

Predication, Metaphysics, and Divine Impassibility in Gregory of Nyssa's Christological Exegesis.

Gregory of Nyssa is widely celebrated for his Trinitarian theology, his biblical interpretation, his language theory and metaphysics, and his Christian mysticism. Yet, for all the fascination he has inspired since the early twentieth century, a plausible account of Gregory's thought as a whole remains to be seen. Gregory's biblical exegesis attracts interest chiefly for the allegorical method demonstrated in his late *Life of Moses* and *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, the centre of which is the figure of Christ, the Bridegroom. While many have noted Gregory's indebtedness to Origen, who pioneered the Christian interpretation of the third book of Solomon, even more telling are the connections between Gregory's late exegesis and the dogmatic works of the middle period of his career, above all the *Contra Eumomium* and *Antirrheticus against Apollinarius*, as well as his short, early works on the Trinity.

This paper gives an account of Gregory's overall approach to Christological predication and divine impassibility, and the metaphysical and ascetical commitments involved therein. It argues that Gregory's doctrine and exegetical method were solidly established by the time of the dogmatic controversies with the Eunomians and Apollinarians, years before he turned to the great stories of the Old Testament. It shows as well that, while Gregory's debt to Origen is considerable, his doctrine and exegesis generally follows its own rationale, which both resembles and yet differs in important ways from that of the master.