

Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte

Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris

(Institut historique allemand)

Band 47 (2020)

DOI: 10.11588/fr.2020.1.86531

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BENJAMIN WHEATON

GREGORY OF TOURS AND HANDBOOKS
AGAINST HERESY

The sixth-century Gallic bishop Gregory of Tours has been, due to the sheer volume of his writings, our major source for the history and culture of his times. This level of dependence has been diminished, or at least nuanced, in the past twenty years or so for two reasons. First, other sources contemporary to Gregory have received more attention, especially the poetry and letters of Venantius Fortunatus. Second, Gregory's own writing has experienced a critical re-examination that seeks to lay bare his literary technique and agenda. The second has had perhaps the largest effect. The quantity of his writings still makes him by far the most important source for our period, and so other authors remain supplementary. Moreover, the critical re-examination of Gregory's works, especially his »Decem libri Historiarum« (hereafter the »Historiae«), has in and of itself opened up new avenues of investigation into the history of sixth-century Gaul and its cultural mindset¹.

Among these new avenues, and one which has only now begun to be carefully traveled, is Gregory's theology and what it says about the Gallic church². Prominent is the question of his depiction of Arianism³. How much is the so-called Arianism in

- 1 The most influential re-evaluations have been by Walter GOFFART, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A. D. 550–800)*, Notre Dame, IN 1994; and Martin HEINZELMANN, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, tr. C. Carroll, Cambridge 2001.
- 2 Heinzelmann has taken the lead on this subject, the most recent contribution being Martin HEINZELMANN, *The Works of Gregory of Tours and Patristic Tradition*, in: Alexander C. MURRAY (ed.), *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, Leiden 2016, p. 281–336.
- 3 GOFFART, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (as in n. 1), p. 213–214, deals with the question by denying that Arianism was a serious threat, but that Gregory wished to warn his Catholic readers against complacency. HEINZELMANN, *Gregory of Tours* (as in n. 1), p. 155–156, argues that Arianism functions for Gregory as a means of measuring the adherence of the Frankish kings to orthodoxy, and as a materialistic philosophy that was counteracted by the power of the spiritually powerful orthodox saints. In another article (ID., *Heresy in Books I and II of Gregory of Tours' Historiae*, in: Alexander C. MURRAY [ed.], *After Rome's Fall*, Toronto 1998, p. 62–82, esp. p. 72–74), Heinzelmann argues that Arianism functions as the paradigmatic heresy, and Arius as the paradigmatic heretic, since it represents both rebellion against and persecution of the orthodox Catholic church and a diminution of the status of Jesus Christ, who is the great End of (especially Christian) history and the source of the miraculous power of the true church. He reiterated this in his 2016 article, ID., *The Works of Gregory of Tours* (as in n. 2), p. 310, where he writes: »If in the *Histories* Gregory the historian wished to put so much stress on the question of Arianism, it was not on account of the historical impact of this form of Christianity, but on account of its spiritual consequences touching above all the role of Christ for his Church and thereby the importance of the saints and miracles in society.« Averil KEELY, *Arians and Jews in the Histories of Gregory of Tours*, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 23.2 (1997), p. 103–115, argues that Gregory uses Arianism as a means of strengthening Catholic identity. He is not concerned, Keely argues, with refuting actual Arianism but in showing the obvious moral and spiritual superiority of the

the »Historiae« a construct designed to promote a particular message, with no bearing on actual threats to Gallic orthodoxy? Or is it a factual account of the beliefs of the Visigothic church? To contribute to an answer to this question, this article will look first at the account in the fifth book of Gregory's »Historiae« of his debate with Agila, an official of the Visigothic king Leuvigild, and then more briefly at the account of his debate with Oppila, likewise an official of Leuvigild. They are two of five sections of his »Historiae« which portray discussions he has with doctrinally heterodox individuals⁴. The examination will result in three conclusions. First, a direct source for the dialogue with Agila is the popular genre of handbooks against heresy. Second, the dialogue with Oppila, although not drawn directly from the handbooks against heresy, nonetheless indirectly alludes to them. Third, Gregory purposely made these conversations an exercise in futility to caution his clergy against too much confidence in the verbal arguments provided by these handbooks. Therefore this article will ultimately caution against taking Gregory's accounts as simple reports of a real conversation. The dialogues are inserted by Gregory to reinforce his emphasis upon the wonders of the saints versus the futile efforts of the world, among which he includes the handbooks against heresy.

There were two kinds of handbook against heresy: classifications of heresies, such as Augustine's fifth-century »De haeresibus«; and instructional guides to refuting heresies, such as the anonymous fifth-century African text »Contra Varimadum«⁵.

orthodox Catholic faith (see esp. KEELY, Arians and Jews [as in n. 3], p. 108–109). Edward JAMES, Gregory of Tours and »Arianism«, in: Andrew CAIN (ed.), *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, Burlington, VT 2009, p. 327–338, argues that Gregory's polemic against Arianism serves the purpose of bolstering his contested credentials as Bishop of Tours. James argues that at least in part the »Histories« are directed at his suspicious clergy, and Gregory portrays himself as not only unimpeachably orthodox but also a stalwart defender of the true faith.

- 4 These dialogues are dealt with by: HEINZELMANN, Gregory of Tours (as in n. 1), p. 155–156, who argues that they should be seen within the general themes of their respective chapters; so the two arguments with Arians appear in chapters (Histories V.43 and VI.40) dealing with the wicked king Chilperic and enhance the juxtaposition of orthodoxy and heresy in these chapters; KEELY, Arians and Jews (as in n. 3), p. 108, who makes the case that the dialogues showcase the wickedness of the Arians, who reject the arguments of the orthodox bishop as well as implicitly signaling their dissociation from the Old Testament saints whom Gregory mentions in support of his position; Jacques FONTAINE, Conversion et culture chez les Wisigoths, in: *La Conversione al Cristianesimo nell'Europa dell'Alto Medioevo*, Spoleto 1967 (Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 14), p. 104–105, who takes the two Arian dialogues as true, verbatim accounts of the arguments made by laymen of the Arian churches in Spain, which show the weakness of those churches just before the official conversion of Reccared in 587; JAMES, Gregory of Tours and »Arianism« (as in n. 3), p. 333–336, who argues that they serve Gregory's self-representation in the »Historiae« as one who is capable of vigorously defending the orthodox faith; and Hans-Werner GOETZ, La compétition entre Catholiques et Ariens en Gaule: Les entretiens religieux (»Religionsgespräche«) de Grégoire de Tours, in: François BOURGARD et al. (eds.), *Agôn: La compétition, V^e–XII^e siècle*, Turnhout 2012, p. 183–198, who analyzes the dialogues and argues that they both reflected genuine concerns by Gregory to combat existing Trinitarian unorthodoxy (p. 187–188). It is worth noting that each of these five sections were later excerpted by Carolingian authors for use in theological *florilegia* and homiliaries (see Alberto FERREIRO, Discourse »Sermons« in the *Libri historiarum decem* of Gregory of Tours, in: *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 107.1 [2012], p. 49–77).
- 5 This article will rely a great deal on the excellent description and discussion of these handbooks by Judith McCLURE, Handbooks Against Heresy in the West, from the Late Fourth to the Late Sixth Centuries, in: *The Journal of Theological Studies* (N. S.) 30.1 (April 1979), p. 186–197.

It is the second kind that this article will suggest functioned as a source for Gregory. These guides to refuting heresies modeled to their readers how a conversation with a heretic might go, and provided answers (accompanied by Scriptural proof-texts) to specific questions posed by theoretical opponents of orthodox Nicene doctrine. The handbooks assumed that both interlocutors in the conversation held to some common religious positions. The Bible was agreed to be absolutely authoritative, and thus one important tactic was the simple amassing of scriptural texts, called *testimonia*, and appeal was made to a common set of beliefs about the nature of the divinity. Thus both sides were assumed to believe in God's goodness, unchangeable nature, and so on.

Most clergy were either insufficiently learned, or did not have the time, to read the lengthy doctrinal treatises on the Trinity and other topics that were written by the church fathers such as Augustine. Florilegia were fairly popular means of transmitting the fathers' main doctrinal contributions to a broader community, but were unfocused. Handbooks against heresy had many of the elements of florilegia but distilled the accepted teaching about the Trinity of the Nicene church and presented it in a useful and easily accessible format.

Three handbooks are of particular interest as potential sources for Gregory: the »Contra Varimadum«, the »De Mysterio sanctae Trinitatis«, and the »Breviarium adversus Haereticos«⁶. The first is the lengthiest, and was written by an African bishop exiled to Naples by the Vandals, probably in the middle of the fifth century⁷. The »Breviarium adversus Haereticos« was probably written in the first quarter of the sixth century in southern Gaul, and almost certainly used the »Contra Varimadum«. Its editor, Germain Morin, suggested that it was written by either Caesarius of Arles or by one of his colleagues⁸. The »De Mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« is from the same milieu, although it is more likely to be from the hand of Caesarius himself than the »Breviarium adversus Haereticos«⁹. The »Contra Varimadum« and the »Breviarium adversus Haereticos« both share a similar format, while the »De Mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« differs slightly.

The first two have two elements: answers to hypothetical questions and lists of divine attributes with their appropriate Scriptural proof-texts. As an example of the first element, the »Contra Varimadum« addresses the reader with hypothetical questions from a heretic and then gives the proper responses, which consist of both logical arguments and Scriptural proof-texts. For example, one hypothetical heretical assertion and orthodox response from the »Contra Varimadum« runs as follows:

- 6 The critical editions are as follows: *Contra Varimadum*, ed. Benedikt SCHWANK, Turnhout 1961 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina, 90); *De Mysterio sanctae Trinitatis*, in: *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis Opera Varia*, ed. Germain MORIN, Maretioli 1942, p. 164–180; *Breviarium adversus Haereticos*, *ibid.*, p. 180–208.
- 7 McCLURE, *Handbooks Against Heresy in the West* (as in n. 5), p. 195; SCHWANK, *Praefatio*, in: *Contra Varimadum* (as in n. 6), p. VII–VIII.
- 8 MORIN, *Admonitio in sequens Breviarium*, in: *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis Opera* (as in n. 6), p. 180–182; McCLURE, *Handbooks Against Heresy in the West* (as in n. 5), p. 195; she doubts the attribution to even Caesarius' milieu by Morin.
- 9 MORIN, *Ad libellum De Trinitate*, in: *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis Opera* (as in n. 6), p. 164–165.

»If they say to you: »The Son is not equal to the Father«, you should respond in this way: If the Son is not equal to the Father, why did John the Evangelist testify in this way about him: »For this reason«, he says, »the Jews persecuted Jesus, and were seeking to kill him, since not only did he break the sabbath, but also was saying that his father was God, making himself equal to God« (John 5.18). Also the Apostle Paul: »Understand this concerning yourselves«, he says, »since it is also in Christ Jesus, who although made in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal to God, but made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant« (Philippians 2.5–7). Also in Solomon: »He who bore me, rested in my tabernacle« (Sirach 24.8b). Also in Isaiah: »Just as he is from the beginning, so unto the end of the age; nothing was added to him, nor is anything taken away: for he himself is the master of his creation, who lacked nothing from anyone« (Sirach 42.21). Also in the seventy-second Psalm: »For what is in heaven for me, and what did I want through you on the earth« (Psalm 72.25)? All these show that there is no inferior nature in the Son, but pronounce the equality of his deity: and he who said these spoke the truth, since he is the truth, and the truth is not able to lie¹⁰.«

Here we see the typical method of argument of these handbooks in operation, along with the assumption of a common high regard for scriptural and divine authority.

The second element is lists of the attributes and actions common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and Scripture verses backing up the presence of these attributes and actions in each member of the Trinity. The »Contra Varimadum« contains one hundred of these statements, while the »Breviarum adversus Haereticos« cites thirty-eight of them, all drawn from the »Contra Varimadum«. So in the »Breviarum adversus Haereticos«, the statement, »The Father resides, the Son resides and the Holy Spirit resides in those believing«, is backed up by three Scripture passages: Jeremiah 17.22 for the Father (»Preserve the Sabbath day, and make it holy, so that I might live in your midst«); Ephesians 3.17 for the Son (»Christ lives in your hearts through faith«); and 1 Corinthians 3.16 for the Holy Spirit (»Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God resides in you?«)¹¹. This pattern is repeated for all the other assertions in both texts, with one text given for each person of the Trinity.

10 *Contra Varimadum* 1.6. *Si tibi dixerint: Non est aequalis filius patri. Ita respondes: Si aequalis patri filius non est, cur ita de illo Iohannes evangelista testatus est: »Propterea«, inquit, »persequerentur Iudaei Iesum, et quaerebant eum occidere, quia non solum solvebat sabbatum, sed et patrem suum dicebat deum, aequalem se faciens deo«. Et Paulus apostolus: »Hoc sentite de vobis«, inquit, »quod et in Christo Iesu, qui cum in forma dei esset constitutus, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem deo, sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens«. Et in Solomone: »Qui genuit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo.« Et in Esaia: »Sicuti est ab initio, ita usque in saeculum; neque adiectum est ei, neque minuitur illi: ipse est enim dominus creaturae suae, qui nihil eguit ab aliquot.« Et in psalmo septuagesimo secundo: »Quid enim mihi est in caelo, et a te quid volui super terram?« Haec omnia in filio non inferiorem naturam demonstrant, sed aequalitatem deitatis adnuntiant: quoniam qui utraque locutus est, verum dixit, quia veritas mentiri non potuit. All translations are my own.*

11 *Breviarum adversus Haereticos* 205.25–29. *Habitat Pater in credentibus, habitat Filius, habitat et Spiritus sanctus. De Patre in Esaia: »Servate diem sabbvati, et sanctificate eum, ut habitem in*

The »De Mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« is written with only one voice, that of the orthodox cleric. At the same time, however, the same challenges are answered. So at the start of the treatise, when the author's voice is directed at the reader, he says:

»He should be asked whether God the Father was always perfect, or imperfect, and whether anything at any time is able or will be able to be added or taken away from him. And when they do not dare to say anything other than that he is truly perfect (...) again they should be asked, whether the Son was always with the Father. If he says, »He was always with him«, then say to him: »If he was always with him, he is therefore coeternal and equal to him«. But if he denies that the Son was always with the Father, why did he profess before that the Father is perfect, to whom afterwards was born a Son, and through the Son the name of Father was added at that time¹²?«

Later on, Caesarius addresses the heretic directly: »I ask again, so that you might respond to me, how you accept that which was written: »Before me God is not, and after me he will not be.« Say to me, whether the voice belongs to the Father or to the Son¹³.« The shift from addressing the orthodox reader to addressing the heretic is typical (the »Breviarium adversus Haereticos« also does this¹⁴), but the »De Mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« is also more of a hybrid between a handbook against heresy, its stated purpose, and a pastoral address on Trinitarian doctrine. But what does all this have to do with Gregory of Tours?

These three handbooks were circulating in Gaul during Gregory's time and there are distinct echoes of them in his »Historiae«¹⁵. The first example I would like to deal with is a conversation he has with the Visigothic king Leuvigild's ambassador Agila in the year 580. Agila himself seems, by Gregory's description, to hold to a fairly

medio vestry. « *De Filio ad Ephesios:* »*Habitare Christum per fidem in cordibus vestris.*« *De Spiritu sancto:* »*Nescitis quoniam templum Dei estis, et Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis?*«

12 *De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis* 166.11–20. *Interrogandus est utrum deus Pater perfectus fuerit semper, an imperfectus, et utrum ei aliquid addi aut minui aut potuerit aliquando aut possit. Et cum non ausus fuerit aliud dicere, nisi quod vere perfectus sit, iterum interrogandus est, utrum Filius semper cum Patre fuerit. Si dixerit, Semper cum eo, dicatur ei: Si semper cum eo fuit, ergo sempiternus et aequalis est illi. Si vero negaverit cum Patre semper fuisse Filium, quomodo eum supra perfectum esse confessus est, cui postea Filius natus est, et per Filium nomen Patris additum?*

13 *De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis* 167.24–26. *Adhuc interrogo, ut mihi respondeas, qualiter accipias illud quod scriptum est: »Ante me non est Deus, et post me non erit.« Dic mihi, utrum Patris an Filii vox est?*

14 *Breviarium adversus Haereticos* 183.25–185.3.

15 The »*Breviarium adversus Haereticos*« is contained in Cod. Paris. Lat. 12 097, written in the sixth century in Gaul (MORIN, Admonitio in sequens *Breviarium* [as in n. 8], p. 181; for the broader context of the manuscripts see Ralph MATHISEN, Church Councils and Local Authority: The Development of Gallic *Libri Canonum* during Late Antiquity, in: Carol HARRISON, Caroline HUMFRESS, Isabella SANDWELL (eds.), *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, Oxford 2014, p. 175–193; the »*Contra Varimadum*« appears in an eighth-century manuscript produced at Corbie, and according to Benedict Schwank, editor of the CCSL edition, this edition seems to be similar to the one used by the author of the »*Breviarium adversus Haereticos*« (SCHWANK, Praefatio [as in n. 7], p. VII).

standard version of Homoian Arian theology¹⁶. Agila denies the equality of the Son with the Father and the Spirit's equality with the Father and Son. He is described by Gregory as a *virum nulli ingenii aut dispositiones ratione conperitum, sed tantum voluntatem in catholica lege perversum*, a »man with no intelligence, known for a skill in rational argument, but only with malevolence against the catholic faith«¹⁷. This cunning gives him confidence in vigorously attacking Gallic Nicene Trinitarianism. The conversation that ensues between Gregory and Agila runs largely along the lines outlined in the handbooks against heresy I have described.

To begin, the hypothetical heretical adversary in the handbooks is portrayed as clearly superior in rhetorical acumen to the simple catholic facing him, as for example in the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis«: »Men of another religion are accustomed to provoke certain simple catholics with very subtle and complicated questioning (...) so that, when those who are questioned are not able to respond as is fitting because of either their own simplicity or lack of skill, the questioners are able to appear as victors over them¹⁸.« Thus, argues Caesarius, there is a need for a treatise like the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis«, outlining how to go about defeating a heretic in argument. Gregory shows by his own actions how this is done when faced with a cunning adversary like Agila.

Agila begins his argument by quoting John 14.28, where Christ says, »The Father is greater than I«, then proceeds to argue that he who suffered could not be equal to the Father¹⁹. Gregory responds in the manner prescribed by the handbooks against heresy. He appeals to the common belief between him and Agila that God is perfect and does not lack wisdom, light, truth, life or justice; and that Christ is all of these for God²⁰. Agila agrees, and so Gregory has him in a trap: if Agila wants to say that there was a time when the Son did not exist, then he has to say that God lacks some critical divine qualities.

All three handbooks against heresy advise their readers to set this trap. Thus the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« suggests: »He should be asked whether he believes what the apostle said, that Christ is »the power of God and the wisdom of God«. And when they are unable for any reason to deny this, it should be said to him: »If Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, without a doubt, if according to you

16 See Uta HEIL, *Avitus von Vienne und die homöische Kirche der Burgunder*, Berlin, Boston 2011, p. XIV–XV, 112–115.

17 *Historiae* 5.43.

18 *De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis* 165.1–8. *Solent homines alterius religionis simplices quosque catholicos subtilissima et non simplici interrogatione provocare (...) ut, cum illi, qui interrogantur, aut propter simplicitatem aut propter imperitiam non, sicut oportet, potuerint respondere, illi, qui interrogaverunt, quasi victores sibi videantur existere.*

19 *Historiae* 5.43. *Non est ergo aequum, ut ei similis estimetur, cui se minorem dicit, cui tristitia mortis ingemit, cui postremo moriens spiritum, quasi nulla praeditus potestate, commendat. Unde patet, eum et aetate et potestate paterna minorem.* »Therefore it is not obvious that he [the Father] should be reckoned equal to him [Christ] who calls himself lesser, who mourns over the sadness of death, who finally, dying, commends his spirit as if he possessed no power. And so it is clear that he is lesser than the Father in both age and power.«

20 *Ibid.* 5.43. *Ego interrogo, si crederit, Iesum Christum filium Dei esse, si eundemque esse Dei sapientiam, si lumen, si veritatem, si vitam, si iustitiam fateretur.* »I then ask if he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, if the same one is also the wisdom of God, if he confesses that he is the light, the life, the justice of God.«

there was a time when the Father was without the Son, he had neither power nor wisdom. (...) But you professed that God the Father is so perfect, that nothing is able to be either added or taken away from him.²¹« The »Breviarium adversus Haereticos« says something similar, addressing the heretic directly: »If therefore the Father was without the Son, as you say, then he was without power, he was without wisdom, he was without life, he was without truth. But without these attributes it must never be believed that the Father exists²².« Gregory follows these two formats exactly. The trap is set, and sprung.

Gregory then proceeds to answer the scripture quote used by Agila, »The Father is greater than I«, by following the advice of the »Contra Varimadum«. Gregory states: »But as for what you say that Christ said, ›the Father is greater than I‹, you should know that he said this out of the humility of the assumed flesh, so that you might know that redemption was achieved not by power but by humility. For you who say, ›The Father is greater than I‹, it is fitting for you to remember where elsewhere it is said: ›I and the Father are one²³.« The »Contra Varimadum's« argument runs as follows: »If they say to you that which the Son said in the gospel: ›The Father is greater than I‹, you should respond in this way: The Son is lesser than the Father in the form of the assumed humanity, but he is equal to the Father in the substance of the nature of his deity, with he himself saying: ›I and the Father are one²⁴.« The »Contra Varimadum« also gives a number of other scriptural *testimonia* from the Gospel of John and one from the letter First John for possible use²⁵. Gregory, however, only uses the one Scriptural citation.

Agila then responds with the argument that since the Son always does the will of the Father, he must be younger and lesser than him²⁶. Gregory makes a rejoinder by pointing out some places in the gospel of John where the Father does the will of the Son. For example, Gregory mentions Jesus' prayer as he was going up to Jerusalem before his crucifixion: »But also when he came to his passion, he said: ›Father, glorify me with the same glory I had when I was with you«. To which the Father an-

21 De mysterio 166.23–27, 29. *Iterum interrogandus est, utrum credat illud, quod apostolus dixit, »Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam« Christum esse. Cum hoc negare nulla ratione potuerit, dicendum est illi: Si Christus Dei virtus est et Dei sapientia, sine dubio, si secundum te fuit tempus quando Pater sine Filio fuit, nec virtutem nec sapientiam habuit. (...) Professus es enim deum Patrem ita perfectum esse, ut ei nec addi aliquid nec minui possit.*

22 Breviarium adversus Haereticos 184.25–27. *Si ergo fuit Pater sine Filio, sicut tu dicis, fuit sine virtute, fuit sine sapientia, fuit sine vita, fuit sine veritate. Sed quia sine his nunquam fuisse pater credendus est (...).*

23 Historiae 5.43. *Quod autem eum dixisse ais: »Pater maior me est«, scias, eum hoc ex adsumptae carnis humilitate dixisse, ut cognoscas, non potestate, sed humilitate fuisse redemptum. Nam tu qui dicis: »Pater maior me est«, oportet te meminere, quod alibi ait: »Ego et Pater unum sumus.«*

24 Contra Varimadum 1.5.1–5. *Si tibi dixerint illud, quod filius in evangelio dixit: »Pater maior me est.« Ita respondes: Filius minor est patre in adsumpti hominis forma, aequalis vero patri est in deitatis naturae substantia, eodem protestante: »Ego et pater unum sumus.«*

25 I. e., John 10.30, 14.9, 15.23, 5.23, 17.22–23, 17.10, 16.15, 14.10, 1.1, 1 John 5.7–8.

26 Historiae 5.43. *Et ille: »Cuius quis implet voluntatem, eius et iunior est; semper filius minor est patri, quia ille facit voluntatem patris, nec pater illius voluntatem facere non probatur.« »And he responded: ›He who fulfills the will of another is also younger than him; the Son is always lesser than the Father, since he does the will of the Father, nor is it proved that the Father does the will of the Son.«*

swered from heaven: ›I have glorified it and I will glorify it again‹²⁷.« The »Contra Varimadum« anticipates this argument in a number of places, most plainly in 1.29, where the objection that since the Son asks things of the Father he must be lesser than him is answered²⁸. There, the anonymous author argues: »Hear him who said ›I ask‹, in the same way commanding the Father, saying in another place in the gospel: ›Father, I desire that where I am, even so will they be‹²⁹.« Gregory does not use the same passage of Scripture, but the argument is the same.

Agila then changes tack, arguing: »He began to be called the Son of God after he assumed humanity, for there was a time when he was not‹³⁰.« This is a mixture of Arian and adoptionist (Bonosian?) teachings, which may well have been characteristic of the actual Visigothic church³¹. The first (adoptionist) statement is not anticipated by the handbooks against heresy dealt with in this article, since the »Contra Varimadum« is directed against a Neapolitan Arian sect and the other handbooks follow its lead. However, the second, »there was a time when he was not«, is a classic Arian slogan. Gregory deals with this second part of Agila's sloganeering in a way recommended by the »Contra Varimadum«. He states: »Hear David speaking in the person of the Father: ›From the womb before the morning star I begot you.‹ And the evangelist John says: ›In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.‹ Therefore by this ›the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, through whom all things were made‹³².« The »Contra Varimadum«, in response to the Arian statement, »there was a time before the Son was born from the Father«, restates Nicene dogma that, »before all times the Son was begotten indescribably from the Father's womb«, then backs it up with five scriptural citations, two of which, Psalm 109.3 (»From the womb before the morning star I begot you in the splendours of the holy places«) and John 1.1–3 (»In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God«), are also cited by Gregory³³. The argument is not the same, since the »Contra Varimadum« deigns to explain the theological concept reasonably thoroughly, while Gregory relies upon the authority of Scripture alone, but the citations are alike.

27 Ibid. 5.43. *Sed et cum ad passionem venit, ait: »Pater clarifica me claritatem quam habui apud te met ipsum, priusquam mundus fierit.« Cui Pater de caelo respondit: »Et clarificavi et iterum clarificabo.«*

28 Contra Varimadum 1.29. *Si tibi dixerint: »Idcirco minor est filius, quia ipse patrem rogasse se dicit.« »If they should say to you: ›The Son is lesser for this reason, since it says that he asked things from the Father.‹«*

29 Ibid. 1.29. *Audi adhuc eum, qui dixit »rogo«, quemadmodum, tamquam patri imperans, dicit alio evangelii loco: »Pater«, ait, »volo, ut ubi ego sum, et isti sint mecum.«*

30 Historiae 5.43. *Et ille: »Ex adsumptum hominem coepit Dei filius vocitari; nam erat quando non erat.«*

31 See Knut SCHÄFERDIEK, *Die Kirche in den Reichen der Westgoten und Suewen bis zur Errichtung der westgotischen katholischen Staatskirche*, Berlin 1967, p. 187 n. 167.

32 Historiae 5.43. *Audi David dicentem ex persona Patris: »Ex utero ante lucifero genui te.« Et Iohannis evangelista ait: »In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum.« Hoc ergo »Verbum caro factum est et habitabit in nobis, per quem facta sunt omnia.«*

33 Contra Varimadum 1.12. *Si autem dixerint: Erat tempus antequam de patre filius nasceretur (...) ante omnia tempora de paterno utero inerrabiliter generatum (...). In splendoribus sanctorum ex utero ante lucifero genui te (...). In principio (...) erat verbum, et verbum erat apud deum, et deus erat verbum.*

In the last section of the discussion, Agila addresses the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This parallels the procession of topics in the handbooks against heresy, which each address the equal divinity of the Holy Spirit after refuting the arguments against the equal divinity of the Son. Agila's argument, which he makes twice before Gregory starts his refutation, is that the Holy Spirit is inferior to both Father and Son because he is sent from both: »The Holy Spirit, who you profess as equal to the Father and to the Son, should be received as lesser than both, since he was read to have been both promised by the Son and sent by the Father. (...) God is he who sends, he is not God who is sent³⁴.« Gregory responds by citing Acts 5.3–4, when the apostle Peter says to Ananias and Sapphira, »What did it seem to you to lie to the Holy Spirit? You have not lied to men, but to God«, and 1 Corinthians 12.11, where the apostle Paul says: »One and the same Spirit works all these things, dividing each one just as he wishes«, which Gregory interprets by saying, »He who does what he wishes is lessened in power in no way«³⁵. These citations are preceded by a question-and-answer sequence where Gregory asks Agila whether or not he recognizes the authority of the apostles Peter and Paul, which Agila affirms³⁶. Thus Gregory uses the authority of the scriptural text and its author as a lever against his interlocutor.

This argument does not appear in the »Contra Varimadum«, but does appear in the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis«. There, the author says to his opponent:

»And concerning the sending of the Holy Spirit I want you to tell me what you think. For you believe that, since the Holy Spirit is frequently called a »sent one«, he is not only lesser but a creature. But that he is not only not lesser, but is even truly God, the apostle Peter showed clearly, when he said to Ananias and Sapphira: »Why has Satan tempted your heart, that you should lie to the Holy Spirit? Therefore you have not lied to men, but to God.« Since so great and such a witness as the apostle Peter, to whom the Lord deigned to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, said that the Holy Spirit was God, let them who try to assert with great impiety that he is a creature consider in what danger they send themselves. The apostle Paul also says: »Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom«; and again: »The Spirit divides each one as he will«. He did not say, »how he was commanded«, but, »as he will«. And John the evangelist: »The Spirit breathes where he will.« And in that which is said, »as he will«, is shown clearly that the power of the will is equal to the Father and to the Son³⁷.«

34 *Historiae* 5.43. *Et ille: »Spiritus sanctum, quem aequalem Patri profertis ac Filio, utrisque minor accipitur, quis et a Filio promissus et a Patre legitur missus (...). Deus est qui mittit, non est Deus qui mittitur.«*

35 *Ibid.* 5.43. *Adiaci: »Cum arguerit Petrus apostolus Annaniam pro fraude fundi, vide, quid dicat: »Quid tibi visum est mentire Spiritus sancto? Non es enim mentitus hominibus, sed Deo.« Et Paulus, cum gratiarum spiritalium distinguierit gradus: »Haec omnia«, inquit, »operatur unus adque idem Spiritus, dividens unicuique prout vult. Qui enim quod voluerit facit, in nullius redegitur potestate.«*

36 *Ibid.* 5.43. *Ad haec ego interrogo, si crediderit doctrinam Petri Paulique apostolorum. Respondentem autem eo: »Credo.«* »At this I asked him if he believed the teaching of the apostles Peter and Paul. He responded to that: »I do believe.««

37 *De mysterio*, 169.12–26. *De missione etiam Spiritus sancti volo ut mihi dicas quid sentias. Vos enim, quia frequenter missus dicitur Spiritus sanctus, non solum minorem, sed etiam creaturam*

The same two citations from Scripture appear that also appear in Gregory's own argument, and the same argument from the authority of the apostles Peter and Paul.

Gregory's conversation with Agila concludes with the bishop and the envoy getting into an increasingly testy exchange. Agila outright rejects the orthodox faith, »Moved by fury and I know not what, gnashing his teeth like a madman«³⁸. Agila then abandons the debate and returns home. Gregory's arguments, modeled after those found in the handbooks against heresy, fail. Gregory concludes by reporting that Agila converted to the true faith just before his death.

There are four other theological dialogues that occur after this one: 1) an abortive attempt by king Chilperic to introduce Sabellianism (that is, that there is no distinction of persons between the members of the Trinity); 2) a debate with Priscus the Jew over the necessity and possibility of Christ's crucifixion; 3) a debate with another ambassador from Spain, Oppila, who however insisted upon only minor adjustments to catholic trinitarianism; and finally 4) a debate with one of Gregory's priests who denied the resurrection. While there are other literary antecedents for the debate with Priscus, they are not strictly speaking handbooks against heresy. The debate with Chilperic also does not draw on them, and is in any case not much of a debate, as will be seen. The discussion with the denier of the resurrection concerns a subject not treated by the handbooks with which this article is engaged. The debate with Oppila also does not engage with material sourced from the handbooks against heresy, but there are a number of broad similarities that warrant some attention. First, however, the general drift of the debates with Chilperic, Priscus and the resurrection-denying priest will be briefly outlined. Although they do not draw from the handbooks against heresy, they on the whole have similar conclusions to the dialogue between Gregory and Agila, and will thus reinforce this article's thesis.

The encounter with Chilperic comes immediately after the conversation with Agila. While it too involves trinitarian heterodoxy (in this case, Sabellianism), there is not really a discussion and no scriptural texts are trotted out³⁹. Instead, Gregory reports

eum creditis esse. Quod autem non solum minor non sit, sed vere deus sit, apostolus Petrus evidenter ostendit, ubi Ananiae et Saphirae dixit: »Cur temptavit Satanas cor vestrum, mentiri vos Spiritui sancto? Itaque non estis mentiti hominibus, sed deo.« Cum tantus ac talis testis apostolus Petrus, cui claves regni caelorum dare dignatus est dominus, deum dixerit Spiritum sanctum, considerent, in quo periculo se mittant, qui eum cum grandi impietate creaturam conantur adserere. Dicit etiam apostolus Paulus: »Ubi Spiritus domini, ibi libertas«; et iterum: »Dividit singulis Spiritus pro ut vult.« Non dixit, quomodo iussus fuerit, sed, »pro ut vult«. Et Iohannes evangelista: »Spiritus ubi vult spirat.« In eo autem quod dicitur, »pro ut vult«, per potestatem voluntatis aequalis esse Patri et Filio evidenter ostenditur.

38 Historiae 5.43. *At ille furore commotus et nescio quid quasi insanus frendens (...).*

39 One of the handbooks against heresy mentioned by McClure, the »Adversus Quinque Haeresis«, falsely ascribed in the manuscripts to Quodvultdeus of Carthage, deals with Sabellianism, leading McClure to suggest, »that the Trinitarian confrontation which resulted from Germanic [Homoian] Arianism had given rise, perhaps among the uninformed, to loose statements of Trinitarian theology that some learned bishops feared could be described as Sabellianism *redivivus*« (McCLURE, Handbooks Against Heresy in the West [as in n. 5], p. 195). Interestingly, Chilperic's lapse into a version of Sabellianism comes immediately after Gregory's debate with Agila; could the king's unfortunate edict have been a result of a process like that described by McClure, in that Chilperic is clumsily countering Homoian Arianism, or at the least could Gregory be mindful in his narrative of the possibility of such a process taking place?

the substance of Chilperic's doctrinal suggestion, then quotes Chilperic's scriptural justification: »He affirmed that the Father himself is the same as he who is the Son, and he who is the Holy Spirit. ›Thus‹, he said, ›he appeared to the prophets and to the patriarchs, thus the same law proclaimed him‹⁴⁰.« Gregory responded first by citing the authority of Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius of Vercelli against Chilperic's view, then, when Chilperic rejected their authority, recited standard clauses about the differentiation of the persons of the Trinity. Chilperic then insists that other bishops will agree with him, and Gregory retorts that they would be fools to do so. Chilperic's response to this is described by Gregory using the same term he uses to describe Agila's response: *frendens*. »At this he, gnashing his teeth, fell silent«, reports the bishop of Tours⁴¹. There is no particular connection to the handbooks against heresy in this dialogue, but the principle of heretics irrationally and furiously rejecting the true faith remains⁴². The solution to this irrationality turns out not to be Gregory's sloganeering but the wrath of a saintly bishop, Salvian of Albi, who angrily rejects the king's proposal⁴³.

The next theological debate once again involves king Chilperic, but this time he is on Gregory's side. The king's servant Priscus, a Jew, is compelled by Chilperic into a situation where he has to engage Gregory in a dispute over the truth of Christianity⁴⁴. The discussion revolves around whether or not the Old Testament, the Jewish Bible, supports Christian claims about Christ. Priscus' objections centre around the character of God, with him arguing that God is one, and not accompanied by anyone else: »God (...) does not endure to have any equal«; and that the events of the incarnation are impossible for God: »Is God really able to be made human, or to be born from a woman, or to be subjected to blows, or to be condemned to death«⁴⁵?« Chilperic and Gregory respond principally with a concatenation of scriptural passages taken exclusively from the Old Testament, as well as more conventional explanations of why Christ had to die. Priscus does not convert at the end of this debate and the vignette ends inconclusively.

40 *Historiae* 5.44. *Adfirmans etiam, ipsum esse Patrem, qui est Filius, idemque ipsum esse Spiritum sanctum, qui Pater et Filius. Sic, inquit, prophetis ac patriarchis apparuit, sic eum ipsa lex nuntiavit.*

41 *Ibid.* 5.44. *Ad haec ille frendens siluit.*

42 The broader context of the moral theme of Books V and VI of Gregory's »*Historiae*«, that is, the discord causing the civil wars between the Merovingian kings and the wickedness of Chilperic, is worth noting here (see esp. HEINZELMANN, *Gregory of Tours* [as in n. 1], p. 41–51). Chilperic's heresy, even if a clumsy reaction to the heresy of Agila, is characteristic of a king who thinks it unnecessary to be obedient to the bishops of the Church.

43 *Historiae* 5.44. *Non post multos vero dies adveniente Salvio Albigense episcopo, haec ei praecepit recensire, depraecans, ut sibi consentaneus fieret. Quod ille audiens, ita respuit, ut, si cartam, in qua haec scripta tenebantur, potuisset attingere, in frustra discerperit. Et sic rex ab hac intentione quievit.* »Now not many days after this, when Salvian bishop of Albi came to him, he commanded him to go through these things, requesting that he should give his consent to them. But hearing him, Salvian rejected it in such a way that, if he should have been able to reach the document in which these writings were held, he would have torn it apart in pieces. And so the king refrained from his intention.«

44 *Ibid.* 6.5.

45 *Ibid.* 6.5. *Deus (...) neque ullum consortem regni habere patitur. Numquid Deus homo fieri potuit aut de mulieri nasci, verberibus subdi, morte damnare?*

In the final book of the »Historiae«, Gregory relates a debate he had in 590 with one of his priests who denied the resurrection, who, »had been infected by the venom of the wickedness of the Sadducees«⁴⁶. The discussion is once again a question-and-answer format, with Gregory and his heretical subordinate exchanging Scriptural passages and arguments. In this case the priest is convinced by Gregory's citations: »At this the priest, having been chastened, departed from our sight, promising to believe the resurrection according to the list of holy Scriptures which we brought forth above«⁴⁷.« This is the only occasion in which Gregory's arguments are successful; it is noteworthy that it is with a priest under his ecclesiastical authority that he enjoys his only success.

The debates with Priscus the Jew and the resurrection-denying, »Sadducean« priest are similar, in that they are extended dialogues complete with exchanges of competing Scriptural passages. The episode involving Chilperic mostly involves a fierce re-assertion of basic Trinitarianism by Gregory and an exchange of insults. So not all these cases are suitable for comparisons with handbooks against heresies. However, the two more involved dialogues contain many of the elements common to both the first passage examined above and to the handbooks against heresies: namely, quoting standard Scriptural passages and playing upon common doctrinal assumptions. This pattern is evident once again in a debate that Gregory has with yet another enjoy of the Visigothic kings, Oppila. This debate is worth examining in more depth, because while it does not draw directly on the »Contra Varimadum«, »Breviarium adversus Haereticos«, or the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis«, it deals with the same subjects and in similar ways.

In 584 Oppila arrives in Tours, claims to be an orthodox Christian, and accompanies Gregory to the celebration of the mass; however, he does not participate directly in the sacrament, raising Gregory's suspicions. When the bishop of Tours confronts him about his abstention, he insists that, while he freely confesses, »I believe that the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one in power (*virtus*)«, he cannot agree with the assigination of *gloria* to the Son, since the Son announced the Father to the world⁴⁸. Oppila states: »You do not rightly respond *gloria*, for together with Paul the apostle we ourselves say, ›Glory be to God the Father though the Son; but you say: ›Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit«, although the teachers of the churches teach that the Father was announced to the world through the Son, just as Paul himself says: ›But to the King of the Ages, immortal, invisible, to God alone be honour and glory for ever and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord«⁴⁹.« Oppila cites the apostle Paul as his authority, merging two citations together from two Pauline letters: 1 Timothy 1.17 and Romans 16.27. The variant creed (*Gloria Deo Patri per*

46 Ibid. 10.13. *Quidam de presbiteris nostris Sadduceae malignitatis infectus veneno (...).*

47 Ibid. 10.13. *Ad haec contristatus presbiter, a conspectu nostro discedens, pollicitus est credere resurrectionem iuxta seriem Scripturarum sanctarum, quam supra memoravimus.*

48 Ibid. 6.40. *Credo Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum unius esse virtutes.*

49 Ibid. 6.40. *Gloriam non recte responditis; nam iuxta Paulum apostolum nos dicimus: »Gloria Deo Patri per Filium«; vos autem dicitis: »Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritu sancto«, cum doctores ecclesiarum doceant, Patrem per Filium nuntiatum fuisse in mundum, sicut ipse Paulus ait: »Regi autem saeculorum immortalis et invisibili, soli Deo honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum, per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum.«*

Filium) that Oppila mentions as being particular to his church is one that comes up in the context of late fifth- and early sixth-century Burgundian Arianism, and appears as an object of dispute in the writings of Avitus of Vienne⁵⁰. The problem that the Visigothic church had with assigning glory to the Son was something it held in common with Avitus' earlier Burgundian interlocutors, which is to be expected given their adherence to the same form of Homoian Arianism⁵¹.

Gregory responds to Oppila's argument and citation of 1 Timothy 1.17 by arguing that, while the Father was indeed announced to the world through the Son, this did not denote an inferior glory. Rather, it was precisely because no one had listened to God's previous (lesser) messengers that the Son had to be sent; the citation, in short, refers to the process of salvation and the distinctive roles of the three persons of the Trinity in that process. And so, »For this reason it is necessary that Glory be given to God under the distinction of persons«⁵². Gregory accuses Oppila of twisting the words of the Apostle Paul, who spoke in a plain manner: »For the humble Paul spoke in a human idiom, so that he might lift them up to the summit of a higher faith⁵³.« He then cites his own evidence that the Son is rightly assigned the attribute of glory.

This evidence Gregory provides is that the Father declared that glory belonged to the Son during the Son's time on earth. He cites three occasions when the Father glorified the Son: at the baptism by John, when the voice from heaven declared: »This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased«; at the Transfiguration, when again the voice from heaven declared: »This is my dearest Son, listen to him«; and finally just before his crucifixion⁵⁴. The first two, Oppila points out after they are trotted out, do not have the Father declaring that glory belonged to the Son⁵⁵. Gregory then brings out his clinching citation, stating: »I will present to you another citation, in which the Father represented the Son as glorious. At the coming of the Lord to his passion, when he said: ›Father, glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you‹, what did the Father answer him with from heaven? Did he not say: ›I both have glorified and will glorify again? For behold the Father glorifies him with his own voice, and yet you try to take glory away from him⁵⁶?« The Father himself declares that glory belongs to the Son, clearly and explicitly.

50 HEIL, Avitus von Vienne (as in n. 16), p. 205–209.

51 Originating with Ulfila, the missionary to the Goths in the fourth century; see *ibid.*, p. 207–208 n. 326.

52 *Historiae* 6.40. *Ideoque necesse est, ut sub significatione personarum gloria detur Deo.*

53 *Ibid.* 6.40. *Secundum homines enim loquibatur Paulus humiliter, ut eos ad celsioris fidei fastigia sublevaret.*

54 *Ibid.* 6.40. *Hic est, ait, Filius meus dilectus, in quo bene conplacui. (...) Hic est meus carissimus, ipsum audite (...) Pater, glorifica Filium tuum, ut Filius tuus glorificet te.*

55 *Ibid.* 6.40. *Ad haec hereticus respondit: »Nihil in his testimoniis Pater de gloria loquitur Filii, nisi tantum ipsum Filium monstrat.« »To these things the heretic responded: »Nothing in these citations does the Father speak about the glory of the Son, unless that the Son shows only his [i. e., the Father's].«*

56 *Ibid.* 6.40. *Proferam tibi aliud testimonium, in quo Pater reddidit Filium gloriosum. Veniente autem Domino ad passionem, cum ille diceret: »Pater, glorifica Filium tuum, ut Filius tuus glorificet te«, quid ei respondit Pater et caelo? Nonne ait: »Et glorificavi, ete iterum glorificabo?« Ecce enim Pater glorificat eum propria voce, et tu ei gloriam conaris ademere?*

Gregory then returns to the question of the apostle Paul's position on the matter, this time with another citation from the apostle's letter to the Philippians that explicitly assigns glory to the Son. The bishop of Tours states: »You who hold forth as an accuser of the apostle Paul, hear him, or rather Christ speaking in him: ›All tongues will confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.‹ But if now his glory abides in common with the Father's glory and is in that glory which the Father is currently in, how then do you dishonour him as inglorious⁵⁷?« Gregory then concludes his peroration by conjuring Oppila to confess the unity of God. The conversation concludes limply, with Gregory merely reporting that Oppila remained silent and then concluded his business with king Chilperic.

This conversation echoes few elements from the handbooks against heresy, and so there is unlikely to be a direct connection. Unlike the debate with Agila there is very little back-and-forth between the two interlocutors. Thus there is no set-up such as is advised by the »Breviarum adversus Haereticos« or the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« to entrap the heretic in his own illogic, and carried out by Gregory in the earlier debate. Instead, Gregory mostly talks without interruption, with the exception of Oppila's opening statement and his mid-argument interjection about the lack of the term *gloria* in the Father's first two cited statements about the Son. There are a number of broad similarities, however, that are worth noting and that support a more general connection by Gregory to handbooks against heresy.

Oppila's citation of 1 Timothy 1.17 and Romans 16.27 in defense of the Son's subordination is also indirectly cited by the imagined heretical foe in the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis«, but in two separate places and in a different context. The orthodox voice says, in the first instance, »For even that which the apostle says, ›To the immortal, invisible God alone be honour and glory‹, which you receive as said only of the Father, this apostle clearly spoke regarding the whole Trinity«⁵⁸. In the second instance, he notes: »For also that which the apostle says, ›To the only wise God‹, you wish to receive not only irreligiously but also impiously to refer only to the Father alone⁵⁹.« The difference is that Oppila appends Romans 16.27 to the end of the quote from 1 Timothy, and makes the argument from it that the Son's subordinate status is denoted by his function as one who announced God to the people. This argument is not present in either the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« or the »Breviarum adversus Haereticos«, nor is Christ's equal glory to the Father discussed.

Where the issue of glory as an attribute belonging equally to the Son as to the Father is in the »Contra Varimadum«. There, the statement on the attribution of *gloria* to all three members of the Trinity reads as follows: »The God of glory is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.« The *testimonia* are cited as follows: the Father is the

57 Ibid. 6.40. *Nam qui Pauli apostoli accusatur existis, audi ipsum, immo Christum in ipso loquentem: »Omnes lingua confiteatur, quia dominus Iesus Christus in gloria est Dei Patris.« Quod si nunc communis cum Patre gloria et in ipsa qua nunc Pater est gloria commoratur, qualiter eum tu quasi inglorium exhonoras?*

58 *De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis*, 172.18–21. *Nam et illud, quod ait apostolus, »Immortali invisibili soli Deo honor et gloria«, quod vos de solo Patre dictum accipitis, de tota Trinitate hoc apostolum dixisse manifestum est.*

59 Ibid. 176.18–20. *Nam et illud, quod ait apostolus, »Soli sapienti Deo«, vos de solo Patre tantum, non solum imperite, sed impie etiam vultis accipere.*

God of glory in Acts 7.2, the Son is the God of glory in 1 Corinthians 2.8, and the Holy Spirit is the God of glory in 1 Corinthians 6.19–20⁶⁰. This collection of *testimonia* has no similarities with Gregory's argument in his »Historiae«, so the »Contra Varimadum« cannot be a direct source. Still, the basic format is similar: *testimonia* and discussions about authority.

But more importantly all of them, save Gregory's interaction with his resurrection-denying priest, end in failure. Gregory's arguments do not in fact succeed in convincing his interlocutors. Agila marches off in a huff at the end of the discussion, only converting at the end of his life in Spain; Priscus simply refuses to continue the dispute after a while, Gregory in his narrative stating that his arguments had failed to convince him; Oppila doesn't respond in any way to Gregory's speech, completes his diplomatic business and drops out of the story; Chilperic eventually drops his heretical suggestions upon encountering the almost violent opposition of another bishop, Salvian. In the cases where conversion to the true faith is achieved, Agila and Chilperic, it is achieved not through words but through fear of impending death or the fury of a particularly saintly bishop.

In his hagiographical work the »Passio sanctorum septem dormientium apud Ephesum«, or »The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus«, Gregory relates the story of how seven Christians, martyred during the third-century Decian persecution, rose again for a brief time during the reign of the emperor Theodosius in the fourth century. Their spokesman, Maximianus, declares to the emperor that the reason why this miracle occurred was to combat the »Sadducean« heresy which was then making significant inroads into the Christian church. He states, »Know, O Emperor, that the Lord commanded us to rise in order to confirm your faith. Therefore continually, and trusting in him, recognize that there will be a resurrection of the dead since today you see us speak with you and relate the great wonders of God after our resurrection⁶¹«. The authority of wonder-working saints is sufficient to quell heresy without any argument.

I would like to suggest that Gregory's echoing of such handbooks against heresy amid this record of futility reflects his desire to warn against excessive reliance upon rational argument rather than the great works of the saints and the work of God himself. Indeed, the »De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis« mentions this possibility in its introduction, laying stress more on the need to not give the impression to onlookers that the heretical side has won the public debate than to convince the heretic of their heresy. But Gregory has placed his fruitless discussions in the midst of a work emphasizing the wonders of the saints amidst the hard-heartedness of the wicked. His message? Handbooks against heresy might be necessary tools, but they are feeble weapons against the evil he graphically describes in his »Historiae«; to conquer that evil, you need saints.

60 Contra Varimadum 3.30. *Deus gloriae pater, hoc filius, hoc spiritus sanctus.*

61 Passio sanctorum septem dormientium Ephesum 12. »Scito«, inquit, »imperator, quia ad confirmandam fidem tuam nos Dominus resurgere iussit. Ergo iugiter et fidens in eum cognosce, quia fiet resurrectio mortuorum, cum nos hodie videas post resurrectionem tecum loqui atque enarrare magnalia Dei.« For the theological implications of this story, see HEINZELMANN, The Works of Gregory of Tours and Patristic Tradition (as in n. 2), p. 324–327.