Introduction

Towards the end of his ministry in the late fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa writes to a group of presbyters urging them to be diligent in how they choose their next bishop.[1] He hopes to visit as soon as possible, he tells them, since his purpose is to support the quarrelsome presbyters as they come to a decision. Tucked into the opening section of the letter is this single reference to the devil:

> Thus may we discover a means of remedying the distresses which have already transpired, and of securing your future, so that you may no longer be torn asunder by this discord, where one withdraws himself from the church in one direction, someone else in another, and you are hereby exposed as a laughing-stock to the devil [γέλωτα προκεῖσθαι τῷ διαβόλῳ], whose one intent and endeavour it is to oppose the divine will [θέλημα] in order *that* none *should be saved or come to the knowledge of the truth*.[2]

To emphasise the intensity of the devil's enmity towards the church, the bishop's warning includes a clever play on words. In the First Letter to

[1] Nyss., *Ep*. 17 (GNO VIII.2.51–58). Since Gregory of Nyssa mentions his old age, it is probable that he composed this letter sometime between 387–394; see Anna M. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 162. For an argument dating the letter to 390, see Jean Daniélou, 'L'Évêque d'après une lettre de Grégoire de Nysse', *Euntes Docete* 20 (1967): 85–98. On the difficulties of identifying Gregory of Nyssa's letter collection, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 'The Letter Collection of Gregory of Nyssa', in *Late Antique Letter Collections*, ed. Christiana Sogno, Bradley K. Storin, and Edward J. Watts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 102–110.

[2] Nyss., *Ep*. 17.3 (GNO VIII.2.52); trans. adapted from Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, 163. Throughout the book, I use both my own and others' translations. Translations are my own unless cited otherwise. I have used a range of male, female, and gender-neutral pronouns when referring to the human person.

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Timothy, we read 'God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:3–4).[3] Gregory deftly replaces 'God' with 'the devil' as the subject of the sentence. By making this move, he stresses that the presbyters must amend their behaviour rapidly because the devil lurks behind the scenes. Given that Gregory of Nyssa has been described as 'the most rigorously intellectual of all the early Christian thinkers',[4] the skilful play on words prompts readers to reflect on the status of the devil in his thought. This reference to the enemy of salvation is one of many through the bishop's corpus. He is not alone in this regard.

Basil of Caesarea 'cut a massive figure in his day'.[5] Known best for his contributions to Trinitarian doctrine, he likewise peppers his communications with remarks and instruction on the devil. For one such example, see his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*. As he builds a case against those who say that the Spirit is not glorified, Basil includes a comprehensive list of the Spirit's works. He cites evidence of the Spirit's power, such as 'kinship with God' and 'the resurrection from the dead'.[6] Amidst miracles and gifts of healing that demonstrate the Spirit's power, we find 'the devil was diminished when the Spirit was present'.[7] This mention of the devil is so fleeting that even careful readers may miss how he is used to bolster Basil's argument on the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Consider too an oration by Gregory of Nazianzus, 'the greatest stylist of the patristic age'.[8] Composed during a period of tax adjustment, the oration aims to promote fair taxation.[9] Gregory explores themes such as simplicity and contentment of life, citizenship in heaven, and how the

[3] New Testament translations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version unless noted otherwise. Pierre Maravel argues that Gregory of Nyssa begins with scripture because of the pastoral nature of his letter (SC 363, 185n4). Note, however, that the bishop's doctrinal treatises engage scripture to the same degree as his pastoral letters and homilies.

[4] Robert Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 11.

[5] Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine* (Eugene: Cascade, 2012), 5.

[6] Bas., *Spir.* 19.49 (SC 17 bis, 420).

[7] Ibid. It is probable that Basil has in mind the temptations of Christ when he speaks of the devil's diminishment by the Spirit's presence.

[8] John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), xxi.

[9] Naz., *Or.* 19 (PG 35, 1044A–1064B). This oration was composed at the request of the imperial tax adjuster, Julian, while enduring a period of tax adjustment (AD 374–375). For further discussion see McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 222.

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people of God best use their time and talents, whether they are young or old. Drawing to a close, he exclaims, 'Would that evil be destroyed utterly, along with the Evil One [ὁ πονηρός], who sowed weeds in us while we were sleeping.'[10] This cry, evoking the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:25, tells us that the devil works tirelessly to engender the greed that instigates excessive taxation. This malevolent angel tempts and deceives and must be resisted. The devil's appearance in this oration is brief, but the conciseness of the preacher's lament does not undermine his frustration at the devil's presence on the earth.

In these three texts, the bishops refer to the devil with equal brevity but to different ends. In the first instance, the devil threatens the unity of the church. In the second, he proves the Spirit's power, and in the third, his wily ways prompt an utterance of grief. These references to the devil were not taken from sermons directly concerned with diabology or demonology, or even the ascetic life. By way of contrast, the references occur in writings on matters seemingly unrelated to the devil: choosing a bishop, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and equitable taxation, respectively. That the devil makes an appearance in such texts invites us to consider his salience in fourth-century Christian thought.

Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa are leading thinkers in the history of Christian theology. The bishops elicit attention for their outstanding responses to the most significant philosophical, doctrinal, and pastoral questions of the fourth century. In recent decades, commentators have scrutinised their accounts of the doctrine of God, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, theological anthropology, and the Christian life. Their instruction on the devil, however, is barely mentioned in modern scholarship.[11] Given that they refer to the devil habitually and across the breadth of their corpora, we might well ask what lies behind the lack of scholarly interest in diabolic matters.

[10] Naz., *Or.* 19.14 (PG 35, 1060C).

[11] Commenting on Gregory Nazianzen's writings: 'The daemonological aspect, so prominent in non-hellenized Christian asceticism, is largely absent in Gregory'; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 149; Samatha L. Miller, *Chrysostom's Devil: Demons, the Will, and Virtue in Patristic Soteriology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 26. There are, of course, exceptions. Writing on Gregory of Nyssa, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz observes, 'The devil always plays a large role in Gregory's summaries of salvation history'; Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 183–184; Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco, 'Devil', in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 223–225.

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DISREGARDING THE DEVIL

Once there was a devil – so the story goes – and as early Christians grappled with all that was wrong in the world, the devil served as their primary explanation for problems of evil, sin, and suffering.[12] To coin a phrase, 'the devil made me and everyone else do it'. Parsed in this way, the devil was useful for covering a gap in theological reasoning. Nowadays – so the story continues – we do not need to resort to fallen angels to make sense of our experiences. Modern commentators on early Christian thought have adjudicated that the devil belongs in the world of elves and fairies.[13] He is a 'goblin',[14] a 'personification of evil',[15] a 'character in a narrative',[16] or else a 'symbol'.[17] The devil is conceived as almost anything but a fallen angel with a place in serious theological discourse. At best, he is an addendum to salvation history.[18]

Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa treated the devil differently from much modern theological scholarship. They drew on traditions of biblical interpretation that understood Lucifer, the

[12] Richard Raiswell, Michelle D. Brock, and David R. Winter, 'Introduction', in *The Routledge History of the Devil in the Western Tradition*, ed. Richard Raiswell, Michelle D. Brock, and David R. Winter (London: Routledge, 2025), 3.

[13] Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism amongst Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 25.

[14] Anthony Meredith, S. J., 'Asceticism: Christian and Greek', *JTS* 27, no. 3 (1976): 322. I follow the early Christian convention of using the male pronoun for the devil throughout this book.

[15] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 19–20.

[16] Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4.

[17] Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 2.

[18] The devil is relegated to the Appendix in Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928). Robert W. Jenson challenged the negation of the devil in modern Protestant theology, albeit Jenson resisted angelology; see Robert W. Jenson, 'Evil as Person', in *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics*, ed. Stephen John Wright (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 135–144. Philip G. Ziegler, a Reformed systematic theologian, also contends that the devil belongs in an account of contemporary Protestant dogmatic theology; see Philip G. Ziegler, '"Bound Over To Satan's Tyranny": Sin and Satan in Contemporary Reformed Hamartiology', *Theology Today* 75, no. 1 (2018): 89–100; Philip G. Ziegler, *God's Adversary and Ours: A Brief Theology of the Devil* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2025). For a Catholic perspective, see Joseph Ratzinger, 'Farewell to the Devil?', in *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, trans. Michael J. Miller and Matthew J. O'Connell (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 197–205.

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brightest of angels, as having been cast from the near presence of God. The three theologians do not apply these traditions indiscriminately. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa explain Lucifer's existence on the earth in slightly different ways, and Gregory of Nazianzus admits that at the end of the day, he cannot truly fathom it.[19] The bishops agree, though, that the devil is the commander-in-chief of an army of demons and a malevolent power. While he hates all that God has made, he hates the church especially because he is bent on opposing God's will, which is that all would be saved.

There are many more studies on demonology than on the devil.[20] For the modern intellect, demons are seemingly more palatable than their captain. Possibly, it is easier to conceive demons as an abstract concept. If we gesture at the 'demonic' in the loosest and vaguest of terms, it can be a little less disconcerting than the particularity of the 'Evil One', especially when he is conceived as a vivid red, horned figure with a pitchfork by his side.[21]

Nonetheless, even demons pose challenges for modern sensibilities.[22] Writing on Augustine's demonology, Gregory D. Wiebe explores the

[19] I will explore varying accounts of Lucifer's fall in Chapter 2.

[20] To name but a few of these excellent studies: David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Dayna Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); David Bradnick, *Evil, Spirits, and Possession: An Emergentist Theology of the Demonic* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Travis W. Proctor, *Demonic Bodies and the Dark Ecologies of Early Christian Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[21] The devil is not depicted explicitly in paintings and iconography until the sixth century. While animal images – such as lions, serpents, and dragons – might be interpreted as symbolising the devil allegorically, such images could also depict evil more broadly; see Glenn Peers, 'Devil', in *The Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology: A–J*, ed. Paul Corby Finney (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 417–418; Jean-Pierre Bayard, *Le Diable dans l'Art Roman* (Paris: Éditions de La Maisnie, 1982), 51–53.

[22] In the introduction to their translation of Justin Martyr's *Apologies*, Denis Minns and Paul Parvis observe that the 'modern reader cannot fail to be struck by the frequency with which he [Justin] makes reference to "wicked demons"'. For Minns and Parvis, it is paradoxical that Justin speaks about demons 'because he is a philosopher'. This assessment suggests that modern readers might not expect philosophers to speak of demons because these entities have no place in an intellectual discourse. Minns and Parvis seek to vindicate Justin's reputation as a serious thinker by observing that throughout his writings, Justin brings in demons to make sense of 'how it is that things go wrong in a world designed by a good and rational creator'. Justin uses demons to explain wickedness, then, which absolves him from rudimentary thought; Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

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concepts that support Augustine's belief in demons, showing that demons were embodied creatures, integral to Augustine's broader theology. While reviewing the related literature, Wiebe observes that angels – fallen and otherwise – are 'often dismissed as a product of the time'.[23] He explains the lack of scholarly interest in Augustine's demonology by way of reference to Weber's concept of disenchantment.[24] From this perspective, fallen angels belong in the world of late antiquity, along with any notion that they might be 'real'.[25] We moderns know better.[26]

Our interpretation of concepts of the religious imagination is complicated by the different contexts of the fourth and twenty-first centuries. Scholars have adopted various ways of navigating this difference. Peter Brown, among others, has drawn attention to the tradition of the psychologisation of demons.[27] Writing on Athanasius of Alexandria's

[23] Gregory D. Wiebe, *Fallen Angels in the Theology of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 1. While scholarly accounts of secularisation vary widely, Wiebe's argument highlights one reason why the devil is repeatedly overlooked in studies of fourth-century Christian theology. Anthony Meredith's article on asceticism exemplifies the approach critiqued by Wiebe. Comparing Basil of Caesarea's ascetic work with Athanasius of Alexandria's *Life of Antony*, Meredith infers that Basil was a respectable and trustworthy theologian because 'Devils and miracles are almost, if not entirely, absent from Basil's *Rules*'; see Meredith, 'Asceticism: Christian and Greek', 326.

[24] Wiebe, *Fallen Angels*, 1–10. For Weber's use of the term 'disenchantment' see Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 2009), 139. Peter Brown's influential biography *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) argues that Augustine turned the Christian struggle with demons inward, exemplifying further the approach that Wiebe aims to challenge. To date, Charles Taylor has provided the most comprehensive critique of disenchantment; see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[25] See the influential essay: Rudolf Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology', in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (London: SPCK, 1964), 1–44. For two approaches to critiquing demythologisation, see David W. Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Esther Acolatse, *Powers, Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

[26] It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the breadth of challenges and defences regarding which cultures do and do not accept the reality of the devil. Generally speaking, scholars in the global North tend to assume that Christians in the global South accept the reality of angels and demons. See, for example, Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7–8. This assumption has been challenged by Emmanuel Ofuasia, 'An Argument for the Non-Existence of the Devil in African Traditional Religions', *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 11, no. 1 (2022): 57–76.

[27] Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 89; Richard Valantasis, 'Daemons and the Perfecting of the Monk's Body: Monastic Anthropology, Daemonology, and Asceticism', *Semeia* 58 (1992): 47–79;

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Life of Antony, Brown has argued that modern readers should take care they are not deceived by the evocative iconography capturing Antony's demonic temptations. Hermitic life in the desert was much less exciting than the representations lead us to believe. The ascetic preoccupation with demonic entities was, Brown reassures us, 'merely the shadow side of the third-century emphasis on the protecting spirit as an upward extension of the self'.[28] We do not need to be concerned that phantasms appeared to Antony, because he was 'grappling with his own personality'.[29] Interpreted thus, it is not difficult to see how demons came to be characterised as abstract concepts, useful only for diagnosing the late antique psyche.[30]

Along with ideas of how the ancients viewed the world, we now have insight into the roles of power and sexuality in early Christian communities.[31] The psychologisation of demons, however, has not gone unchallenged. Having examined late antique accounts of demons' bodies in conversation with beliefs about matter, physics, and biology, Gregory A. Smith concludes that a demonic body may be invisible but that this is 'not the same as being a metaphor'.[32] He does not rule out psychological and figurative interpretations but proposes that contemporary interpreters take what is said about the nature and activity of demons 'as literally, as physically, as possible', rather than leaping to the metaphorical option.[33]

The modern confusion over what is 'real' to fourth-century Christian thinkers can be resolved when we recognise that the category 'supernatural' did not exist for the ancients.[34] For late antique Christians, 'reality'

David Brakke, 'The Making of Monastic Demonology: Three Ascetic Teachers on Withdrawal and Resistance', *Church History* 70 (2001): 19–48; Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 1–9.

[28] Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, 89. [29] Ibid., 89.

[30] Inbar Graiver, 'Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms: Cognitive Insights into Early Monastic Demonology', *The Journal of Religion* 102, no. 1 (2022): 1–26. Psychologisation continues as a method for dealing with demons today; see Christopher H. Cook, 'Demon Possession, Theology, and Mental Health', *Journal of Disability & Religion* 29, no. 2 (2024): 171–189.

[31] David Brakke, 'Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, nos. 3/4 (2001): 501–535.

[32] Gregory A. Smith, 'How Thin Is a Demon?', *JECS* 16, no. 4 (2008): 483.

[33] Smith, 'How Thin Is a Demon?', 483. On ancient views of metaphor, see Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 9–11.

[34] On considering angels and demons as 'real', see George Caird, *Principalities and Powers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and*

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was not split into two realms, one described as 'natural' and the other as 'supernatural'.[35] Consequently, there is no equivalent word for 'supernatural' in classical Greek or Latin. There is only *physis* (nature). Following this logic, the devil existed in *physis* for Basil and the Gregories. Thus, my approach to their writing is to assume that when these theologians speak of the devil, they are describing reality as they understand it.[36]

'THE CAPPADOCIANS'

It is time to introduce Basil of Caesarea (c. AD 330–379), his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa (c. AD 335–394), and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus (c. AD 323–389). These three bishops took an active role in the theological controversies of their time, which for the Gregories included the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (AD 381).[37]

Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 151; Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 133. Also see Carlos Eire, *They Flew: A History of the Impossible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023). While Eire defends medieval accounts of levitation, his method could be transferred to accounts of angels and therefore the devil.

[35] Dale Martin, *Inventing Superstition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 13. Annette Yoshiko Reed likewise cautions against distinguishing between 'natural' and 'supernatural', since this contrast is predicated on 'distinctively post-Enlightenment epistemological assumptions (partitioning, e.g., "secular" from "religious")'. Yoshiko Reed prefers instead terms such as 'otherworldly' to communicate that some religious influences are just beyond the reach of visible, ordinary forms of communication; Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 3. In contrast, Hector M. Patmore and Josef Lössl define a demon as a 'malefic supernatural being'; see Hector M. Patmore and Josef Lössl, 'Introduction', in *Demons in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Hector M. Patmore and Josef Lössl, (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 1–6, 13; Charles Taliaferro, 'Early Christian Thought', in *The History of Evil in Antiquity 2000 BCE–450 CE*, vol. 1, ed. Tom P. S. Angier (London: Routledge, 2019), 34.

[36] With respect to how contemporary interpreters speak of the reality of creatures such as angels in late ancient sources, Ellen Muehlberger has proposed that we apply the description 'culturally operational'. This phrase captures the idea that angels were understood as active in the everyday lives of fourth-century Christians and can be applied without necessitating forms of demythologisation; see Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19. On the reality of the devil, see Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development* (London: Epworth, 1949); Phillip Wiebe, *God and Other Spirits: Intimations of Transcendence in Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1–6; Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

[37] For their contributions to debates on the doctrine of God, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford

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While each bishop was involved in pastoral work and community life, Basil is heralded for his contribution to the development of fourth-century monasticism.[38] Best known for his 'Theological Orations', Gregory of Nazianzus also composed myriad poems.[39] Some of these communicate a point of doctrine, others aid the memorisation of scripture, and many are prayers. While Gregory of Nyssa is typically regarded as the most philosophical and speculative of three theologians, he composed several series of exegetical homilies that also offer grounded wisdom on the Christian life.[40] Together, these three theologians have come to be known as 'the Cappadocians'.[41] I investigate the devil in their writings precisely because they are renowned for contributing to orthodox doctrine.[42] They wrote during the Roman imperial period and have been 'explicitly marked as

University Press, 2004), 187–260. For a more general biography, see Anthony Meredith, S.J., *The Cappadocians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995). On Cappadocian 'style', see Morwenna Ludlow, 'Christian Literary Identity and Rhetoric about Style', in *Rhetoric and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Flower and Morwenna Ludlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 231–250.

[38] On Basil's life, see Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). On the manuscript tradition of Basil's works, see Paul Jonathan Fedwick, *Studies of Basil of Caesarea and His World: An Annotated Bio-Bibliography* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

[39] On Gregory's theological poetry, see Claudio Moreschini and Donald A. Sykes, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: Poemata Arcana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). On his life, thought, and letters, see McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, passim; Bradley K. Storin, *Self-Portrait in Three Colors: Gregory of Nazianzus's Epistolary Autobiography* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

[40] Pierre Maravel, 'Biography of Gregory of Nyssa', in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 103–116.

[41] By referring to them as 'the Cappadocians', I do not suggest that these theologians thought in isolation. The bishops were prolific letter-writers and were influenced by Amphilochius, Eustathius, and Didymus, to name but a few. For scholarship on their interlocutors, see Jean Robert Pouchet, 'Les rapports de Basile de Césarée avec Diodore de Tarse', *BLE* 87 (1986): 243–272; Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004). For a fruitful comparison of Evagrius Ponticus' *Kephalaia Gnostika* with Gregory Nazianzen's *Theological Orations*, see Joel Kalvesmaki, 'Evagrius the Cappadocian: Redating the *Kephalaia Gnostica*', *JECS* 31, no. 1 (2023): 541. For an excellent comparative study on the theological anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius, see Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

[42] The Cappadocians were brought into sharper focus by members of the *ressourcement* movement of the twentieth century and today by historical theologians and systematic theologians who continue to revisit their thought. On the movement, see Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). On Gregory of

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authoritative', as is evidenced by the scholarship labelled 'patristics'.[43] Moreover, together their works comprise a body of literature that encompasses nearly every genre in use in the late fourth century. This study aims to show that the devil is not confined to homiletic, ascetic, and spiritual writing; it must engage with a range of theological genres. That these three theologians craft extensive doctrinal treatises while also instructing on the devil makes their work ripe for investigation.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention Macrina the Younger (c. AD 327–379).[44] We do not have the benefit of Macrina's teachings in her own words. We know about her life and thought through her younger brother Gregory of Nyssa, who gives voice to her both as a philosopher and teacher in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* and *The Life of Macrina*.[45] Macrina refers to the devil's role in salvation history on three occasions during her final prayer, which leaves us with the sense that she understood the devil as a serious enemy who aims to ensnare believers until their last breath. Since Macrina's life of prayer and teaching are central to my argument in Chapters 5 and 6, I apply 'the

Nyssa's thought in systematic theology, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Présence et pensée. Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988).

[43] Virginia Burrus and Rebecca Lyman, 'Shifting the Focus of History', in *Late Ancient Christianity: A People's History of Christianity*, vol. 2, ed. Virginia Burrus and Rebecca Lyman (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1. Burrus and Lyman rightly argue against exploring narrowly the works of a 'theological and institutional elite', since this approach hinders the study of the history of Christians; Burrus and Lyman, 'Shifting the Focus of History', 2. For the purposes of this book, however, I am interested in how neglecting the devil may hinder the study of theology. Demons – if not their leader – tend to be studied in the context of ascetic thought and practice, rather than in the writings of those who have contributed to orthodox doctrine; see Brakke, 'The Making of Monastic Demonology', 19–48.

[44] On Macrina's influence, see Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 78–105; Carla D. Sunberg, *The Cappadocian Mothers: Deification Exemplified In the Writings of Basil, Gregory and Gregory* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2017), 133–154. On Macrina as the 'fourth Cappadocian', see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 8–9; Durstan McDonald, 'Macrina: The Fourth Cappadocian?', in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 1, ed. Pauline Allen (Brisbane: Australian Catholic University, 1998), 367–373.

[45] Macrina's portrait has been debated tirelessly. For coverage of the debate, see Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 214–219. On how Gregory of Nyssa's portrait of Macrina is constructed, see Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History and the "Linguistic Turn"', *JECS* 6, no. 3 (1998): 413–430; Ellen Muehlberger, 'Salvage: Macrina and the Christian Project of Cultural Reclamation', *Church History* 81, no. 2 (2012): 273–297.

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Cappadocians' fluidly as a descriptor, varying between the three and four 'teachers of the faith'.[46]

In referring to Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Macrina the Younger as 'the Cappadocians', I swim against recent scholarly tides. During the nineteenth century, commentators referred to the three bishops as 'the Cappadocians' or as the 'Cappadocian Fathers', a convention that one observes in Adolf von Harnack's *History of Dogma*.[47] Since the beginning of the twentieth century, thanks to the scholarship of Karl Holl, an increasing number of interpreters have shown that the theology of these three bishops is shaped by very 'different terminologies and concerns'.[48] Modern recognition of Cappadocian theological differences is witnessed in the growing number of full-length studies that focus on only one of these theologians.[49] Concerning the Trinity, for instance, Basil and his brother have more in common with one another than with Gregory of Nazianzus, but Gregory of Nyssa's articulation of Trinitarian unity exceeds that of his elder brother. These differences lead scholars to conclude that 'the Cappadocians' must be used with caution when describing the three bishops.[50] For this reason, one finds disclaimers, such as 'so-called', applied to the group's name.[51] It is possible to call

[46] Each theologian is recognised as a 'Teacher of the Faith' in the Church of England's liturgical calendar, which designates 2 January for Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, and 19 July for Gregory of Nyssa and Macrina the Younger.

[47] Adolf von Harnack, *The History of Dogma*, vol. 4, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 157–159; George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1952), 137, 216; Maurice F. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 130.

[48] Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 250; Karl Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den Grossen Kappadoziern* (Tübingen; Leipzig: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1904). I am indebted to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz for drawing my attention to this point.

[49] Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Gabrielle Thomas, *The Image of God in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[50] Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 251; Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 134.

[51] Morwenna Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology in Fourth-century Christian Authors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 230–231. For an example of the use of 'so-called', see Sarah Coakley, 'Introduction – Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*', in *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1.

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them 'the Cappadocians', however, without requiring them to think uniformly. Their correspondence itself demonstrates their numerous theological differences.

My final comment on the Cappadocians addresses the question of how to engage with them collectively and productively. In support of treating together Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Macrina the Younger, Morwenna Ludlow has shown how to engage with them as a 'workshop of wordsmiths'.[52] The 'workshop', as Ludlow explains it, was a fluid concept in the ancient Greek-speaking world and described both the place of work and a group of craftsmen. In the workshop, apprentices gathered around a master to learn *technē* (art, craft, a particular skill) through imitation.[53] Imagine the rivalry and collaboration that thrive in relationships established through a workshop or workgroup. The Cappadocians exhibit these ways of relating to one another, as far as we know from their correspondence.[54] See, by way of an example, how Gregory of Nazianzus harangues Basil of Caesarea in a letter scribed at Easter 372: 'And as you are just now getting a taste of glory, it's no surprise that you may want to parade for me whatever glory you come across, so that you may thus make yourself even more august, just like painters who paint beautiful things.'[55] Writing to Basil during the same period, Gregory takes up his colleague's critique that he is both idle and lethargic, contending, 'Were everyone to imitate me, the churches would have no trouble.'[56] We also have evidence of collaboration. Gregory of Nazianzus writes to Basil about visiting his friend to show support following Basil's controversial election to the episcopate in 370. Glossing his visit, Gregory comments, 'I will, in any event, profit from it and treat our being insulted together philosophically.'[57]

In the Christian workshop, as Basil tells it, the great craftsman (τεχνίτης) is God and the world is the 'workshop of divine craftsmanship'.[58] It is not such a stretch to reconceive a Christian workshop in

[52] Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology*, 231. The proposal of treating the Cappadocians as a workshop has been also taken up elsewhere; see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 'The Cappadocians', in *Cambridge History of Early Christian Theology*, ed. Lewis Ayres (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[53] Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology*, 221–225. [54] Ibid., 231.

[55] Naz., *Ep.* 50 (*Lettres* I, 64); trans. Storin, *Gregory of Nazianzus's Letter Collection*, 70.

[56] Naz., *Ep.* 49 (*Lettres* I, 64); trans. Storin, *Gregory of Nazianzus's Letter Collection*, 70.

[57] Naz., *Ep.* 47 (*Lettres* I, 61); trans. Storin, *Gregory of Nazianzus's Letter Collection*, 72.

[58] Bas., *Hex.* 4.1 (SC 26, 246); Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology*, 227. On Basil's authorship of this text, see Volker Henning Drecoll, *Basilius of Caesarea as Exegete: An Analysis of His Homilies on the Hexaemeron* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2025),

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terms of discipleship and as a conceptual group in which the Cappadocians constitute the apprentices who learn from their master, Jesus Christ. The craft in this workshop is spiritual warfare, which they learn by practising how to recognise, resist, and ultimately defeat the devil.[59] The fluidity of the workshop allows that they are also teachers, as Gregory of Nyssa says of his sister, Macrina.[60] In this sense, through their letters, sermons, and treatises – and for Gregory of Nazianzus, through his poetry – they educate Christian communities on how to resist and defeat the devil.

The conceptual space of the workshop is well suited to this study, since this motif does not require us to determine who influenced whom and encourages us to recognise how Christian authors test out 'similar themes to various theological ends'.[61] The experimental nature of the workshop creates a space in which sources as varied as letters, dogmatic treatises, exegetical homilies, and poems sit side by side, allowing us to see both where the devil *is* and where he *is not*, to explore points of convergence and divergence, and to identify theological and spiritual problems posed by the devil's presence on the earth and how the Cappadocians negotiate them.[62] Each Cappadocian affirms unequivocally that the devil is resisted and defeated only from within the church. A theological investigation of the devil, then, is surely best conducted in conversation with a group of Christians who negotiate the devil distinctly but who share the common goal of his defeat.

175–185. I am indebted to Volker Drecoll for sharing the manuscript of his book long before publication. For an exhaustive list of Basil's works, see Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta and Stig Y. Rudberg, eds., *Basilius von Caesarea: Homilien zum Hexameron* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), xvii.

[59] In English, we speak of the 'craft' of the devil, meaning the devil's 'wiles'. In the ancient world, craft (τέχνη) has a positive meaning and describes something which is believed to have a good end. When readers come across the devil's 'craft' in English translations, the Greek word is μεθοδεία; see, for example, Basil's homily *Prologus VIII* (*On Faith)*: 'by vigorously opposing those who attempt to destroy it by the craft of the Devil' (PG 31, 680D); trans. Wagner, *Ascetical Works*, 60. Greek text: ποτὲ μὲν τοῖς ἐν μεθοδείᾳ τοῦ διαβόλου καταλύειν πειρωμένοις αὐτὴν ἀγωνιστικώτερον ἀνθιστάμενοι. The Cappadocians borrow from Ephesians 6:11 when speaking of the craft of the devil; see Chapter 5 for further discussion of their use of Ephesians.

[60] Macrina is 'the teacher' (ἡ διδάσκαλος); *Macr*. 28.1 (GNO VIII.1.400). When citing *Macr*., I follow Anna M. Silvas' numbering because I have used her translations. This numbering differs from Pierre Maraval's system (SC 178). As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, Macrina engages with questions on the devil's existence in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, philosophically, and in *The Life of Macrina*, spiritually.

[61] Ludlow, *Art, Craft, and Theology*, 232.

[62] Chapter 1 picks up the question of where the devil *is* and *is not*.

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A NOTE ON METHODS AND SOURCES

This research was launched by a series of questions: What is the status of the devil in fourth-century Christian theology? Is he central or peripheral to salvation history? How is the devil discussed in doctrinal debates? Where do we find him: is he ubiquitous across a range of textual sources or does he perhaps crop up primarily in texts on specific topics, such as spiritual warfare, the ascetic life, or baptism? Each question prompted reflection on methods and sources, along with an increasing appreciation that one cannot answer these questions in a single volume.

Broadly speaking, contemporary scholarship on fourth-century Christian theology espouses two approaches to the texts. One school of thought seeks to articulate theological content but not apart from the literary form, historical context, and rhetorical aims. By 'literary', I have in mind paying attention to imagery, metaphor, and the like. This approach allows for the possibility or even the probability that it may not be possible to determine a unified system of thought.[63] A second school adopts a synthetic approach in order to prioritise theological readings over historical ones in pursuit of a coherent system.[64] Here I lean heavily into the first approach, for this book does not aim to present a comprehensive account of the devil embedded within a coherent system. I have found no evidence that the three bishops sought to communicate or develop a systematic exposition of the theological problem of the devil.[65] At the same time, my interest in the ubiquitousness of the devil's presence in the teachings of the Cappadocians, as well as the challenges posed by his presence, precludes me from adhering unequivocally to a literary, historical, and rhetorical reading of the textual sources. For this reason, I rely on a synthetic approach at certain points in the book, in pursuit of the devil's pervasiveness.[66]

[63] For scholarship using this methodology, see Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works*, 7–8; Alexander L. Abecina, *Christ, the Spirit, and Human Transformation in Gregory of Nyssa's* In Canticum Canticorum (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 14–15.

[64] For scholarship which adopts this approach, see Giulio Maspero, *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's* Ad Ablabium (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xxviii.

[65] Correspondingly, on how Gregory of Nyssa does not attempt to resolve systematically the philosophical problem of universal human nature, see Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 7–8.

[66] In Chapter 3, for example, I provide a list of the devil's names gathered from the breadth of Cappadocian writings.

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I have mentioned genre briefly. It will be helpful, I think, to say a little more about the role of genre in this book. Certain genres, accompanied by rhetorical strategies, lend themselves to naming the devil creatively. Gregory of Nazianzus uses poetry to refer to the devil by evocative names, such as 'Destroyer of the human image of God'.[67] Likewise, in his exegetical homilies *On the Lord's Prayer*, Gregory of Nyssa calls the devil 'Subterranean One',[68] placing him in contrast to the Heavenly Father. Names like these shed light on the devil's motivations and aims, aiding recognition of the malevolent creature who employs all available means to harm the human race. When I embarked upon this study, I assumed I would encounter the devil in homilies on the moral life because he constitutes a persuasive example of a life lived badly. The devil is a handy addition to a preacher's rhetorical toolkit. I did not anticipate that the devil would pervade – in one form or another – the full breadth of Cappadocian exegetical homilies, doctrinal treatises, letters, and poems, focused on a range of themes. His ubiquitous presence demonstrates that the devil is not confined to a particular form of writing or a single topic. While I recognise the consequence of genre, I have not discovered any evidence that genre serves as a reliable indicator for different theological conceptions of the devil.[69]

A MAP FOR THE JOURNEY

This book takes readers on a journey through problems with the devil in Cappadocian thought. A journey requires a map. Before I disclose this book's direction of travel, I want to recognise that it is usual to provide an overview of the state of relevant scholarship to date. Since the specific contexts and foci of each chapter lend themselves to a more integrated approach, I will engage with related literature along the way with the aim of taking readers on a productive expedition.

[67] Naz., *Carm.* 2.1.65 (PG 37, 1407, 6); cf. Gen 1:26–28.

[68] Nyss., *Or. dom.* 2 (GNO VII.2.29); see Chapter 6 for further discussion of this name.

[69] On this matter, I am inclined to agree with the scholarship that purports the view that no sharp disjunction exists in fourth-century Christian writing between 'exegesis and philosophical thinking, or between (so-called) "spirituality" and "theology"'; see Coakley, 'Introduction', 6. Coakley contends that Gregory's later exegetical writings 'contain no less "theological" content than their predecessors, despite their (often very great) differences of genre and intended audience'; ibid., 6–7. For a similar argument, see Martin Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 63–99.

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This study begins by returning to my earlier point regarding the scholarly assumption that the devil, as he appears in early Christian writings, is little more than a useful way of covering a gap in theological reasoning. This widespread misconception undercuts the breadth and complexity of early Christian thought and adopts anachronistically the concerns of eighteenth-century philosophers, gathered up into what is known as the classic 'problem of evil'. By disentangling the devil from the conceptual webs that surround evil and suffering, Chapter 1 argues that, for the Cappadocians, the devil does not resolve the question of why humans experience evil.

Chapter 2 takes as its point of departure angelology, which provides the theological context for examining the devil before, during, and after his fall. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa drew on traditions of interpretation that understood scripture as speaking of one adversary, an angel – Satan, Lucifer, serpent, and devil – who moves across Testaments, Old and New. While the three theologians agree on who the devil is – a fallen angel – they are not of one mind on how he came to fall from the near presence of God, his defeat, his continued existence, or his ultimate end. By interrogating the nature and purpose of angels, I will identify how the Cappadocians construe the devil as a philosophical, theological, and spiritual problem.

While modern theologians have questioned the reality of the devil, premodern thinkers such as Basil and the Gregories felt no need to prove his existence. Instead, they sought to shine a light on the one who operates undercover and in plain sight, tempting and deceiving the human race. Chapter 3 argues that by referring to the devil by his name(s) repeatedly, a practice inherited from Origen, the three leaders teach their communities how to recognise the activity of the enemy of salvation. Our theologians employ at least fifty names for the devil, both new and established. These names for the most part identify the devil's activities in salvation history and demonstrate that he is antithetical to God and humankind. In effect, I propose, the Cappadocians teach the church to know the devil by his name(s).

By Chapter 4, we have a vision of the devil as a destructive angelic force who must be recognised by the people of God in order to be resisted. Hope is at hand, however. The church is victorious over the devil through participating in Christ's defeat of him. That said, Christ's defeat of the devil poses theological difficulties for the Cappadocians, which they navigate in different but equally creative ways. Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa preach that God is truth, and yet their use of the

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Christ-as-fishhook motif suggests that the devil is deceived by God, for Christ uses his mortal flesh as bait to lure and catch the devil. Gregory of Nazianzus sees no need to justify his use of the fishhook motif, but Gregory of Nyssa provides a comprehensive defence, going so far as to describe the crucifixion as 'a kind of deceit'. This chapter, then, draws on Greek philosophical, cultural, and biblical thought to investigate how the Gregories tackle complications arising from Christ's defeat of the devil.

While professing faith in Christ's victory over the devil, each Cappadocian takes seriously the devil's continuing activity in the world and in the church. To borrow from Gregory of Nyssa, the three theologians do not treat lightly the sting of the serpent's thrashing tail – a sting that lasts well beyond the devil's defeat.[70] The devil is skilled in every aspect of war. His ability to move about stealthily like the serpent and engage in forms of open combat makes him a veritable opponent. Against this backdrop, Chapter 5 examines how the Cappadocians utilise an array of protective measures against the devil. The sacrament of baptism is the first defence and the greatest protection against the devil's attacks; at the same time, however, baptism heightens the likelihood of the devil's advances. Amongst the numerous tactics that they employ to combat the ongoing threat of the devil, the Cappadocians appeal to the sign of the cross. They also teach on wearing the whole armour of God. These forms of protection emphasise the eschatological nature of the devil's defeat, since they recall what Christ has done while also highlighting how spiritual warfare continues throughout the Christian life.

Having established that Christians are not exempt from the devil's attacks, we turn in Chapter 6 to explore how those who do not live according to the way of faith take on the devil's characteristics to the extent that they are known by him and claimed as his own. As scholarly work on Gregory of Nyssa's vision of the spiritual life has proliferated, commentators have focused on virtue, participation, and how human beings become like God. In contrast, Chapter 6 argues that Gregory's vision of the spiritual life is concerned not only with how human beings can become divine but also with how they can become diabolic. Here we come to a central problem with the devil. According to Gregory of Nyssa's teaching in *On the Beatitudes* and *On the Lord's Prayer*, just as children of the 'Heavenly Father' become like God, children of the 'Subterranean Father' become like the devil.

[70] Nyss., *Or. cat.* 30.1 (GNO III.4.74).

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Chapter 7 closes the study by focusing on a single source: Gregory of Nyssa's homilies *On the Song of Songs*. These homilies are generally recognised as Gregory's final work, composed towards the end of his life. Through them, he weaves his most comprehensive and sustained account of the history, ontology, and activity of the devil and his army of demons. Only Christ is victorious over this army of hostile powers in the proper sense. Christians participate in Christ's victory by journeying with Gregory through *On the Song of Songs*. The way of victory begins with baptism and continues with prayer, pure thoughts, and self-knowing. Like those sources examined in the previous chapters, the homilies undertake a journey towards victory, bringing to the fore the eschatological nature of spiritual warfare. Gregory's exegetical attention to adversarial powers in these homilies indicates that the war with the devil is far from peripheral to the Christian life. For good reason, Gregory is known as an early Christian mystic, a philosopher, an exegete, and a theologian who made groundbreaking contributions to Trinitarian doctrine. This chapter, along with the previous ones, demonstrates that in addition to his other accolades, Gregory of Nyssa was an erudite homilist and skilled teacher on spiritual warfare.

The Problem of the Devil in Cappadocian Thought argues that Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Macrina the Younger treat the devil as a live enemy in their midst. The devil is central to their respective theological projects and to their visions of the Christian life, appearing in one form or another across the full breadth of their corpora. They utilise a range of biblical, philosophical, theological, and spiritual resources as they respond to the enemy of salvation and as they teach the church to do the same. The devil is not simply a strategy for explaining the problem of evil in the world – the devil himself *is* the problem.

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