the good and the evil. . .” (ἀλλὰ μέσον μεθέηκεν ὁμῶς ἀγαθῶν τε κακῶν τε: *carm.* 1.1.7.87, tr. Gilbert, *On God and Man*, 60). Sykes suggests this means that the devil lay in between bad people (over whom he had control) and good people (over who he did not): Sykes in Claudio Moreschini and D. A. Sykes, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Poemata Arcana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 212. It could, however, also refer more to the devil’s position between good and evil things: he is rational, powerful and with a degree of freedom, yet he uses these good things to an evil end.

⁴⁵ Compare the way in which Gregory describes the life of a person prone to vice as a “mixed life” (τῶ συμμίκτω βίῳ): GNO8/1:180:13.

⁴⁶ See Mosshammer, “Evil”, 328: for Gregory of Nyssa, “evil is not a self-existing condition that presents itself to the soul as a false object of choice, but an otherwise non-existent condition that the soul constitutes as a possibility for choice by the very act of choosing it”.

⁴⁷ Dale B. Martin, *Inventing superstition: from the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴⁸ Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, chapters 5 and 8.

⁴⁹ Martin *Inventing Superstition*, 98-108.

⁵⁰ Martin *Inventing Superstition*, chapter 3 and 94-98

⁵¹ Martin *Inventing Superstition*, 192-200.

⁵² Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 185.

⁵³ Martin, *Inventing Superstition* 178, 185, 188, see also 179 (“purely evil,” “completely misanthropic”). The claim seems attenuated with reference to Eusebius: demons are “thoroughly evil,” but not as dangerous, because of the Christians’ patron and their imperial patron on earth: 222-3.

⁵⁴ For this terminology see Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, especially 82-3

⁵⁵ Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 182 (Martin’s interpretation of Christian demonology ties it closely to Christian readings of human imperial power).

⁵⁶ It is not clear whether the Cappadocians perhaps have a lingering attachment to the Platonic or Neoplatonic idea that those beings which are more immaterial, more powerful and more rational are in a sense ‘more good’ than those which are not.

⁵⁷ Modern theologians are happy to describe creation as good: see, for example, Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 11-12: ‘Everything made by God is good, indeed very good’, despite the obvious fact

that ‘the world we encounter is very far from good, and seems to present us with a combination of good and evil, so that those religions which have speculated that there are both good and evil divine principles at work in the world have some of the evidence on their side’. However, few modern theologians would subscribe to the Platonic notion of degrees of goodness/reality.

⁵⁸ See also Kallis, “Geister (Dämonen)”, 702: in Origen this contrast is expressed in the difference between demons’ nature and choice.

⁵⁹ The relation in Cappadocian theology of demons to what modern theologians would call “natural evil” requires further research.

⁶⁰ My thanks to Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe for this point.

⁶¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *hom. in 1 Cor. 15:28* GNO3:2:13:22 - 14:7

⁶² Basil *hom.* 11, PG 31:372:23-25, tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 463.

⁶³ Basil *ep.* 233:1:7-11, tr. Roy J. Deferrari, *Basil: Letters* vol. 3, LCL243 (London; Cambridge, Mass: Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1926).

⁶⁴ Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG 29:221:45 – 224:1, tr. Way *Basil: Exegetic Homilies*, 160. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *v. Mos* 2.45-6.

⁶⁵ Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG 29:221:48.

⁶⁶ See Bartelink, “BASKANOS,” 398-400, citing Gregory of Nyssa *v. Macr.* SC 178:224 and Gregory of Nazianzus, *carm.* 2.2.97. On the theme of death as a toll-gate manned by demons, see Nicholas Constatas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream’,” 108, n.58 (again citing Macrina’s prayer). But Daley seems right to contrast Macrina’s peaceful death with accounts of more disturbed deaths where the fight with the demons was more threatening, perhaps suggesting that her prayer owes more to convention than her/Gregory’s sincere belief that her soul was in danger: “‘At the Hour of Our Death’: Mary’s Dormition and Christian Dying in Late Patristic and Early Byzantine Literature,” *DOP* 55 (2001), 75-76.

⁶⁷ See Martin *Inventing Superstition*, especially 224-25

⁶⁸ See below notes 70 and 77.

⁶⁹ Basil *ep.* 160.3.48-9, tr. De Ferrari, *Basil: The Letters*, vol.2, 407.

⁷⁰ Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG 29:416:46 – 417:3

⁷¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *fat.* GNO 3/2:59:6-12. As the whole point of Gregory's treatise is to dissuade people from trusting demonic divination practices, he must assume that people are to some degree responsible for allowing themselves to be duped.

⁷² Gregory of Nyssa, v. *Gr. Thaum.* PG46:937:30.

⁷³ Dayna S. Kalleres, "Demons and Divine Illumination", 179, citing Gregory of Nazianzus, *or.* 40.37, PG36:412:22-25 and (later on the same page), *carm.* 1.1.7 tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana* 6.76 (PG37:446:11).

⁷⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *carm.* 1.1.7 tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana* 6.56-66, c.f. line 71: his fellow-demons "fell through envy of the godly host which serves God who rules on high." Translation adapted by present author: Sykes translates ἀντὶ Θεοῦ "rather than God," but the point is not that Lucifer could have become God, but that compared to God he can be described – by poetic exaggeration perhaps – as total darkness. The question of how one should read Nazianzen's poetry theologically is of course a moot one: should one make allowances for possible exaggeration?

⁷⁵ See Bartelink, "BASKANOS," 398. C.f. Basil *hom.* 11, PG 31:376:7-9; tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 465.

⁷⁶ Limberis, "The eyes infected by evil," 167.

⁷⁷ Basil *hom.* 11, PG 31:380:47; tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 470 - a further example of the patron motif, here within the military sphere.

⁷⁸ Thus Limberis explains Basil's preaching strategy: in order to shake people out of their complacency, he emphasises "the cosmological level rather than... the personal: the devil is

warring with God, and human beings are caught and compelled by the devil to carry out its purpose.” The demons “can ‘compel’ humans,” because of the spiritual blindness and attraction to passion which muddies their free will; until they become aware of their situation they are, in effect, enslaved. Limberis, “The eyes infected by evil,” 168. My thanks to Limberis for discussing her article in detail with me.

⁷⁹ See e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, *carm.* 2.1.11, PG37:1080:3-7 (*De vita sua* 736-740); Basil *ep.* 5 and 6; *hom.* 11, *passim*. Gregory of Nazianzus quotes Euripides to the effect that “ambition” (*philotimia*) is “the worst of demons,” presumably because it is intimately associated with envy: *ep.* 11.3. On the pagan background, see Bartelink, “BASKANOS,” *passim*, and Vasiliki Limberis, “The eyes infected by evil,” *passim*.

⁸⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *beat.* 7:3, PG 44:1284:49 – 1285:14, tr. S. Hall, in H. R. Drobner and A. Viciano (edd.) *Homilies on the beatitudes: an English version with commentary and supporting studies: proceedings of the eighth international colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa VC Suppl.* 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 79. C.f. Basil, *hom.* 10, PG 31:357:12-16 and 372:3-8; tr. Wagner, Basil: *Ascetic Works* 450 and 460. Although there is no direct evidence for this view in the Cappadocians, Evagrius apparently associated demons with particularly thumos, anger or spirit, the third part of Plato’s tri-partite soul along with reason (which Evagrius associates with the angels) and desire (associated with humanity): Stewart, “Imageless Prayer,” 176, n.14.

⁸¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *beat.* PG 44:1285:6-10, tr. Hall, Homily 7.3, 79.

⁸² Basil, *hom.* 10; PG 31:369:1-7.

⁸³ For the connection of false mimicry with demonic hybridity see, for example, Lyman, “Hellenism and Heresy” and Reed, “The trickery of the fallen angels” *passim*.

⁸⁴ Brakke, *Demons*, 77; see also 20-21, 44-47

⁸⁵ Basil, *hom.* 10, tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 447.

⁸⁶ Basil, *hom.* 11, PG 31:380:40-45, tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 470.

⁸⁷ Basil, *hom.* 10, tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 453

⁸⁸ *enoikos*: Basil, *hom.* 10, PG31:372:7; *sunoiikos*: Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.2.25, PG 37:813:6 (of anger).

⁸⁹ Basil *hom.* 10, PG 31:372:7; tr. Wagner, *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 460: anger “is a wicked demon coming to birth in our souls.”

⁹⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *or.* 40.35, (PG 36:409:17-26) (translation adapted from that in Dayna S. Kalleres, “Demons and Divine Illumination”, 180).

⁹¹ 2 Cor 6.16 quotes Ezek. 37.27 : “My dwelling-place (ἡ κατασκήνωσίς) shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”; Paul’s use of ἐνοικήσω is more suggestive for Nazianzen’s theme, rather than the LXX κατασκήνωσίς. See also e.g. 1 Cor 3.17; 1 Cor 6.19 for the idea of being a temple (ὁ ναὸς) for divine indwelling.

⁹² Gregory of Nyssa, *hom. in Cant.* II, GNO 6:47:13 – 48:1, Gregory’s exegesis of the tents (σκηνώματα) of Kedar suggesting he has in mind both the LXX of Ezek. 37.27 (ἡ κατασκήνωσίς) as well as Paul’s use of ἐνοικήσω in 2 Cor 6.16. For the reading of Solomon as Christ, see e.g. *hom. in Cant.* II, GNO 6:17.1-4.

⁹³ Smith, “How thin...?,” 479-80.

⁹⁴ Smith, “How thin...?,” 481-82.

⁹⁵ See Smith, “How thin...?,” e.g. 492, 505-6, 508 and c.f. Temkin on medical and demonic explanations of mental illness: note 11 above. Smith does not discuss the Cappadocians, but what he writes about Origen and Evagrius fits their view of the demonic very well. Given other similarities and intellectual connections between Origen, the Cappadocians and Evagrius, it would be reasonable to assume *prima facie* that they agreed on *this particular question*. Although Origen and Evagrius are arguably less-than-orthodox on some questions,

Smith is right to claim that “Origen’s ideas about fine material demons, however, rank among the least idiosyncratic... of his many speculations.” Smith, “How thin...?” 485.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), Chapter esp. 27, 35-37. My thanks to my anonymous reader for drawing my attention to this point.

⁹⁷ Following Matt 17.22.

⁹⁸ Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG 29:212:49; Basil *reg. fus. (Asceticon Magnum)* PG 31:1016:1

⁹⁹ e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 40, PG 36:377:20-2.

¹⁰⁰ Basil *hom.* 19, PG 31:512:24, presumably referring to Phil 2.10-11.

¹⁰¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *tres dii (Ad Ablabium)*, GNO3/1:50:9; *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii* 223, GNO2:406:9-19; Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 29.20; *or.* 30.11; Basil *Sp.* 8, 16, 19; Basil *moral.* PG 31:756:15ff.

¹⁰² Gregory of Nyssa, *v. Gr. Thaum.* PG46:916:54.

¹⁰³ *v. Macr.* 39.12; *laud. Bas.* 4.

¹⁰⁴ Basil *hom.* 11, PG 31:380:38-40 tr. Wagner *Basil: Ascetic Works*, 470. My emphasis.

¹⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5 (1113b).

¹⁰⁶ See e.g. Ekkehard Mühlenberg, “Synergism in Gregory of Nyssa,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 68 (1977), 93–94; John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1987), 124 and Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1979), 58, 62–63.

¹⁰⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 45, PG 36:661:6-10; Gregory of Nyssa, *v. Mos* 2.294. (In fact, Gregory is here confusing the case of Legion with Jesus’s earlier exorcism, which Basil also refers to for the same purpose).

¹⁰⁸ Basil *Eun.* PG29:612:14-15.

¹⁰⁹ This argument assumes that the Cappadocians think that to “know God” is not simply akin to recognising a person called “God”, but – as the exorcism examples would appear to imply – recognising that God is *God* – that is, that he is good and powerful.

¹¹⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7.37-39, tr. Sykes *Poemata Arcana*, 6.37-39.

¹¹¹ By presenting “pagan religion” in quotation marks, I am acknowledging that this is not a phenomenon recognised by modern scholars (who would stress the diversity of religious practices in late antiquity), but a concept presented rhetorically to the reader by the Cappadocians.

¹¹² Justin Martyr e.g. *2 apol.* 5.4 (see Reed, “Trickery of the fallen angels”, *passim*, especially 144); Origen e.g. *Cels.* 3.2; 3.25; 5.46; 7.65, as cited by Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 178. See also Julien Ries, “Cultes païens et démons dans l’apologétique chrétienne de Justin à Augustin,” in Julien Ries (ed.), *Anges et démons. Actes du colloque de Liège et de Louvain-la-Neuve 25-26 novembre 1987* *Homo religiosus*, 14 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d’histoire des religions, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1989), 339-41.

¹¹³ Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 31.16

¹¹⁴ See e.g. Basil *ep.* 8.3. The Cappadocians are presumably reading this verse with 1 Cor.10:20 (my thanks to Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe for pointing this out).

¹¹⁵ Again, a theme found elsewhere in the fathers: see Ries, “Cultes païens et démons,” 344-49.

¹¹⁶ Basil *ep.* 233; c.f. Basil *hom. in Ps.* PG 29:416:50-1, tr. Way, *Saint Basil: Exegetic Homilies*, 298: “Therefore, the unbelievers flee to demons and idols, having the knowledge of the true God snatched away by the confusion which is produced in them by the devil.”

¹¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa *or. catech.* 18; see also Basil *ep.* 217.81.12 where pagan religion (probably specifically sacrificial practice) referred to as “the table of the demons” (τῆς τραπέζης τῶν δαιμονίων). This connection of demons to sacrifices allows the

Cappadocians to apply to pagan Roman and Greek religion the commands against idolatry and (certain forms of) sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible.

¹¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa *fat.* GNO3/2:59:15-16. Gregory emphatically repeats the phrase ἡ ἀπατηλὴ τῶν δαιμόνων twice in ten lines (59:14, 59:24).

¹¹⁹ Unreliable: e.g. Gregory of Nyssa *fat.* esp. GNO3/2:59.12 – 60.4; 61.18 – 63.11; temporarily supported by demons Gregory of Nyssa *v. Mos* 1.73-4 and 2.292; c.f. Origen *Cels.* 3.31-32; 4.92, 7.69, 8.25-26, cited by Martin, *Inventing Superstition*, 178.

¹²⁰ *v. Gr. Thaum.*, PG 46:956:23

¹²¹ Gregory of Nyssa *v. Gr. Thaum.* PG46:956:22-48

¹²² See e.g. Matt 7.7-11.

¹²³ Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 31.16, tr. Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams in *Gregory of Nazianzus, On God and Christ: the five theological orations and two letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 128.

¹²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 2.619 (GNO1:407:11-18), tr. S. Hall, in Scot Douglass, Lenka Karfíková, Johannes Zachhuber (edd.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II: An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Tenth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, (Brill, Leiden, 2006), 199-200.

¹²⁵ The Nyssen may also be alluding to the Watchers myth, according to which demons were more literally hybrid, being born of the couplings between fallen angels and the daughters of men: 1 Enoch 6-7. Justin Martyr is inconsistent in his terminology, but on one occasion distinguishes demons from fallen angels, in that they are the progeny of fallen angels (the ‘sons of God’) and the daughters of men, as recounted in the Watchers myth: Reed, “Trickery of the fallen angels,” 149.

¹²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 3.10.41 (GNO2:305), tr. W. Moore, NPNF5:246

¹²⁷ See Iamblichus *De Mysteriis* 4 The fact that both Gregory and Iamblichus specifically discuss Egyptian religion supports the idea that the former is (in part) responding to the latter.

¹²⁸ This is the implication of *v. Gr. Thaum.* PG46:916:21-38.

¹²⁹ Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 2:1:619 (GNO1:407:11-21)

¹³⁰ Gregory of Nyssa *virg.* 7. Christianity – the worship of one God – thus lies on the golden mean between paganism and atheism!

¹³¹ Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 4 (*In Julianum* 1) PG35:645:12, c.f. Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 39, PG36:341:16-19.

¹³² Gregory of Nazianzus *or.* 39, PG 36:337:6-10. For a classic Christian iteration of the same theme, see Justin Martyr *dial.* 2

¹³³ Gregory of Nyssa *Thdr.* PG46:741:51

¹³⁴ See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 692-93 on Basil; see also Gregory of Nazianzus, *or.* 29.2 and *or.* 40.3

¹³⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus *carm.* 1.1.7.48 (tr. Sykes, *Poemata Arcana*, 6.48): ἀνθ' ἐνὸς οὐ ποτε πολλά.

¹³⁶ According to Christians even good angels may not rightly be worshipped

¹³⁷ Besides those who have read earlier versions of this text (who are mentioned in the notes above), I have greatly benefitted from the comments of various audiences to whom I have presented this paper: my thanks go to the audience at NAPS, Chicago 2010, to the South West group for the study of Late Antiquity (especially for the comments from Gillian Clark, Stephen Mitchell and Daniel Ogden) and to the research group on the *Rhetoric of Evil* (Universities of Oxford and Bonn). Most of the research for this paper was carried out as a Visiting Scholar in 2009 at Princeton Theological Seminary, for which opportunity I express my sincere thanks to the President and Faculty.