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# The Concept of Morphosis in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa

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# THE CONCEPT OF MORPHOSIS IN THE WRITINGS OF GREGORY OF NYSSA

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by

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# CHAPTER I

## GREGORY OF NYSSA

### Introduction

In Early Christianity and Greek Paideia,[1] Werner Jaeger traces the "Greek ideal of paideia" from Origen through Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil the Great to Gregory of Nyssa. Jaeger pointed out that Origen provided "the ideological framework" and developed a "Christian theology" by merging Greek thought with the Christian religion. Furthermore, Jaeger credits Gregory of Naziansus with reviving "the old Greek literary forms" and creating a superior "Christian literature," which often surpassed the pagan writings. To Basil, Jaeger attributes "the direct reception" of classical Greek epics and literature into the educational curriculum as a mark of "higher education." But it is to Gregory of Nyssa that Jaeger assigns the application of the various Greek literary forms with "the appropriate style" for "the different purposes of his literary productivity." Not only does Gregory appropriate the "Neo-Attic style" introduced by the so-called "Second Sophistic movement," but he developed "a new kind of accented prose rhythm." Consequently Jaeger chooses to delineate the ideas of Gregory concerning Greek paideia, because he "more than his great brother Basil, and more than Origen himself, was able to see the nature of Greek paideia in all its aspects."[2]

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[1] Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia (Cambridge, Mass.; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 83-84.

[2] Ibid., p. 86.

Johannes Quasten points out that Gregory of Nyssa shows an "open-mindedness toward contemporary currents of intellectual life, by his great adaptability and keenness of his thought."[3]

Therefore, Gregory of Nyssa in treating the subjects which his brother Basil set forth and expressed, as he did in the area of theology and especially of anthropology, restated, extended and supplemented the concept of paideia as morphosis, that is, as the process of forming or moulding the human personality as developed in the thought of Plato. Gregory took the morphosis, the moulding of human personality of Greek paideia to be comparable to metamorphosis-transformation, which St. Paul recommended in his Epistle to the Romans:

> Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed ( μεταμορφοῦσθε ) by the renewal of your mind ( τῇ ἀνα-καινώσει τοῦ νοός ) that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect( τέλειον).[4]

Thus Gregory enriched the Platonic idea of paideia by supplementing its meaning with a Christian content. It was with this great contribution that the Greek spirit was finally and completely embodied into Christianity.

Werner Jaeger claims that this word morphosis is his summation of Plato's ideal of paideia, and placed it in its German translation Die Formung as the subtitle of the original German edition of his three-volume Paideia. However, since the English translator of that work could not find a suitable and satisfactory English word to render an intelligible literal translation for morphosis, he chose the word Ideals

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[3]Johannes Quasten, Patrology, (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), III, 255.

[4]Rom. 12:2

instead.[5] The fact remains that Gregory of Nyssa had reached the conclusion that for Christianity the idea of Greek paideia was the morphosis of man, the process through which man had to pass, through exercise ( ἄσκησις ), to reach Christian perfection ( τελειότητα ).

For all these reasons, we too have chosen Gregory of Nyssa as the subject for this thesis, in order to trace the concept of Greek paideia as morphosis in his writings. But what about Gregory himself? How much and to what degree was he influenced by earlier writers, Christian and non-Christian? Was Gregory, as some of his contemporaries claimed, interpolating a foreign philosophy into the Bible? Was Jaeger, who devoted most of his later efforts to Gregorian studies, justified in concluding in Humanistische Reden und Vortrage,[6] that Gregory of Nyssa was completely dependent on Plato?

To arrive at some firm or approximate answers to these and other related questions, it is necessary to examine the milieu of Gregory of Nyssa's sphere of activities, his life, his spiritual and cultural environment, his teachers and associates, his writings and his thought, especially his anthropology. This shall be the content of this thesis, which will attempt to make this enquiry in three chapters.

## Biographical Sketch

Gregory, a younger brother of Basil the Great, was born in Neocaesarea about the year 335 A.D., and was nurtured in the same Christian and

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[5] Jaeger, p. 140.

[6] Werner Jaeger, Humanistische Reden und Vortrage, 2 Aufl. (Berlin: n.p., 1960).

intellectual environment. Gregory was born into a family that had a long history of Christian background. He had a great grandfather who was a martyr of early Christian times. His grandparents were victims of the persecutions of Diocletian. His grandmother Macrina had studied Christian doctrine under the great St. Gregory the Thaumaturg. His father was a well-known rhetorician and outstanding person in Caesarea, who died early in life leaving a large family of four sons and five daughters to his widowed wife Emelia. The oldest daughter, named Macrina after her grandmother, together with their mother Emelia, after everyone in the family had been made self-sufficient, organized a women's monastery on the banks of the Iris river. Macrina later became the head of the monastery in which capacity she later died.[7] Basil, who had gone to study in Constantinople and Athens, returned in 356 A.D. A few years later he also founded a monastery for men nearby, where he and his friend Gregory of Nazianzus studied the writings of the earlier Christian Fathers and lived a very ascetic life. Here Gregory of Nyssa spent much time in study and contemplation.

In the next section the educational background of Gregory will be examined in greater detail, therefore suffice it to say here that beside the general studies in local schools Gregory had as his private teachers in secular and religious studies his brother Basil and his sister

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[7]Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of St. Macrina, translated by W. K. L. Clarke (London: SPCK, 1916), p. 159; Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), XLVI, 959-1000. Hereafter Migne's edition will be referred to as MPG, and Gregory of Nyssa's works will be referred to only by title of writings and place of reference without his name.

Macrina.[8] At an early age Gregory became an acolyte in the Church, participating as a "lay-reader" in church services, and seemingly preparing for the ministry in the Church. Suddenly he changed his mind and took the position of a rhetorician and began plying this profession. It was also during this period of time that he married a very devout young woman named Theosevia,[9] ἡ ὄντως ἱερὰ καὶ ἱερέως σύζυγος. Later his family and friends urged Gregory to return to serve the Church. Especially his friend Gregory of Nazianaus wrote to him to convince him to leave rhetoric, this ἄδοξον ταύτην εὐδοξίαν and return to the study of Holy Scripture.[10] It seems that a little later his wife died and Gregory espoused the ascetic life, to which he gave himself completely in the study of theology.[11] In 371 Basil as the Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia called and ordained Gregory to serve as bishop of the small city of Nyssa on the road between Caesarea and Ancyra. Ever since then this title of Nyssa has been associated with the name of Gregory as his distinctive nomenclature.[12] Gregory being of a great theoretical bent of mind reluctantly and only after great urging accepted this chore away from

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[8]Gregory of Nyssa; cf. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, edited by Philip Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), V, 387. Hereafter Eerdmans' edition will be referred to as LNPF.

[9]Gregory of Nazianzus, Epistle 197; cf. De Virginitate, MPG, XLVI, 325B; LNPF, V, 345; J. Danielou, "Le marriage de Gregoire de Nysse et la chronologie de sa vie," Revue des Etudes Augustiennes, II (1956), 71-78.

[10]Gregory of Nazianaus, Epistle 197; MPG, XXXVII, 41B.

[11]Basil, Epistle 225, MPG, XXXII, 840AB.

[12]Basil, Epistle 237, MPG, XXXII, 885-888.

the peace and serenity of his eremitic study. Basil knew that Gregory was not proficient in matters of administration, but he needed him for his deep theological wisdom to support him in his battle against the Arian heretics. Gregory's active and able support of the Nicene doctrines was a formidable weapon against the Arians. But what these enemies could not accomplish by fair means, they did by slander and royal intrigues. The Arians slandered Gregory unjustly as not having a canonical ordination and of having misused church funds. In his absence, the Arian bishop Demosthenes called a synod in Nyssa in 375 and deposed Gregory.[13] The order was made into a royal decree by the Arian Emperor Valens, and Gregory went into exile for two years. In 378 the Emperor died, and Gregory returned in triumph to this throne.[14] From that time on Gregory became recognized as a champion of Orthodoxy, especially since the death of his brother Basil created a great need for another capable person to take effective action against the heretics. Later in 379 Gregory attended the Synod of Antioch and participated in the condemnation of Apollinarius. This same Synod commissioned Gregory to undertake a secret mission against the Arians in the diocese of Arabia, Palestine and Pontus.[15] In his absence the Church, without his knowledge, elected Gregory to be the bishop of Sevasteia. On his return, Gregory did not accept this promotion, but returned to his old see in Nyssa.[16]

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[13] MPG, XXXII, 888B.

[14] Epistle 3, LNPF, V, 529-530.

[15] Vita Macrina, LXVI, 960.

[16] Epistle 18, LNPF, V, 545.

In 381 the Second Ecumenical Council convened in Constantinople. Gregory of Nyssa attended and was given great honors.[17] Furthermore, Gregory was selected by the Emperor Theodosius to preach the oration on the occasion of the elevation of Gregory of Nazianzus to the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople. During the meetings of the Council, the presiding bishop Meletios died, and Gregory was selected to preach the funeral oration. The Emperor Theodosius sent an edict to the bishops of the Second Ecumenical Council on July 30th, 381, stating that anyone who was not in ecclesiastical communion with Gregory of Nyssa, with Helladius of Caesarea, and with Otrius of Melitini, was to be condemned as a heretic. Gregory of Nyssa also was given the honor by that Council to complete the orthodox confession concerning the Holy Spirit, which was incorporated into the Nicene Creed.[18] After the Second Ecumenical Council in the year 386 the princess Pulcheria and later her mother, Empress Flacilla, died. The Emperor Theodosius brought Gregory of Nyssa to Constantinople on both occasions to preach the eulogy at the funerals of his dear departed. The last recorded event concerning Gregory of Nyssa is his participation in another synod in Constantinople in the year 394 A.D. Historians agree that shortly thereafter Gregory must have died for no other record of him exists.

The Third Ecumenical Council in the year 431 A.D. at Ephesus hailed Gregory of Nyssa as "a man second only after his brother in words and

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[17]Socrates, Historia Ecclesiastica, Book V, 8, MPG, LXVII, 576-581.

[18]Nicephorus Kallistos, Historia Ecclesiastica, LIB, XII, MPG, CXLVI,

manners."[19] The Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 A.D. at Nicea of Bithynia decreed Gregory of Nyssa "to be called the father of fathers by all."

Modern writers seem to also agree that Gregory of Nyssa surpassed the other Cappadocians as a philosopher and theologian;[20] that he was "more learned and profound" than they;[21] that he was "possibly the most versatile theologian of the century,"[22] and "as a speculative theologian and mystic he is certainly the most gifted of the three."[23]

## Educational Background

The scant information concerning Gregory of Nyssa's educational background, his expressions of lack of formal education on the one hand, and his erudite writings on the other, together with his recognition as a great preacher and outstanding writer by his contemporaries both friendly and hostile, have been an embarrassment to scholars dealing with Gregory's life and activities and trying to justify these contradictory factors. In his letter to the pagan teacher and rhetor Libanius[24] Gregory paints a poor picture of his own educational

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[19] D. S. Balanos, Πατρολογία (Athens: Alexopoulou Company, 1930), p. 332.

[20] B. Altaner, Patrology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1960), p. 352.

[21] J. M. Campbell, The Greek Fathers (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1929), p. 62.

[22] H. V. Campenhausen, The Fathers of the Greek Church (London: Adam and Charles Black, Ltd., 1963), p. 109.

[23] Quasten, III, 254.

[24] Epistle 13, MPG, XLIII, 5-21; cf. LNPF, V, 535-538.

background. He attributes the source of his learning to the Holy Scriptures and to his brother Basil, whom he calls here and elsewhere "father and teacher." He further admits that if he has any knowledge of the art of rhetoric, he learned it indirectly from Libanius, who was Basil's teacher.

There are, however, enough indications and incidents in related studies about Gregory of Nyssa to afford the occasion to make a more complete evaluation of his educational background. To begin with Gregory's family background was extraordinary to say the least.[25] His paternal grandmother Macrina, as stated, had received instruction in the Christian Faith from Gregory Thaumaturg, the disciple of Origen. Gregory's father was a famous teacher of rhetoric at Neo Caesarea. His brother Naucratius was a Christian jurist, before he was killed in a hunting accident.[26] And his brother Basil attended schools in Neo Caesarea, in Constantinople and the University of Athens. Born into such a family, which W. K. L. Clarke[27] describes as "so uniformly brilliant," it was not possible that Gregory would not have been educated at home and in the local schools at least. The references to his lack of formal education[28] can only mean that Gregory did not travel to the various centers of education for studies in recognized schools of higher learning as did his brother Basil and friend Gregory of

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[25] Vita Macrina, MPG, XLVI, 981AB.

[26] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 965-968.

[27] Gregory of Nyssa, Introduction, p. 7.

[28] Epistle 13, MPG, XLVI, 1048-1049; cf. LNPF, V, 535-538.

Nazianzus. The fact that he "cast away the sacred and delightful books" of the church and became a teacher of rhetoric indicates that his education was of a higher caliber than the general education (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία ) of those times, even though it may have been acquired locally.

It is generally recognized that Gregory's tutelage under his brother Basil was not only for a short time, as he writes to Libanius, but extended formally as higher education when Basil returned from Athens in 356 A.D. At that time Basil went to Nicomedia as a teacher of rhetoric, and continued as Gregory's teacher for another ten years after Gregory retired to the monastery at Annesis[29] to practice asceticism and study theology until the year 372. That was probably the year that Gregory's formal education ended as Basil forced him to take charge of the episcopate of Nyssa. Gregory of Nazianzus must also have contributed to Gregory of Nyssa's educational edification as a friend of Basil and ascetic in the monastery at Annesis. The same can be said of Gregory's sister Macrina, who had much to do with the education of her younger brothers in the home and in the guidance that she offered that led them to serve the Church. In his treatise, The Life of St. Macrina, Gregory calls her his "teacher."[30] But if there was one person who influenced and inspired Gregory of Nyssa more than anyone, it was without question his brother Basil. For Gregory, his brother Basil was "the wonder of

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[29] A. Vacant, "Gregoire de Nysse," in Dictionnaire de theologie, VI (1903), 1847-1852.

[30] On the Soul and the Resurrection, LNPF, V, 430.

the whole world" and the example of a true philosopher.[31] Furthermore, in his Encomium on Basil, Gregory considered him to be a saint and he accepted his writings as divinely inspired. Gregory of Nyssa has these profound statements to make:

> Who is he? Shall I speak his name, or does his grace without his name suffice to indicate the man? For when you heard of teacher or shepherd next after the apostles, you recognized of course the shepherd and teacher next after the apostles. Him I mean, the vessel of election Basil, the sublime in life and in eloquence, who was fair unto God from birth, who was venerable in character from his youth, who like Moses was instructed in all knowledge of profane learning, and who from boyhood to manhood grew up and increased and flourished by the Sacred Scriptures and because of this instructing everyone in all wisdom both sacred and profane.[32]

In his earliest treatise On Virginity[33] one can easily see that Gregory is using Basil as his example, and that he is deeply dependent on Basil even though he does not refer to him by name. Gregory's admiration for his great brother was not a mere idealistic sentimentality. In the Encomium he exhorts his listeners to that which he had actually practiced himself:

> Let us also who boast of Basil as our teacher show by our lives his instruction, becoming that which made him celebrated and great in the eyes of God and man.[34]

But this great admiration, respect and devotion to Basil did not mean that Gregory slavishly accepted what his great brother had taught him as Brooks Otis, who probably was following the lead of J. H. Srawley,

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[31] Oratio in XL Martyrs, MPG, XLVI, 776A.

[32] J. A. Stein, Encomium of St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, on his brother St. Basil, Archbishop of Cappadocian Caesarea (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1928), p. 5.

[33] De Virginitate, MPG, XLVI, 320.

[34] Stein, p. 61.

suggests.[35] Rather Gregory showed himself to be an independent thinker and superior to Basil in the exhaustiveness and completeness of knowledge.[36]

## Philosophical Orientation

Gregory of Nyssa's writings reveal him to be a very thoroughgoing scholar and philosopher, who restudied the entire Christian religion in a most systematic way and endeavored to create a more perfect science of theology with the purpose of providing a system of thinking that could lead and guide man in his ultimate destination. Gregory was brought up in the milieu of Christian and Judaeo-Christian culture. He was aware of the spiritual needs of his times. He knew the pagan culture and he knew the Christian Scriptures and traditions, and was easily and comfortably conversant with the philosophical systems, in non-Christian and in Christian thought. But Gregory was not content to receive his information from secondary sources. He, in the manner and custom of his brother Basil and his namesake from Nazianzus, went to the sources as well. Gregory the Thaumaturg, who was a disciple of Origen and who like his master and teacher before him, interpreted the Christian doctrines in the terminology and thought patterns of the Greek philosophers, became the model for Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory of Nyssa read and studied Origen, but he also tracked down the references to the ancient philosophers, and he studied in depth the Holy Scriptures. Basil, who recognized Gregory's brilliant mind, gave him the impetus to study in private in his monastery.

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[35] Brooks Otis, Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, XII (1958), 97-124.

[36] J. H. Srawley, "Cappadocian Theology," Ency. of Reli. and Ethics, III (1928), 212-217.

There can be no question that Gregory, who was versed in the tradition of the Alexandrian School of theology was a follower of the Platonic system of thinking. Plato was ὁ μόνος σοφός ἐν τοῖς ἔξω [37] for Gregory of Nyssa, as he was for many of the Greek Fathers. They recognized an uncanny resemblance between Christianity and the idealism and transcendence of Plato's philosophy. It is quite probable that Gregory of Nyssa and the other Greek Fathers opposed Aristotelian deductive and inductive reasoning, because it lent itself more easily to error than did Platonic dialectic.[38] Gregory's writings reveal that he used many illustrations from Plato's works to draw comparisons and to clarify his teachings, and one finds a preponderant amount of words and terms from Plato's vocabulary in Gregory's treatises.[39] Plato's philosophy and method of dialectic therefore became basic to Gregory's own thinking processes. But this did not in any way isolate him from the other classical philosophers, their doctrines or methods. If he appropriated the ontology of Plato, the trisection of the souls and the four classical virtues as a foundation of his own philosophical exposition, this did not restrict him from borrowing the terminology of aretology from the Stoics, or the theory of means from Aristotle, or the mystical concept for his theology from the Neo Platonists. Therefore Gregory was not one-sided in his study of philosophy nor was he restricted to the study

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[37] De Infantibus, MPG, XLVI, 164.

[38] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 52 B.C.

[39] Ibid., passim; cf. Harold Cherniss, The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa (Berkeley: University of California Publications in Classical Philology, 1930) XI, I; Jean Danielou, Platonisme et theologie mystique (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1944).

of philosophy alone. A source of inspiration for Gregory of Nyssa in this sense was Philo, the Hebrew theologian, who had tried to harmonize Greek philosophy with Hebrew religious thought.[40] And there were others such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen[41] from whom he took what was useful and tried to avoid the ἀτόπους δογματοποιΐας. Origen's ascetic doctrines were especially inspiring to Gregory, who seemed to be able, as no other, to fathom the depths of Origenistic thought, and come forth with a further development in many areas. Thus he formulated his theory of perfection, according to ἄσκησις - exercise or gradual ascent from stage to stage, much as the body organically develops through προαίρεσις - free choice and conscious effort. Origen was the first to set the foundations for a "science of theology" in the third century A.D. Origen, among the most brilliant minds of all Christian times, had dealt with almost all problems of Christian thought. He had been able to combine the ascetic ideal with the spiritual element in man, and suggested that the ascetic life is actually a process of Christian paideia. In attempting to relate the Christian Faith to the Greek classical heritage, however, Origen had not completely succeeded, because he had allowed the Greek spirit and thought to triumph over Christian doctrine in some important aspects. Gregory, however, succeeded where Origen failed, for not only did he make the effort to relate Christianity to the Divine Plan of God and to human history, not only did he go beyond Origen in speculative idealism, but

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[40] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 204C-205B; cf. De Hominis Opificio, edited by Werner Jaeger in Gregorii Nysseni Opera (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), II, 240.

[41] Quod non sint Tres Dii, MPG, 125A.

he also found the proper relation of knowledge, philosophy, and classical heritage to Christianity by placing all these as hand-maidens to the Christian Faith.

Gregory's treatise, Oratio Catechetica, is considered to be the first systematic writing of Patristic Literature after Origen's De Principiis. Where Origin equated theology with philosophy, Gregory made philosophy serve as an aid to help the sincere inquirer to comprehend the doctrines of the Christian Faith, that is, the praembula fide, in which relative truth is preparatory to the Christian religion. Furthermore, if philosophy did not serve this purpose Gregory was not in the least reluctant to part company even with Platonism.[43] And where Plato's doctrines confirm or clarify the Christian faith, Gregory urges Christians to take example from Moses and not hold pagan knowledge in contempt. Moses was for him a prototype of a man of God, who eclectically appropriated the good and beneficial elements of pagan wisdom and education, and placed them into the service of the faith.[44]

In his Life of St. Ephraem[45] Gregory indicates how a Christian of discretion, one who "whatever was useful he made his own, what unprofitable he discarded," could use pagan wisdom to great advantage, which reflects his own use of philosophy in the service of the παραθήκην τῆς πίστεως. Gregory insisted that such a discreet use of pagan knowledge and wisdom was commanded by God in the typological directive through Moses that the

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[43] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 1055; cf. Answer to Eunomius' Second Book, LNPF, V, 291.

[44] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 329.

[45] De Vita S. Patris Ephraem Syri, MPG, XLVI, 829B.

Israelites carry away with them the treasures of the Egyptians as they left for the Promised Land. One such treasure was wisdom, which was to serve a higher purpose among the "chosen people" in the life of virtue.[46] Thus Gregory of Nyssa considered the Christian Faith to be the supreme truth and the infallible guide and canon of every doctrine, because this faith was none other than that which was preached by the disciples of our Lord, and as such was not man-made but of divine origin,[47] and therefore the supreme truth.

For Gregory of Nyssa Holy Scripture was the infallible guide and canon of every doctrine and the standard with which truth from philosophy had to agree before it could be used to serve the Christian faith.[48] Thus Gregory understood Holy Scripture to be: "the guide of reason,"[49] "the criterion of truth,"[50] and an advantage over the wisdom of the pagans,[51] and therefore he could not accept anything from human reason which contradicted Holy Scripture.[52] Furthermore, Gregory held that all the words of Holy Scripture are "words inspired of God"(θεόπνευστα ρήματα).[53] Nevertheless, he also contended that the words attributed to God in the

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[46] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 336D-337A.

[47] Contra Eunomium, LIB. II, MPG, XLV, 465D; cf. LNPF, V, 101.

[48] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 49C.

[49] Contra Eunomium, LIB. I, MPG, XLV, 349B; cf. LNPF, V, 65.

[50] Contra Eunomium, LIB. I, MPG, XLV, 314B.

[51] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 46B; cf. De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 144D.

[52] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 781A.

[53] Ibid., Hom. I, MPG, XLIV, 772D.

Scriptures were not uttered by Him in any human language, but that God inspired Moses and the prophets so that they expressed His divine Will in the language in which they spoke.[54] He found no garrulousness ( ἀδολεσχία ) nor anything redundant ( παρέλκον ) in Scripture, nor did he find Scripture to speak idly ( ἀργολογεῖ ).[55] The allegorical method was employed by Gregory more freely than by the other Cappadocians. By allegory Gregory explained the early chapters of Genesis,[56] and dealt with the accomodation ( συγκατάβασις ) of the language of Scripture after the manner of Origen.[57] But whenever possible he adhered to the literal sense.[58]

With the other Cappadocians Gregory of Nyssa recognized the importance of Holy Tradition,[59] again following the example of Gregory the Thaumaturg. Holy Tradition was for Gregory something very specific and the authority on which the interpretation of Holy Scripture became the orthodox doctrine.[60] Therefore, Gregory's primary starting point was the "faith" established by the Church, which was for him the "Holy Tradition," and not the speculations of philosophy. His purpose was to defend the

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[54] Contra Eunomium, LIB. XII, MPG, XLV, 997CD; cf. Fragmenta, MPG, XLVI, 1115A-C.

[55] In Verba Facciamus Hominem, Orat. I, MPG, XVIV, 272CD.

[56] Oratio Catechetica, V-VIII, MPG, XLV, 20-39C; cf. LNPF, V, 478-485.

[57] Tracta Adversus Graecos, MPG, XLV, 181.

[58] In Hexaemeron, MPG, XLIV, 68; cf. Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 756.

[59] Epistle III, ad Eustath, et Ambrose, MPG, XLVI, 1024.

[60] Contra Eunomium, LIB. III, MPG, XLV, 571; cf. Quod non sint Tres Dii, MPG, XLV, 155; LNPF, V, 331.

Faith as established and recognized by the Church and he chose the medium of the opponents of the orthodox faith, which was philosophy, to defeat them in their own arena. In so doing he also clarified many of the Christian doctrines, and proved himself to be more versed in philosophy and more capable of comprehending philosophical meanings than those who used philosophy to undermine the Christian Faith.

## CHAPTER II

## GREEK PAIDEIA AND GREGORY OF NYSSA

Gregory of Nyssa's use of Greek philosophy and Greek philosophical concepts in the service of the Christian faith was not a mere expression of Christian terms in the philosophical language of the time. Gregory being a thorough and deep thinker developed a Christian philosophy that was based on Platonism but yet was something new, because he was able to glean what was best in Hellenism and blend it with the Christian concepts, as Quasten[1] points out. Modern scholars have discovered in recent years that Gregory of Nyssa followed the tradition inherited from the Apostles of our Lord and from those who came before him[2] and took a fresh approach to the concept of paideia.

As was seen in the section on the philosophical orientation of Gregory, Plato had a direct influence on his thought. But indirectly, through the pagan and Christian Platonists, whom Gregory thoroughly studied, Platonic ideas and reasoning also had their impact on him. For Plato philosophy was contemplation of the good, while paideia was the process of philosophical ascesis to attain assimilation with the divine. Gregory appropriated this same basic idea for the Christian concept of deification. And similarly he found Christian paideia or morphosis to be the means through which the Christian could attain perfection and

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[1] J. Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), III, 274.

[2] Contra Eunomium, LIB. III, Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), XLV, 571. Hereafter Migne's edition will be referred to as MPG, and Gregory of Nyssa's works will be referred to only by title of writings and place of reference without his name.

sanctification. For Gregory, Christianity was not a simple or mechanical listing or acceptance of certain dogmas, but a "way of life" which was to be lived according to God's will. This life of ascetic contemplation of the Divine Being through θεογνωσία resulted in ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ. The terms which Gregory of Nyssa used to express some of the intricacies of his most basic ascetic doctrines, such as the processes of θεωρία to γνῶσις attained by ἔρως, ἄσκησις and ἐγκράτειαresulting in ἄνοδος, καθαρότης and ἀρετή gradually by βαθμίδες toward τελειότης, θεογνωσία and ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, are borrowed from Plato's Republic, the Dialogues, and especially from the Symposium, the Theaetetus and the Phaedo.

Gregory's entire ascetic theology was based on the principle that Christian paideia as described by Plato, or morphosis (μορφωθῆναι ψυχήν)[3] the moulding of human personality, is the only way to achieve the Christian ideal of deification. How Gregory interpreted each stage in this process of morphosis from a Christian point of view is the basic purpose of this thesis and will be dealt with in the third chapter. The purpose of the present chapter is to show how Greek paideia developed from Homer to its final expression in Plato, which Gregory adopted through his studies of pagan philosophy and Christian Platonists before him.[4]

A study of Plato's philosophy can only lead to the conclusion that Robert S. Brumbaugh of Yale University reached, that "Plato was an

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[3]Werner Jaeger, Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), p. 93; cf. De Instituto Christiano, Gregorii Nysseni Opera, edited by W. Jaeger (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952), VIII, 46.

[4]Jaeger, pp. 106-111.

unsurpassed philosopher and a brilliant author, but that his practical vocation in life was that of an educator."[5] And one can easily understand why Gregory of Nyssa found so much in Plato's writings, when modern philosophers of education can appreciate today after so many centuries the genius of Plato for "practical embodiment of ideas in educational programs and institutions," and place him in the "first rank in the history of education."[6] Although Plato may be the last and greatest exponent of Greek paideia, it must be understood that he was the last in a long line of thinkers who, beginning with Homer gradually and painstakingly developed the concept of paideia by inheriting and bequeathing to their successors a legacy which they evaluated, added to and amended according to their philosophical orientation and historical development. Therefore it becomes necessary to define paideia and specifically Greek paideia in its historical development.

## What Then Is Greek Paideia?

Greek Paideia casually translated into English becomes Greek Education. But the terms education and/or Greek Education do not really even begin to intimate what the Greek word παιδεία as used and employed by the early Greek philosophers meant. In this usage of the term, I choose to follow the great German philologist Werner Jaeger, who used "a Greek word for a Greek thing," to explore in his three volume classic Paideia: The Ideals

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[5]Robert S. Brumbaugh and Nathaniel M. Lawrence, Six Essays on the Foundations of Western Thought (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p. 11.

[6]Loc. cit.

of Greek culture,[7] the deeper meaning of this important Greek concept. Jaeger informs us that the Greek word paideia expresses the original unity of all the aspects of modern expressions such as civilization, culture, tradition, literature and education,[8] which is the very essence of scholarship and scholarly activity. The word paideia is derived from the word παῖς which means a child, and is similar to παιδιά or child's game or play. R. G. Bury in a study on education shows how Plato combined the two meanings of "child training" and "child play" to produce a new axiology--paideia.[9] Originally παιδεῖα or παίδευσις meant the teaching by which the Greek was trained early in life through games, stories, and songs accompanied by play acting and dancing to be properly prepared for becoming an adult. In those early times the pais was accompanied or led and protected as he went from his home to the teacher or school by a guardian called a παιδαγωγός , one who leads a child. This paidagogos, a family servant, was also responsible for the behavior of the child, and could punish him in case of disobedience. Furthermore, he trained the child in good manners and contributed to the moulding of his character and morals.[10] In time, the paidagogue became solely responsible for the actual moral education of the child, while

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[7]Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, translated by Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), from the 2nd German edition.

[8]Ibid., Preface, p. v.

[9]R. G. Bury, "Theory of Education in Plato's 'Laws,'" Revue des E'tudes Grecque, L (1937), 311.

[10]Kenneth J. Freeman, Schools of Hellas (London: Macmillan & Company, Ltd., 1908), p. 66; cf. Plato, Laws, Book VII, 808.

the διδάσκαλος instructor imparted the technical instruction. Thus the word ἀγωγή which meant to lead, to discipline or supervise in education became the technical term for the classical form of Spartan education, as well as a term used interchangeably with paideia. Both these terms paideia and agoge were names applied to what the Greeks thought concerning the purpose of education: a clearly defined system of preparation of the youth for the attainment of their ideals; that is, the education of man into his true form, the real and genuine human nature.[11] Paideia did not mean doing things for the child, but rather the directing of his natural activities toward artistic and graceful forms; the development of physical and mental powers to attain a perfection of human nature; the formation of a good character by training in good conduct and control over emotions. The training of youth to become good and useful citizens was the moulding ( πλάττειν ) of human character.[12]

Before the fifth century B.C. anything that was equivalent to culture was not called paideia but arete, the concept of virtue combined with the beautiful ( τό καλόν ), and the ideal man was καλοκάγαθος. The word arete, which defies an equivalent word in modern English, comes from the word ἄριστος , which means the very best, the ultimate, and was used to denote the ultimate strength, the power or ability to excel,

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[11]Jaeger, Paideia, I, xxiii; cf. Die griechische Staats ethik im Zeitalter des Plato: Die geistige Gegenwart der Antike (Berlin: 1929), p. 38.

[12]Plato, Republic, Book II, 377B; Plato, Laws, Book II, 671C; Bernard Bosonquet, The Education of the Young in the Republic of Plato (Cambridge: The University Press, 1905).

nobility, valor, that which made a man or a thing the very best of its kind. By the time of Homer arete had become the motto of honor among the Greeks, and it was also the basic theme of his educational influence: αἰέν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων,[13] that is, "Always be the best and keep well ahead of the others."

## Homeric Education

Homer, a superior poet who produced epic poetry of the highest standards, reflecting the acts and words of Greek historical personages and events, and projecting the "Homeric ideal" of man, was able to influence and mould the Greek conscience, mind and spirit, and thus became the educator of Greece τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαίδευκεν as Plato reports it.[14] Homeric paideia had two purposes, the technical or practical, and the ethical. The technical or practical purpose of paideia was to prepare the child to be a good member of the polis, while the ethical was to prepare the citizens to attain to an ideal existence--to be God-like.

Homer's epics became the textbook of this educational system.[15] Homer taught these high ideals by the character of his heroes, whom he depicted in an appropriate moral climate and style of life that encouraged emulation on the part of the reader. The Homeric ideal man was not anyone particular character whom he portrayed. He tried to show that there is some of the "ideal" in more or less degree in every man, and

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[13] Homer, Iliad, VI, 208.

[14] Plato, Republic, Book X, 606E; cf. Plato, Protagoras, 339AJ; Xenephones, Fragmenta, X (Diehl).

[15] Ibid.

the reader or student was led to select for himself the best in each character according to his preference.

## Plato

Plato (427-348 B.C.) stands at the midpoint of the entire subject of education. Plato lived at a time when the old and the new education clashed. He had been brought up in the old system of education, but he also was a leading student of Socrates, who personified the new education. Plato made a sweeping study of the traditional beliefs and practices, he scrutinized the prevalent views of the Sophists, he saw the decadence of Athenian democracy which had degenerated into mob rule, and the demogoguery of tyrants and he developed a philosophy which purported to rebuild a republic of the highest order. His ideal has been characterized as utopia, the non-existing place of perfection, but it would be a social structure built on the concepts of knowledge, virtue and justice. But Plato did not merely dream of a utopia, he provided the means by which this ideal republic would materialize, and that was through paideia. Plato defined paideia in a very practical and systematic way in his treatises The Republic and The Laws, and thus became the first thinker to formulate a theory of education. Plato's theory of education was not accepted by everyone, but what was said and what was written after Plato even by his famous student Aristotle, was mere commentary; A. N. Whitehead said very appropriately:

> The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.[16]

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[16] A. N. Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 63.

Plato's central concept of the philosopher was that of the ideal man and the ideal ruler in the perfect state. The philosopher accordingly must possess the ideal attributes of all citizens, such as temperance, self control and courage. But beyond these he had to acquire an insight into knowledge and the "good," which he would come to love. Plato outlined the meticulous training which the philosopher had to undergo in a gradual ascendence from knowledge through the imagination ( εἰκασία ) and belief ( πίστις ), the technique of knowledge, to the world of understanding and reasoning ( διάνοια ). The philosopher would reach the highest level of knowledge, the intelligible ( νοούμενον ), the concept of what Plato called pure forms ( εἴδη ). The next step was to arrive at the level of the good through intuition. This training in its highest form was the Form of the Good. Everyone was taken as far as he could go, but only the truly qualified continued until only a few reached the highest forms of knowledge and were set apart from the other citizens to take a place of prominence in the utopian state. Thus the future leaders were equipped with the best knowledge available, and were qualified to lead the people to a just and happy life.

Plato's philosophy has at its very core the concept of the Ideal Forms. It is an "idealism," but also a "formalism," through which the ideal is attained. Plato recognized two worlds: the world of objects that we know is a copy or shadow of the real world, or the world of ideas, of thought, the ideal world. The ideas are the absolute, they are concepts that have true and real existence apart from the world of objects and sense that we as humans know. Ideas are ideal entities

and absolutely perfect; they never change; they are eternal and constitute the world of Ideas. Basic, therefore, to Plato's philosophy and thought is the Ideal or Good, which is the highest form in the scale of values beginning with virtue through truth, beauty and the good. Each idea is perfect and good in itself, but together they comprise the one supreme idea, the Idea of the Good, which Plato considered to be the mind of God.[17] The "myth of the cave" in the Republic[18] shows how the liberating power of knowledge redeems the soul from the uncultured state ( ἀπαιδευσία ). As knowledge is attained the individual is raised to the next higher level by a process of clearness of knowledge, from the world of ambiguity to the world of clear and true knowledge, accomplished by paideia. Thus the essence of Platonic paideia or philosophical education is περιαγωγή or μεταστροφή [19] which means "the wheeling round of the 'whole soul'" towards the light of the Idea of Good, the divine origin of the universe.[20] A. D. Nock has shown from this that Plato was the originator of the concept and word of conversion, which came to describe Christian experience through early Christian Platonism.[21] Plato built his system of education on the basis of truth and its conquest through rational knowledge. He proposed doing

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[17]Plato, Republic, Book VI, 504E, Book VI, 505A.

[18]Ibid., Book VII, 514A-517A.

[19]Ibid., Book VII, 525C, Book VII, 532B.

[20]Ibid., Book VII, 518CD.

[21]A. D. Nock, Conversion (London: Oxford University Press, Paperback, 1961).

this by training the leaders to be true statesmen who would possess ἐπιστήμη. This royal knowledge was applicable to the governing of the family as it was to the governing of the state, because it involved the possession of truth, that is, genuine knowledge based on reason. Thus Plato's educational ideal was not only for the training of political leaders, but was also of universal range and value for every human activity. Plato was opposed to the Sophists' practice of offering higher education "just to anyone"[22] merely because they could afford to pay for it, he considered aptitude and preliminary training as primary factors for higher education.

Plato's theory of education was concerned with the moral elevation of the individual and the perfection of his character, and this in itself was enough to attract the attention of the Christian Church Fathers to a ready-made program based on a healthy philosophy for the moral nurture of the individual. Plato had stressed the principle that man without sufficient and true education could become "more savage than anything on the face of the earth,"[23] which meant that education is the one hope for the improvement of human character and for the world. But there was another greater reason why the Church Fathers could in all good conscience express the Christian concepts and doctrines in a Platonic frame of reference: because Plato's entire philosophical thought and educational theory were based on belief in God-Νοῦς. Plato refers to God as Nous,[24] alethia, agathon, beauty, arche, cause of all,

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[22]Plato, Republic, Book VII, 539D.

[23]Plato, Laws, Book VI, 766.

[24]Ibid., Book IX, 875CD.

sophia.[25] In the Theaetetus Plato expresses the high purpose of man and that is to "become like God"-- ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ .[26] In the Symposium Plato records Socrates as saying: "true virtue is to become the friend of God and be immortal."[27] Jaeger points out the God-orientation of Plato's philosophy and paideia thus:

> Plato's attempts to reveal the truths and immovable bases of human paideia lead to the Idea of Him, who is infinitely higher than man, but at the same time the most genuine and honorable in man. Ancient humanism, in the form it received in platonic paideia, finds its center in God. The state, the nation, is the social form which the historical tradition of the Greek people offered to Plato so that he may imprint his own Idea of God as the measure of all things. By his idea, however, Plato changed the state from an earthly organism in place and time, into the ideal Nation of God, which was universal, as universal was also its symbol, the living.[28]

Near the end of his life Plato wrote a new treatise, the Laws in order to correct his thoughts expressed in the Republic. Consequently, he toned down his previous theory and emphasized the role of religion in this life. Thus he produced a synthesis of theological πολιτειολογίας and educative law-making, through which he believed that laws would be reestablished on a divine pedestal and deified. In the Laws Plato refuted Protagoras' contention that "man is the measure of all things," and stated very clearly that not man, but "God is the measure of all things."[29] God was not merely the Demiurge for Plato, but He was vitally

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[25]Plato, Republic, Book VI, 507A, Book IX, 579B, Book II, 379C, Book X, 613B.

[26]Plato, Theaetetus, 176BC.

[27]Plato, Symposium, 212A.

[28]Jaeger, Paideia, III, 343; cf. Plato, Laws, Book VII, 887BC.

[29]Plato, Laws, Book IV, 716C.

and conscientiously concerned in His world as the great Pedagogue, who παιδαγωγεῖ πάντα , that is, who educates all things.[30] It was Jaeger again who pointed out in Humanism and Theology that Plato was the first to use the term theology which he coined and established as the center of all philosophical thought.[31] Plato was not the first to speak and write about God, but certainly he was the first to produce a theology that became the science concerning God and man's relation to Him; science that provided the Eastern Church Fathers with the vehicle for Christian theology.[32] Furthermore, Plato showed how paideia is also based on religion[33] and in that sense in his philosophy and thought man and human life are central in Plato's world, and God central in man's world.[34]

This then is the theocentric paideia of Plato which grew out of Greek paideia and became its most complete and articulate form which was bequeathed to all mankind, but especially inherited by the early Christian Church Fathers, and adopted by Gregory of Nyssa.

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[30] Ibid., Book X, 897B.

[31] Werner Jaeger, Humanism and Theology (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1943), p. 46.

[32] Ibid., pp. 56, 57.

[33] Plato, Laws, Book VII, 515.

[34] Jaeger, Humanism and Theology, p. 53.

## CHAPTER III

## THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF GREGORY OF NYSSA

The first systematic study of anthropology in the fourth century A.D. was made by Gregory of Nyssa as a result of his efforts to supplement and complete the work of his brother Basil. Basil had written his Hexaemeron to interpret the work of creation as recorded in the Book of Genesis. However, he had stopped the writing without completing it, that is, without the exposition of the creation of man. And Gregory in lieu of any other gift wrote his treatise On the Making of Man, the De Hominis Opificio,[1] and presented it as a gift of love at holy Eastertide to his younger brother Peter, at that time bishop of Sevastia and dedicated it to the memory of Basil:

> For he alone has worthily considered the creation of God who truly was created after God, and whose soul was fashioned in the image of Him Who created him--Basil, our common father and teacher,--who by his own speculation made the subline ordering of the universe generally intelligible, making the world as established by God in the true Wisdom known to those who by means of his understanding are led to such contemplation; but we, who fall short even of worthily admiring him, yet intend to add to the great writer's speculations that which is lacking in them, not so as to interpolate his work by insertion (for it is not to be thought of that that lofty mouth should suffer the insult of being given an authority for our discourses), but that the glory of the teacher may not seem to be failing among his disciples.[2]

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[1]Gregory of Nyssa, De Hominis Opificio, Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), XLIV, 124D, written about 379 A.D. Hereafter Migne's edition will be referred to as MPG, and Gregory of Nyssa's works will be referred to only by title of writings and place of reference without his name.

[2]Ibid.; A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, edited by Philip Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), V, 387. Hereafter Eerdmans' edition will be referred to as LNPF.

Gregory of Nyssa used Greek philosophy and philosophical terminology and the philosophical concepts of paideia and askesis to express his theological concept of anthropology, which he understood to be the assimilation of man to God. In so doing Gregory projected a theological rather than a philosophical anthropology, because his primary concern was to express biblical thought through the medium in which the people of his times were conversant. The various non-Christian philosophers were unable to appreciate the deeper religious value of human personality and therefore they had come to see man as a "microcosm," a miniature representation of the universe, an image of the universe, and consequently nothing more than just another unreasoning animal. Gregory affirmed that man was much more than a "microcosm," since man was rather a special creation of God, different from the created nature over which he was assigned to have dominion and to rule. God made man in His own likeness and image. Man's difference from the rest of the created world consisted in likeness ( ὁμοίωσις ) to his Creator. And herein lies the real value and excellence of human nature, as opposed to nature, in the fact that God created man in His image.[3] Gregory drew from a twofold spiritual inheritance to present his theological anthropology, from the Pauline concept of human bodies as temples of God and members of Christ, and the age-long Greek aspiration to kalokagathia, the proper balance between physical and mental perfection.

A closer study of the theological anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa which we shall attempt in the following pages will reveal one major

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[3]Gen. 1:26; cf. De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 133D, 136BD, 137E.

thrust: the mystical union ( ἕνωσις ) of man with God, his Creator. Basing his thought on the Nicene doctrines, Gregory clearly indicates the ultimate goal of man as deification or the vision of the Divine Being ( θεωρία ). But Gregory is no less clear and positive in showing how man can and should attain his God-given purpose through the life according to philosophy (κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν βίον). Gregory built his anthropology on the theological foundation of Holy Scripture, and proceeded to lay the groundwork, which in general was that: (1) God created man in His image and likeness (κατ'εἰκόνα καὶ καθ'ὁμοίωσιν θεῷ); (2) God endowed man with all the virtues and the knowledge of truth (γνῶσιν τῆς ἀληθείας), and (3) God further gifted man with reason, self-consciousness, and free will. As a result of this, man made wrong choices in his freedom and fell from the grace of God. Nevertheless, God's philanthropia allowed man to have the means of moulding the soul (μορφωθῆναι τὴν ψυχήν ) together with the renewal of the mind ( τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός ) to return to his primal state. Gregory's contribution consists in the implementation of theology into anthropology through education by developing a Christian philosophy based on a refined Greek paideia, the Holy Scriptures, and the writings of the Early Christian Fathers.

We begin our study with the topic of morphosis, which is the integrating element and basis of all Gregory's writings, and runs through the entire spectrum of his thought resulting in a very clear and systematic anthropology. The purpose of this thesis will be to examine the main teachings of Gregory in about twenty subheadings. Each will confirm the centrality of morphosis in Gregory's thought.

## Morphosis--Paideia

Gregory of Nyssa occasionally used the term paideia in his writings, but always in the sense of morphosis. Werner Jaeger[4] claims that the word morphosis and its derivatives are so numerous in Gregory's writings that he could not collect them all "for the modest purpose" of his small book. The problem of the morphosis of man, he claims, remains the theme of that other famous three-volume work under the title of Paideia,[5] and is the root of what we call "humanism."

The word morphosis comes from the verb μορφόω which means, to give form or shape, and was used to express the forming or shaping of the paideutic function of the polis in classical Greece. The ancient Greeks described this function by the word ἡμέρωσις or taming, and finally came to use the word paideia for education, which they understood to be the forming or shaping of character. The idea of paideia as morphosis probably grew out of the creative activity and workmanship of the Greeks as they worked with non-living materials of wood, metal, and marble, which they shaped or formed into beautiful life-like reproductions of living things. Ultimately they tried to also give beauty to the most important living things, and that was man. Man had a body, which the ancients believed in developing by exercise and athletics. But man also had a soul, which they tried to develop through the askesis of arete. In their efforts to shape the physical and spiritual elements of humans

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[4]Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 240, n. 1.

[5]Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, translated from the German by Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963). In three volumes (Die Formung des griechischen Menschen).

the ancient Greeks raised the human to the level called ἄνθρωπος, that is, he who stands erect. And for anthropos they set the standard of humanism (ἀνθρωπισμός), which was accomplished through paideia.

Gregory's understanding of Christian education as morphosis implies a gradual growth of the human personality, a growth that is not automatic or spontaneous, but rather one that is guided and cared for.

> It is fitting for the recently-born soul whose participation in the Spirit restores to its nature its former beauty, after it has destroyed the sickness which comes over it through disobedience not to remain always like a child but to nourish itself by its own food, and, in proportion to what its nature demands, to rear itself through the power of the Spirit by its own virtue.[6]

Commenting on Romans 12:2 to "be transformed (μεταμορφοῦσθαι) in the newness of your mind, that you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," Gregory gave Christian religious content to his philosophical thought by moulding it with the thought of St. Paul:

> The perfect will of God is that the soul be changed (μορφωθῆναι) by reverence, the soul having been brought to the full flower of its beauty by the grace of the Spirit which attends upon the sufferings of the person who undergoes the change (τοῦ μορφουμένου). The development of the body in its process of growing is not in our hands . . . the measure of the soul, however, in the renewal of its birth and the beauty which the grace of the Spirit furnishes through the zeal of the one who receives it depends on our judgment. As far as you extend your efforts in behalf of piety, so far will the greatness of your soul extend through efforts (ἀγῶνων) and toil (πόνων).[7]

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[6] The Fathers of the Church, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetic Works, "On the Christian Mode of Life," translated by V. W. Callahan (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967), p. 130; De Instituto Christiano in Gregorii Nysseni Opera, edited by W. Jaeger (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952), VIII, 44.

[7] Fathers of the Church, p. 131; De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 46.

Pursuing further the biblical evidence concerning man's efforts to "strive" (Luke 13:24), to use "force" (Matthew 11:12), to "endure" (Mark 13:13; Luke 21:19), to "run with perseverence" (Hebrews 12:1), and so on, Gregory says:

> He summons us to run and he urges us to enter the contests eagerly, since the gift of grace is measured by the labors of the receiver. For the grace of the Spirit gives eternal life and unspeakable joy in heaven, but it is the love of the toils ( περὶ τοὺς πόνους ἔρως ) because of the faith that makes the soul worthy of receiving the gifts and enjoying the grace.[8]

The treatise De Instituto Christiano constitutes a basic premise of Gregory's that man can be educated or moulded ( μορφωθῆναι ) and that this "moulding" depends greatly on his efforts to use the means which God provided for him.

## The Doctrine of Man as the Image of God

Gregory of Nyssa speaks and thinks of man as that great thing and name ( τὸ μέγα πρᾶγμα καὶ ὄνομα ). In the treatise De Hominis Opificio, Gregory upholds the royal descent of man and his sovereign authority. Creation is divided into the visible and invisible world, according to St. Paul's distinction in 2 Corinthians 4:18 of "things that are seen" and "things that are unseen."[9] Man belongs to both. According to his body he belongs to the visible world, and his soul to the invisible world, and therefore is the mediator and link between the

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[8] Fathers of the Church, p. 131.

[9] On Infants' Early Death, LNPF, V, 375; On the Soul and Resurrection, LNPF, V, 458.

two. The soul[10] of man was endowed with self-determination and free will, which distinguishes it from the humbleness of a private citizen and points up its royal characteristics. The structure of the human body, its erect stance, is only to be found in man[11] who is able thus to look up to the heavens. Man in his special creation was created by God according to His own image and likeness. Human nature therefore as image of the governing nature of all things (κυβερνητικῆς τῶν πάντων φύσεως) was created to be master of the world, while man himself is masterless (ἀδέσποτος ). This special creation in the image and likeness of God to be master of the world gave man both mind and reason and consequently the summit of the visible world.

## Man's Soul

Gregory of Nyssa emphasizes that Man is a special creation of God, who out of His goodness endowed man with His own attributes:

> For no other reason did God create man than because of His own goodness . . . Therefore, entering upon the creation of man He would not show a half perfect power of His goodness, giving man only some of His goods and begrudging him a share in others; but the perfect form of His goodness is in this that He brought man from non-being into being and perfected him with no lack of His goods: They are so many that one could hardly list them.[12]

And one of the many "goods" that God gave man was his soul. In the Dialog with Macrina Gregory gives his own definition of the soul as

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[10] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 29B.

[11] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 144B; In Hexaem, MPG, XLIV, 29B.

[12] De Hominis Opificis, MPG, XLIV, 183A; cf. Oratio Catechetica, V, MPG, XLV, 24A, 61A.

follows:

> The soul is an essence created, and living, and intellectual, transmitting from itself to an organized and sentient body the power of living and of grasping objects of sense, as long as a natural constitution capable of this holds together.[13]

Furthermore, Gregory insists on the unity of the soul.[14] He justifies and explains the existence of the faculties of sense and growth and the passions in man, which man has in common with the animals, as additions by God to the soul but not really part of the soul in order to provide the means through which the soul can operate through the organs of the body. Just as the perfection of the soul in its intelligence (νοερόν ) and reason ( λογικόν ), everything which is not that, though it can share the name in common with the soul, is not really soul, but is a certain vital energy, included by extension in the appelation of soul.[15] Thus Gregory rejects Aristotle's definition of the soul and follows the Scriptural reasoning concerning the soul:

> Which lays it down that we are to consider that there is no excellence ( ἐξαίρετον ) of the soul which is not proper to the divine nature.[16]

Gregory, endeavoring to explain the union of soul and body, made a precise interpretation of St. Paul's distinction between flesh, soul, and spirit. Thinking in terms of moral rather than physical distinction, Gregory defined "flesh" ( σάρξ ) as the pursuit of carnal pleasures,

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[13] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 29B; LNPF, V, 433.

[14] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 176AB.

[15] Ibid., XLIV, 176D-177A; cf. De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 52A, 53B.

[16] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 49C-52A; cf. Aristotle, De Anima, i,4; iii,5.

the "soul" ( ψυχή ) as the path of virtue and avoidance of evil; "spirit" ( πνεῦμα ) as that which leads to perfection in compliance with God's laws. The philosophical interpretation of soul given by Gregory makes it the cause of rational knowledge in man. For Gregory the idea of the soul becomes almost as incomprehensible as God in whose image it was created. In contrast to the secular philosophers who tried to "place" the soul in the brain or heart, Gregory stressed the incorporeal nature of the soul stating that it cannot be contained in any definite space. The existence of the soul is proved by the effect of the soul on the "microcosm" of the body, just as God rules over the "macrocosm" of the universe.

## Man's Nature

Human nature is not simple nor of one kind. Rather it is a harmonious combination of the physical or sensory body and the spiritual or noetic soul.[17] Gregory admits that it is impossible for man to comprehend completely how mortal human nature can also be the image and likeness of the spiritual nature of God. But this does not deter him from attempting to provide a partial answer, at least for the spiritual edification of foes and friends alike. He does this by going back to the source of all Christian knowledge, the Holy Scriptures. In this instance Gregory bases his explanation on the 26th and 27th verses of the first chapter of Genesis:

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and

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[17] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 333B.

> over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
>
> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.[18]

The theory of double creation

From these two verses of Genesis 1:26 and 27 Gregory arrived at the theory of double creation. Verse 26 gave him the impression that there was a first creation of man in which man was created as a completely spiritual, sexless being, who was endowed with all the virtues and wisdom of God. Since man was made in the image and likeness of God and had dominion over all creation, he had the privilege of sharing in all good. But there was a difference, because God is uncreated and unchanging; while man was created after the image and likeness of God, and therefore is an image that is changeable and not eternal.[19] Gregory understood this "sexless man" not as a male and female, but yet representing the entire human race in its total meaning. Even so, God in His Omniscience, saw this spiritual being of the first creation, as a potential sinner. God foresaw in that "creation" the tendency toward evil which would result in sin. And sin would restrict this "creature's" multiplication according to the angelic method and "he" or "it" would have no hope of salvation. The influence of the Neoplatonic ideas shows clearly here in the theological concept of Gregory:

> As his power which sees everything shows him in advance the deviation of our liberty from the straight path and the fall

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[18]Gen. 1:26-27.

[19]On the Making of Man, LNPF, V, 411, "Adam not yet created."

> which results, far from the life of the angels, in order not to alter the desired number of souls in this race which has lost the mode of growth of the angelic species, God, for these reasons, establishes for our nature a means more adapted to the sinful state into which we have slipped: in place of the nobility of the angels, he provides us with a means of transmitting life from one to another as the animals and the beings without intelligence.[20]

Therefore, Gregory contends, God proceeded to a "second" creation, which was the actual creation, in which, according to Genesis 1:27 "male and female created He them," thus adding to the first created spiritual being, the human nature. As a result of these "two creations" man became an existence which was a being that simultaneously shared in the divine nature of the Creator and in the unreasoning and animal life of physical nature.[21] Reason, which was given to man in the first creation, was that which related him to God. Man's distinction into male and female and the ability to perpetuate himself, related man to unreasoning nature. These two elements comprise human nature.[22] The Christian Church, as we know, did not accept Gregory's theory of double creation.

The rejection of the pre-existence of souls

Gregory of Nyssa did not accept the teaching of Plato concerning the pre-existence of souls, which Origen had adopted. But further he specifically attacked "this doctrine, which maintains that souls have a life by themselves before their life in the flesh"[23] in the treatise

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[20] Ibid., V, 407.

[21] Ibid., V, 406, "God created man"---"pleroma."

[22] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 185A; 188A-189.

[23] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 230-234; LNPF, V, 419-420.

De Hominis Opificio. Origen claimed that human souls had pre-existed from eternity, and although created, there was never a time when they did not exist, taking his cue from Plato's theory of metempsychosis. But Gregory, seeing that souls which were created could not have the same attributes as the Deity nor immediate kinship with the Logos, came up with another explanation. Instead of the Platonic distinction of the intelligible ( νοητόν ) and sensible ( αἰσθητόν ) world, which Origen had completely accepted, Gregory delved a little deeper to discern the antithesis between God (the Creator) and the world (the Creation.) Thus he gave up the idea of the pre-existence of the rational soul, because it did not provide an explanation for the infinite variety found in souls. In rejecting the theory of the pre-existence of souls, Gregory found no reason to retain Origen's trichotomy of σάρξ , ψυχή , and πνεῦμα which was derived from Plato. Gregory adopted St. Paul's division of σῶμα and πνεῦμα with ψυχή as the baser part of the πνεῦμα .

Gregory's theory of the origin of the soul, known as "traducianism," is found in the treatise On the Soul and the Resurrection. According to this view the soul is transmitted by the parents to the children through the generating seed, that is, the body and the soul are created at the same time. Gregory could not adopt the "creationism" view which other orthodox writers had accepted, and according to which the souls are created by God at the moment of conception, because of his previous theory of double creation. In the "first" creation Gregory had taught that a determined number of souls had been created as "spiritual beings"

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[23] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 230-234; LNPF, V, 419-420.

in that one spontaneous creative act.[24] Gregory expresses his thought thus:

> Since man is one, in the composition of his soul and body his being can only have a single common origin . . . Thus it is true that neither does the soul exist before the body, nor the body apart from the soul, but that there is only a single origin for both of them.[25]

Gregory also rejected Plato's theory of metempsychosis mentioned above, saying:

> The philosophy of other nations also teaches that the soul is immortal: that is one of its welcome and godly fruits. But it teaches also that the souls go from one body to another . . . that is due to its uncircumcized flesh.[26]

Human nature

Human nature is treated in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa in a most unique and interesting manner. According to him humanity was created in toto, ideally by God in the person of Adam, as we have seen in the theory of double creation. This two-stage formation of Adam, according to Platonic realism made it possible for Gregory to present a rational explanation of how the responsibilities of Adam's actions and the incurring penalties were passed on to all of mankind. According to Gregory's two-stage creation, God created universal man, Adam, in His own image and likeness. This universal Adam represented mankind in its entirety, rational human nature universally. This universal man was

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[24] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 230-234; cf. De Anima et Resurrection, MPG, XLVI, 125A; cf. footnote 15.

[25] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 234; LNPF, V, 420-421.

[26] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 337.

created with body and soul in the image of God, and existed spiritually in God's mind before the actual creation of Adam. As we have seen, God in His omniscience foresaw the sin into which man would fall, because of the wrong use of man's free will, and therefore in the second stage created Adam in His own image and likeness, but equipped Adam's soul with appetites and senses, and his body with organs and growth and made him a male being. From the very beginning man's soul was commingled by ἀνάκρασις with a body, so that the whole of creation might share in the divine. Thus Adam and all his descendants could live as rational beings in a material body, having the image of God, sense, appetites, distinction of sexes, and the ability to think and freely choose.[27]

> When the Scripture says that God made man, by the indefinite annotation it signifies mankind (τό ἀνθρώπινον) . . . Therefore by the universal appelation of the nature we are brought to make such a conjecture as the following: that by the foreknowledge and power of God all humanity is included in the first formative . . . Just as the individual man has a finite bodily magnitude, and possesses a measurable substance which is commensurate with his bodily appearance exactly, so, I think, in one body, by the power of God foreseeing all things, the whole fullness of humanity was included and this is what Scripture teaches when it says that God made man and after the image of God He made him. For the image . . . pertains equally to the whole human race.[28]

The term nature ( φύσις ) does not have the same connotation in Gregory's thought as our modern understanding of the word. Nature according to Gregory includes all that was part of Adam when human nature was first created, that is, not only intellect, but also immortality, freedom of will, and all the other attributes which Gregory terms

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[27] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 178-187; LNPF, V, 404-406.

[28] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 185B; cf. Contra Eunomium, LIB. III, MPG, XLV, 592C.

"excellences," with which man was endowed when he received the gift of the imago Dei (κατ'εἰκόνα θεοῦ ). In Gregory's distinction, however, φύσις did not include the non-rational abilities of man's being, nor the passions, nor the appetites, nor the senses. These latter were added by God, apart from the "image and likeness" as a plus at the time of Adam's actual creation, because of God's foreknowledge of mortal man's needs. However, these non-rational abilities, the passions, appetites, and senses through which the soul operates through the body, are in themselves adiaphora. They are neither evil nor good, nor excellences as counterparts or share in the image of God in man. Therefore the "good" or "bad" reason determines their contribution to the practice of virtue or evil. When reason makes bad use of these factors they become masters of reason and enslave it:

> Whatever qualities are on the border line of the soul tending by their own nature to either of two opposites whose use for good or the opposite determines the outcome, such as anger or fear or any such movement of the soul without which you cannot conceive human nature, all these we consider are produced from without since no such characteristics can be conceived to be in the archetypal beauty.[29]

Thus the soul being created in the image of God possesses all the attributes found in the Divine nature, but since they are in imitation of God's attributes they do not exist as perfections in man as they are in God in whom the excellences and goods exist in their most perfect degree.[30] Human nature has its being from creation but the Divine is

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[29] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 57C; cf. In Hexaem, MPG, XLIV, 82B; De Mortuis, MPG, XLVI, 524D.

[30] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 21D; De Beatitudinibus, III, MPG, XLIV, 1125D.

uncreated.[31] The union of the soul with the body forms a created, living, and intellectual being, with bodily organs that are used as instruments of the soul. Taken in this sense the soul causes rational knowledge, expressed in human speech. That part of the soul is known as the intellect ( νοῦς ), which knows and by knowing encompasses within itself the whole world. Thus the soul encompasses a vastness which includes an understanding of itself and a multitude of things outside itself, making it almost as incomprehensible as God, after whom it has been modeled.[32]

Man's mind

The nous operates through the senses ( αἰσθήσεις ) in a mysterious manner. The senses introduce presentations from the material world, while the nous that accepts them is non-material and spiritual. Gregory here poses a question: "What is the width of that inner space in which all are accepted through hearing? Who are the note-takers of the introduced words? And how, even though various and sundry enter, is there no confusion as they pile up?" And he notes that the same questions can be asked concerning the visual reception of presentations to the sense of sight. Gregory gives this explanation:

> Just as if there were some extensive city receiving all comers by different entrances, all will not congregate at any particular place, but some will go to the market, some to the houses, others to the churches, or the streets, or the lanes, or the theatres, each according to his own inclination--some such city of our mind I seem to discern established in us, which the different

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[31] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 185BC; LNPF, V, 405.

[32] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 153-156; LNPF, V, 397.

> entrances through the senses keep filling, while the mind, distinguishing in their proper departments of knowledge.[33]

Thus the senses that have their beginning in the physiological condition and reach the psychological provide the evidence of a psychosomatic unity, according to Gregory:

> What then is, in its own nature, this mind that distributes itself into faculties of sensation, and duly receives by means of each the knowledge of each? That it is something else besides the senses, I suppose no reasonable man doubts, for if it were identical with sense it would reduce the proper character of the operations carried on by sense to one, on the ground that it is itself simple, and that on what is simple no diversity is to be found . . . we must surely suppose since the mind is duly present in each case (touch, sight, smell, etc.) that it is something else besides the sensitive nature, so that no variation may attach to a thing intelligible.[34]

Man's mind, therefore, while endowed with the qualities of the divine mind, is not identical with God's mind, although it was created in God's image. It is intellectual, incorporeal, not subject to measurement, and yet it has its own nature. Man's mind imitates the divine mind to the degree of its development, as a small mirror reflects the great sun in miniature.[35] Man's mind not only controls and rules the body, but with the knowledge gained through the senses and its capability of reasoning, it can attain various degrees of comprehending God. But man cannot know the essence of God. He can only know through knowledge, love, and reason, the attributes of God. In the moral sense, man can distinguish the "good" from the "apparent goods" in God.[36]

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[33] On the Making of Man, LNPF, V, 396.

[34] Ibid.

[35] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 41CD; LNPF, V, 437.

[36] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 60B; LNPF, V, 492.

Immortality

The soul created in the image and likeness of God has attributes akin to God. God's being is life, life immortal, eternal existence. And like God the soul of man has life and immortality.

> Since, then, one of the excellences connected with the Divine nature is also eternal existence, it was altogether needful that the equipment of our nature should not be without the further gift of this attribute, but should have in itself the immortal, that by its inherent faculty it might both recognize what is above it, and be possessed with a desire for the divine and eternal life.[37]

In the Commentary on the Song of Songs Gregory emphasizes that immortality is built into man through the imago Dei.

> Now of all things which were very beautiful one was man or rather, man was adorned with a beauty above that of beautiful things. For what is so beautiful as the likeness of the sheer beauty. But if all things were very beautiful and among all things man was preeminent, death was not at all in man; for he would not be a thing of beauty, if he bore within him the sorry mark of the dejection of death; but, being the copy and likeness of the eternal life, he was truly and exceedingly beautiful, adorned with the gladdening mark of life.[38]

Death

Man was created immortal and yet he dies. Death took hold of man because man disobeyed God.

> And so after man had withdrawn himself from the fruit of the fullness of goods and filled himself with the death-bearing fruit through disobedience . . . he exchanged the more divine for the irrational and brutish life, and once death mingled with our nature, mortality reached through

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[37] Ibid., V, MPG, XLV, 21D, 24D; LNPF, V, 479.

[38] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, XII, MPG, XLIV, 1020C.

> to the succeeding generations of those born. Wherefore a living death took hold of us, our life in a sense died, for it is quite dead deprived as it is of immortality.[39]

According to Gregory mortality was an element that was "added" to man's nature in addition to the outward part of man's nature. Mortality did not include or affect the image of God in man. It was through the senses that man disobeyed God and sinned, and since the senses are part of the body, the physical part of man is subject to death, but the spiritual part is not. Thus death does not dissolve the image of God in man. But even the body will be reconstituted to its original beauty at the resurrection:

> Therefore by an economy, from the nature of irrational animals, mortality was added to our nature made for immortality. This mortality enfolds it not from without but within, and it takes hold of the sentient part of man, but does not touch the divine image.[40]

Free-will

In the section on Man's Mind it was seen that Gregory placed the full responsibility of man's actions on man himself, because of the gift of free-will. It is man's reason which distinguishes the good from evil, but it is man's will which decides which he will choose. The power to choose is another attribute of the image of God in man. And this power of choice between virtue and vice, between the spiritual and the earthly, is that which makes the difference between man's advances toward recovering his original likeness to God and his regression into becoming like Satan. Gregory was eager to show that it was man's

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[39] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 1021CD.

[40] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 33CD; cf. MPG, XLV, 36AB; 33B; LNPF, V, 483.

free-will which made him responsible for his acts. In this he was reacting against the deterministic tendencies of the followers of Manes, who were intent upon justifying man's sinfulness.[41] Gregory of Nyssa held that man could not depend entirely on himself to make a proper choice, because the inclination to evil is strong in him as will be pointed out in the next section. He very sagaciously urges the use of prayer to solicit the aid of God to help him choose the good.

> Why do we pray that the good purpose may be in us from God? Because human nature is weak with respect to good, once it has been weakened by evil; for man does not turn with the same facility from evil to good as from good to evil, just as a man whose constitution has received a shock from some sickness easily becomes sick again.[42]

But prayer alone is not sufficient in itself, rather it is God's grace that comes to men's aid and gives fulfillment to the good that man freely chooses.

> There is no need of help from anyone to seek evil and vice, but if the inclination ( τροπή ) is to become better, there is need of God to bring the desire into effect. Wherefore we say: Your Will is temperance, but I am carnal sold under sin; by Your Power may this good Will be established in me.[43]

Man has to make a choice at all times between the real goods, which are the things of eternal value, and the apparent goods, which are the things of pleasure found in the temporal and earthly goods. It is in our power to be what we will.[44]

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[41] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 117; LNPF, V, 458.

[42] De Oratio Dominicana IV, MPG, XLIV, 1164D.

[43] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 1165A.

[44] De Beatitudinibus, V, MPG, XLIV, 1256A.

> There is a two-fold pleasure in the soul: the one is effected in the soul through self-control, the other in the body through the passions; which of the two man chooses, that rules over the other.[45]

Gregory further explains this duality in choice by indicating that there is in man's nature the intellectual principle which is weaker, and which seeks the things that are above. On the other hand, there is a stronger tendency which drags him down:

> Our free power of choice stands between these two inclinations and by itself imparts firmness to the former when it is weakening and restrains the latter when it threatens to prevail.[46]

Gregory compares man to an unusual piece of sculpture having two faces, one face looking up to the spiritual, the other looking down after those things which are of the flesh:

> Just as one sometimes sees in works of art twofold forms which the artists have produced to the consternation of spectators making two faces on one head, so it seems to me, man bears a twofold likeness to contrarities: by the divine likeness of his mind he is formed after the divine beauty, but by the movements of passion he bears a likeness to the beast.[47]

## Evil

Man created in the image of God and having the attribute of free will was subject to sin. The misuse of man's free will resulted in sin, with which we shall deal more fully in the section on the Fall of man. However, it was this misuse of free will, the choice or preference for those things which are opposed to virtue, which caused sin. In departing from what is good, man is drawn by his lower nature down to the earthly

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[45] Commentarius In Canticum Canticorum XI, MPG, XLIV, 993C.

[46] Ibid., XII, MPG, XLIV, 1017C.

[47] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 192D; LNPF, V, 408.

ways, and his choice produces evil. Influenced by Plato, Origen and Athanasius, Gregory as well as the other Cappadocians accepted evil as a negative concept; evil did not exist per se it grew out of "a disposition in the soul opposed to virtue." And Gregory says following James 1:15, "when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin:"

> Evil is, in some way or other engendered from within, springing up in the will at that moment when there is a retrocession of the soul from the kalon . . . It is, in fact, not possible to form any other notion of the origin of vice than as the absence of virtue.[48]

But Gregory wrestled with the problem of evil from a philosophical and a religious view and in doing so came forth with the explanation that sin has to do with man's conscience, but also that evil existed prior to man's fall, since man was deceived by Satan, who appeared in the form of a serpent (Genesis 3:4,5). Therefore, Gregory does not simply appropriate Plato's and Origen's interpretation of evil as a mere absence of good ( στέρησις ἀγαθοῦ ). Gregory interprets the agathon in its Christological sense and in reference to the Nicene doctrine, and identifies it with God's act in the Son.[49] Thus evil as the absence of the good is understood in the biblical sense as a demonic structure, and yet not as an ontological entity.[50]

> For when once he, who by his apostasy from goodness had begotten in himself this Envy, had received this bias to evil, like a rock torn asunder from a mountain ridge, which is driven down headlong by its own weight, in like manner he, dragged away from his original natural propensity to goodness and gravitating with all his weight

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[48] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 24D, 25A; LNPF, V, 479.

[49] Contra Eunomium, in Gregorii Nysseni Opera, II, 6; De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 41.

[50] J. H. Srawley, The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press, 1956), pp. 27, 83.

> in the direction of vice, was deliberately forced and borne away as by a kind of gravitation to the utmost limit of iniquity . . . by his crafty skill he deceives and circumvents man, persuading him to become his own murderer with his own hands.[51]

In spite of this attraction or lure of his lower nature, man is free from any external necessity that would prevent him from choosing the good over the evil. Man is free to form his own judgment and discern the true good, from what appears good and is in reality evil. His choice is his own, and the result is of his own making:

> The inclination to evil comes from no compelling external necessity, but as soon as we have chosen evil, it subsists, and once we have chosen it, it is brought into existence . . . evil is found nowhere apart from the will . . . Good and evil alike depend on our free will.[52]

Once this happens the evil which is produced by man's free will dims and obscures the divine image of God within man, who then assumes the form and appearance of the devil himself:

> If the divine character itself is imprinted on the virtuous life, it is clear that the vicious life becomes the form and countenance of the adversary . . . since the power to choose either alternative according to our independence is bestowed upon us, let us flee from the form of the devil, put off the wicked person and resume the divine image.[53]

Gregory of Nyssa went further than the other Cappadocians and although accepting the negative concept of evil, teaches that evil is an inherited moral taint. In De Vita Moysis Gregory refers to man's nature

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[51] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 30A; LNPF, V, 481; De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 155; LNPF, V, 399.

[52] De Beatitudinibus, V, MPG, XLIV, 1256AB; cf. De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 328B.

[53] De Beatitudinibus, VI, MPG, XLIV, 1276C-1277A.

as "sinful" and speaks of it as having "fallen into sin."[54] Furthermore in his Commentary on the Psalms Gregory states that sin is born in man's nature[55] and in another treatise says that: "He who partakes of Adam's nature partakes also of his fall."[56]

## The Virtues--Aretology

The image of God in man is not limited to the gifts that were mentioned above, immortality, reason, and free will, but includes other gifts with which he was endowed, which are known as the virtues. The virtues are the goods that man received from the creating hand of God. Gregory of Nyssa does not attempt to give a complete list of virtues, since they are too many to enumerate, but he does attempt to define virtue following Aristotle's definition of ἀρετή as a mean between two extremes:

> Wherefore every virtue is a mean between evils viz. between defect of uprightness ( τό καλόν ) and its excess, just as they say courage and liberty are seen to consist in the mean, the former between cowardice and rashness, the latter between prodigality and meanness; cowardice and meanness they classify as vices because of their falling short of what is becoming; prodigality and rashness because they are an excess and superabundance; the mean between the disproportions of the two they call virtue.[57]

The virtues are an integral part of man because man was made in the image of God. Gregory does not try to classify virtues, as the scholastics later were to do, into moral and theological and into acquired and infused.

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[54] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 336, 337.

[55] In Psalmos, MPG, XLIV, 609.

[56] De Oratione Dominica, Or. V, MPG, XLVI, 1184.

[57] Commentarius In Canticum Canticorum IX, MPG, XLIV, 972A.

But he does borrow from classical paideia the classification of virtues into four general categories: wisdom ( σοφία ), bravery ( ἀνδρεία ), soundness of mind ( σωφροσύνη )[58] and justice ( δικαιοσύνη ). And he placed each in its spiritual place. Wisdom he placed in the reasoning faculty ( λογιστικόν μέρος ).[59] Bravery he placed in that part of the soul which Plato called θυμοειδές for which we cannot find an appropriate equivalent English term. Soundness of mind he placed in that part of the soul which Plato considered the seat of desire and affection and called ἐπιθυμητικόν.[60] Justice was considered by Gregory to be a general virtue and he did not therefore limit to any part. Furthermore he tried to define each of these general virtues by harmoniously combining philosophical and Christian concepts. Gregory reached a definition of the virtue of wisdom by combining Plato's thought that defined wisdom as "the science which distinguishes the good from the evil"[61] with the Stoic teaching that spoke of it as "the ability to choose between good and evil." But he also gave the virtue of wisdom a Christian content by defining its relation to the divine ( ὄντως ὄν ),[62] man created in the image of God. For the virtue of bravery Gregory takes Aristotle's definition of the "true medium between cowardice and audacity"[63]

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[58] Plato, Symposium 196C; Plato, Phaedo, 68C; Plato, Republic, Book III, 430E.

[59] Plato, Republic, Book III, 410B.

[60] Ibid., Book III, 439E.

[61] Testimonia Adversus Judaeos, MPG, XLVI, 224C.

[62] Tractatus Psalmorum Inscriptiones, MPG, XLIV, 481AB.

[63] In Ecclesiasten Solomonis, MPG, XLIV, 697C.

and supplements it with the Christian concept of bravery, not as that which is exhibited on the field of battle, but chiefly as the expression against the inner passions of the soul. Plato defined the virtue of soundness of mind ( σωφροσύνη ) as that which brings calmness and serenity to the human soul.[64] To this, Gregory added the Christian meaning of ἀπάθεια or "the freedom from unruly passions," and interpreted bravery ( ἀνδρεία ) as the virtue of the Will of God in man, which is accomplished with the help of God.[65] For the virtue of justice Gregory again goes to Plato and accepts it as the general virtue of the soul, the overall virtue that includes all the other virtues: "in justice every virtue is included."[66] But not quite satisfied with this, he includes Aristotelian and Stoic elements: "the condition of distributing of the equal and according to the worth of each."[67] Even with this addition the concept of justice for Gregory remains too narrow, and he seeks a wider concept that includes everyman regardless of position or social class, because justice is from God, implanted originally in man when God created him, and therefore is that virtue without which wisdom, bravery, and soundness of mind would not truly be virtues.

> It is then universally acknowledged that we must believe the Deity to be not only almighty, but just, and good, and wise, and everything else that suggests excellence . . . no one of these exalted terms, when disjoined from

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[64] De Virginitate, in Gregorii Nysseni Opera, VIII, 130.

[65] De Oratio Dominicana, IV, MPG, XLIV, 1165A.

[66] De Beatitudinibus, IV, MPG, XLIV, 1241C.

[67] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 1233D.

> the rest, is by itself alone a virtue, nor is the good really good, unless allied with what is just, and wise, and mighty . . . wisdom when combined with justice, then absolutely becomes a virtue.[68]

The virtues, however, have been covered over with the taint of evil. But man can rub off the crust of evil by uprooting the vices which he has willingly chosen to accept. When he does this the virtues are restored to their former pristine splendor, which constitutes the return to the likeness of God in which man was originally created:

> God impressed in your formation the imitations of the goods of His own nature like moulding wax, as it were, into the shape of a statue. But evil spreading over the Godlike character, covering it with base veils, has made it useless to you. But if by a careful life you wash away the filth formed in your heart, the divine beauty will shine forth in you again. Just as in the case of iron, when the rust has been rubbed off with a whetstone, though the iron was black a little before, it reflects certain rays in itself against the sun and gives off brightness; so also the interior man . . . when it has rubbed off the excrescience of rust which has accumulated on its form with its debasing squalor, will regain its likeness to the archetype and will become good.[69]

Again it must be pointed out that Gregory is not in any way belittling or ignoring the Grace of God in dealing with the topic of virtues. In fact, in speaking of man's return to the state of likeness to God, he says:

> In fact this likeness to the divine is not our work at all; it is not the achievement of any faculty of man; it is the great gift of God bestowed upon our nature at the very moment of our birth; human efforts can only go so far as to clear away the filth of sin, and so cause the buried beauty of the soul to shine forth again.[70]

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[68] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 56D-57A; LNPF, V, 491.

[69] De Beatitudinibus, VI, MPG, XLIV, 1272A.

[70] De Virginitate, VIII, 300; LNPF, V, 358.

Gregory finds greater meaning for the moral ascent and the perfection of man in the spiritual virtues of faith, hope, and love. These are gifts of the Holy Spirit and are implanted in the souls of Christians. But they only bear fruit when man cooperates by making good use of his free will.

> It is necessary, then, for those calling themselves after Christ, first of all, to become what the name implies, and then, to adapt themselves to the title . . . a person cannot accurately be called a Christian if he does not give assent to the faith with his mind, even if he conforms to it in other respects, or if his mind gives assent, but his body is not suited to this way of life . . . and "the hope" (Colossians 1:27) which we know to be the same as the cornerstone towards which all things tend, if they are zealously pursued in virtue, is that One so named by Paul. The beginning of this high "tower" (Luke 14:28) of life is our faith in Him upon which we build, putting down the principles of our life we erect pure thoughts and actions upon it . . . but the first-born is also, justice and holiness and love and redemption and such things. So if our life is characterized by such qualities, we furnish clear tokens of our noble birth, and anyone, seeing these qualities in our life, will bear witness to our brotherhood with Christ.[71]

The natural virtues find their perfection in the supernatural virtues. The purpose and end of the virtuous life is blessedness ( μακαριότης ). Blessedness in its absolute state is characteristic of the divine. And it is through virtue that man participates in divine happiness and blessedness. Gregory describes this purpose as ὁμοίωσις θεῷ , which is impossible to attain completely on earth.[72]

## Likeness to God

Gregory of Nyssa does not follow the Alexandrian distinction between image ( εἰκών ) and likeness ( ὁμοίωσις ), with its understanding that

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[71]"On Perfection, The Fathers of the Church, pp. 98, 99, 109, 115.

[72]De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 301AB.

homoiosis is the ethical perfection of man as the icon of God. Most scholars claim that Gregory considers the terms eikon and homoiosis as synonymous, and consequently are of the opinion that Gregory used the words image and likeness interchangeably. But John Trinich informs us that Pere Roger Leys, in a critical study, mentions eleven citations from Gregory's writings (although he claims that there are more) to prove that Gregory does distinguish between the terms eikon and homoiosis, not however as between two different things, but as between two aspects of the same reality. Thus he agrees that Gregory considers the terms eikon and homoiosis as synonymous, but uses one or the other in some instances to emphasize a particular aspect of the image of God in man. Pere Leys points out that Gregory uses the term eikon to denote the static aspect of the resemblance with God, while the term homoiosis is used by him to express a dynamic notion, which is the progressive realization of the eikon.[73] Gregory states it thus:

> And even the likeness is commonly spoken of as "a king," so the human nature also, as it was made to rule the rest, was, by its likeness to the King of all, made as it were a living image, partaking with the archetype both in rank and in name.[74]

Gregory is considered to be the first of the Fathers who attributed full or complete homoiosis of man to God.[75] The concept of homoiosis found in most of the other Greek Fathers was due to Platonic influence

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[73] J. Trinich, "S. Gregory of Nyssa and the Doctrine of the Image," in Eastern Churches Quarterly, IX (1951), 175-184; cf. Roger Leys, L'image de Dieu chez Saint Gregoire de Nysse (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1952), p. 146.

[74] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 128A; LNPF, V, 391.

[75] Gerhart B. Ladner, "Anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, XII (1958), 64.

and specifically Plato's contention of homoiosis according to virtue (ὁμοίωσις τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς). Gregory, however, used the term homoiosis in an absolute Christian dynamic sense, except when he wished to refer to the image of God in man in an ontological and static sense. In this usage Gregory applied the term ὁμοίωμα. For Gregory homoiosis means the regaining of the lost blessedness of Paradise and the reacquisition of the fullness of the image of God, which was not destroyed by sin, but dimmed when Adam fell from God's Grace. Gregory recommends the homoiosis of man to God for the attainment of earthly perfection:

> To become like God means to become just, holy, and good, and such like things. If anyone, as far as in him lies, clearly shows himself the characteristics of these virtues, he will pass automatically and without effort from this earthly life to the life of heaven. For the distance between the Divine and the human is not a local one as to need some mechanical device by which this heavily weighted earthly flesh should migrate into the disembodied intelligible life. No, if virtue has really been separated from evil, it lies solely within the free choice of man to be there where his desire inclines him. Since, therefore, the choice of the good is not followed by any labor--for possession of the things that are chosen follows the act of choice--you are entitled to be in heaven immediately because you have seized God with your mind . . . He tells you to do nothing less than to become like your heavenly Father by a life that is worthy of God, as He bids us do more clearly elsewhere when He says, "be therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48)[76]

Perfection again is relative to human ability, but is achieved by a continuous striving toward the supreme good. This does not mean, however, that homoiosis is primarily man's work because it is a gift of God. The homoiosis to God is restored when the soul attains the original beauty (τὸ ἐκ φύσεως κάλλος) or its old form (ἀρχαία μορφή) through a process of catharsis (καθαρότης).

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[76] De Oratio Dominicana, II, MPG, XLIV, 1119.

## The Fall of Man

As we have seen, Gregory of Nyssa referred to man as he was created by God as natural man. Natural man was endowed with the gifts of purity, love, happiness, intelligence, and free will.[77] But man did not remain in this natural condition for long. Something happened and he fell away from being an image of God. Gregory asks:

> Where is the divine resemblance in the soul? Where the body's freedom from suffering? Where the eternal life? Man is of brief existence, subject to passions, liable to decay, and ready both in body and mind for every form of suffering.[78]

Man was living in Paradise as a creature that was more spiritual than material, since he was created in the image of God, endowed with reason and freedom of will. Man's animal nature, with its physical needs and cravings was not a controlling factor within man, for man could look to God in a pure and simple mind and be content with contemplation of Him.

> He did not yet judge of what was lovely by taste or sight; he found in the Lord alone all that was sweet, and he used the ehopmeet given him only for this delight, as Scripture signified when it said that "he knew her not" (Genesis 4:1) till he was driven forth from the garden, and till she, for the sin which she was decoyed into committing, was sentenced to the pangs of childbirth.[79]

In the exercise of his free will in response to the promptings of the devil, man made bad use of it by choosing to disobey God. Adam failed to maintain his single-minded contemplation of God, but instead turned his attention away from God and focussed it upon the creatures. This brought

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[77] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 137AC.

[78] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 246; LNPF, V, 479.

[79] De Virginitate, XII, MPG, XLVI, 575D; LNPF, V, 358.

about the fall of man.

> For when once he, who by his apostasy from goodness had begotten in himself this Envy, had received this bias to evil, like a rock torn asunder from a mountain ridge, which is driven down headlong by its own weight, in like manner he, dragged away from his original natural propensity to goodness and gravitating with all his weight in the direction of vice, was deliberately forced and borne away as by a kind of gravitation to the utmost limit of iniquity; and as for that intellectual power which he had received from his Creator to cooperate with the better endowments, this he made his assisting instrument in the discovery of contrivances for the purposes of vice, while by his crafty skill he deceives and circumvents man persuading him to become his own murderer with his own hands.[80]

In speaking thus Gregory by no means wishes to absolve man from the guilt of sin and of the fall. Rather he is careful to stress the freedom of choice in man and the responsibility of that choice:

> So the first man on the earth, or rather he who generated evil in man, had for choice the Good and the Beautiful lying all around him in the very nature of things; yet he willfully cut out a new way for himself against this nature and in the act of turning away from virtue, which was his own free act, he created the usage of evil.[81]

Furthermore Gregory emphasized the thought that the devil, who fell away into the passion of envy, could have no influence over man, if man had not "sold himself" to him:

> Now that we had voluntarily bartered away our freedom, it was requisite that no arbitrary method of recovery but the one consonant with justice should be devised by Him Who in His goodness had undertaken our rescue.[82]

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[80] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 28C-29D; cf. De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 335B.

[81] De Virginitate, XII, MPG, XLVI, 372A; LNPF, V, 357; cf. De Deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti, MPG, XLVI, 569A.

[82] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 60D.

And when man turned away from God, the source of life and good, then man fell from the grace of God and acquired the "garments of skins."

> Pleasure, craftily offered, began the fall, and there followed after pleasure, shame and fear, even to remain longer in the sight of their Creator, so that they hid themselves with the skins of dead animal.[83]

Gregory understands the acquisition of "skins of dead animals" by the first man to mean the loss of immortality:

> In my opinion we are bound to take these skins in their literal meaning . . . But since all skin, after it is separated from the animal, is dead, I am certainly of the opinion that He Who is the healer of our sinfulness, of his foresight invested man subsequently with that capacity of dying which had been the special attribute of the brute creation. Not that it was to last forever; for a coat is something external put on us, lending itself to the body for a time, but not indigenous to its nature. This liability to death, then, taken from the brute creation, was, provisionally, made to envelope the nature created for immortality.[84]

But the "coats of skins" were also all the passions, actions and habits of the body after the fall, which Gregory lumps together under the term passions ( πάθη ). Death was not only a punishment for man's fall, according to Gregory, it was something much more meaningful. It held within it the means through which man could be elevated to a position of eliminating sin. But this does not mean that death restores man to his original state. It is the death of Christ and His resurrection that unites man to God.

> This then, is the mystery of God's plan with regard to His death and His resurrection from the dead; namely, instead of preventing the dissolution of his body by death and the necessary results of nature, to bring both back to each other in the resurrection, so that He might become in

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[83] De Virginitate, XII, MPG, XLVI, 373; LNPF, V, 358.

[84] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 33C; LNPF, V, 482-483.

> Himself the meeting-ground both of life and death, having re-established in Himself that nature which death had divided, and being Himself the originating principle of the uniting those separated portions.[85]

The penalty of death, which involved the corruption of the body, also signified the alienation of man from God, since:

> the death of the soul is separation from the true life, the death of the body, corruption and dissolution.[86]

And Gregory described this penalty of death, emphasizing the separation from God thus:

> Now it was not the body merely, but the whole man, compacted of soul and body, that was lost; indeed, if we are to speak more exactly, the soul was lost sooner than the body. For disobedience is a sin, not of the body, but of the will; and the will properly belongs to the soul, from which the whole disaster of our nature had its beginning, as the threat of God, that admits of no falsehood, testifies in the declaration that, in the day that they should eat of the forbidden fruit, death without respite would attach to the act. Now since the condemnation of man was twofold, death correspondingly effects in each part of our nature the deprivation of the twofold life that operates in him who is thus mortally stricken. For the death of the body consists in the extinction of the means of sensible perception, and in the dissolution of the body into its kindred elements; but "the soul that sinneth," he saith, "it shall die" (John 5:22). Now sin is nothing else than alienation from God, Who is the true and only life.[87]

The Fall of Adam and Eve resulted in their separation from God and they were cast out of Paradise. But we, too, the descendants of the first man and woman, are ejected from Paradise, because we share their human nature.

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[85] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 52BC; LNPF, V, 489.

[86] In Christi Resurrectionem, I, MPG, XLVI, 616B; cf. Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 36B.

[87] Contra Eunomium, LIB. II, MPG, XLV, 545AB; LNPF, V, 126-127.

> The habit of sinning entered as we have described, and with fatal quickness, into the life of man; and from that small beginning spread into this infinitude of evil. Then that godly beauty of the soul which was an imitation of the Archetypal Beauty, like fine steel blackened with the vicious rust, preserved no longer the glory of its familiar essence, but was disfigured with the ugliness of sin. This thing so great and precious as the Scripture calls him, this being man, has fallen from his proud birthright.[88]

Although Gregory does not use the term original sin, which seems to have a different connotation in the East from that which it has in the West, yet in substance this is what can be concluded from his insistence that not only Adam, but Adam for himself and for all men after him, lost the holiness and justice received from God, and acquired death, suffering, and sin. In substantiation of the contention that the human race was "enslaved by sin and alienated from the true life,"[89] Gregory brought the witness of St. Paul that all are: "by nature sons of wrath."[90] Man's nature being both spirit and flesh was not perfect, even before the Fall, but being created in the image and likeness of God had the potentiality of becoming perfect through the element of free will, but by the same token had the same potential of falling into evil. Consequently Gregory did not understand the Fall of man to be the devastating depraved calamity that later Calvinistic theology depicted it to be. Gregory did not teach, in other words, that man became completely depraved as a result of the Fall. According to him, man did not lose his reason nor his free will in the Fall. Human nature was not corrupted. But rather in the Fall man was stripped of

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[88] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 409B.

[89] Contra Eunomium, LIB. II, MPG, XLV, 532D.

[90] De Perfecta Christiani Forma, MPG, XLVI, 276A; cf. De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 356.

the "added" gifts which were not an integral part of his human nature to begin with. In essence Gregory taught that in the Fall human nature was weakened and human understanding was dimmed.[91]

## Catharsis

Catharsis is the process through which the soul is cleansed from the accretions of sin and evil. And catharsis is the beginning of the process, the first stage of sanctification ( θέωσις ) or the contemplation of God.

> Once the habit of sin entered into the life of man . . . that God-like beauty of the soul which had been produced by imitation of the archetype became blackened with the rust of evil . . . so man falling into the filth of sin ruined his character as an image of the incorruptible God and through his sin put on a corruptible and slimy image which reason bids him remove by the water, as it were, of purity of life. The divine goodness is not separated from our nature nor does it dwell far from those who choose to seek it; it is in each one of us, unknown and escaping notice . . . but it is found whenever we turn our mind back to it.[92]

Catharsis fulfills a triple need, for it combats the triple function of evil which resides in the soul of man as (1) an inherited tendency; (2) an accumulation of personal sins, and (3) a condition which has taken hold of the soul. Every person is born a sinner because he has received a soul tainted by the fall of Adam. The effect of this is an inclination toward evil, a whetting of the lower appetites. Catharsis, however, according to Gregory of Nyssa, does not restore the grace lost through Adam's Fall. This is accomplished only through Baptism:

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[91] De Oratio Dominicana, IV, MPG, XLIV, 276A; cf. De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 356.

[92] De Virginitate, XII, MPG, XLVI, 372B-373A.

> In Baptism we receive the grace of regeneration; we are no longer in sin and virtues are produced in the soul by the Holy Spirit.[93]

Rather the function of catharsis is to bring this inclination toward evil under control, and make man master over his evil habits. At that time in the history of the Church, for the most part, those accepted into the Christian Faith through baptism were adults. A period of instruction and preparation preceded the Baptismal rite. It was during this period of preparation that the catechumen underwent at the same time a process of catharsis or purification. But this was only a beginning for the process of purification continued throughout the Christian life, according to Gregory, and even extended beyond the grave into eternity, as we shall see in his theory of "apokatastasis." Gregory compared the "cleansing of the heart" or the attaining of beatitude, to being "taken up in a chariot."

> For this earthly weight pulls him down. If he have a mind alert to the passions of the soul, which are as it were necessary he will think that it is difficult and all but impossible to get rid of the evils to which he is yoked . . . in a sense evil is mingled with our nature through those who originally gave entrance to passion and through disobedience brought in the ailment ( νόσος ) . . . Virtue is hard to obtain and is acquired only by much sweat and labor, by earnestness and weariness as Scripture teaches us, but it does not say that the sublime life is utterly unattainable.. . . There are two meanings to the promise to see God; one is to know the nature of Him who transcends all, the other is to be united to Him through a spotless life; the former kind of contemplation the saints tell us is unattainable, the latter the Lord promises to human nature when He says: "Blessed are the clean ( καθαροί ) of heart since they shall see God."[94]

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[93] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 421B-424B.

[94] De Beatitudinibus, VI, MPG, XLIV, 1273AC; cf. De Virginitate, XI, MPG, XLVI, 368BC; In Psalmos, MPG, XLIV, 433AC; Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, II, MPG, XLIV, 804BC; De Beatitudinibus, II, MPG, XLIV, 1216AB.

Man's personal sins as a result of his passions and lower appetites have given strength to these passions and appetites. Here again the matter of free will and proper or improper use of the adiaphora comes into play in Gregory's exposition to indicate his basic thought that man is personally responsible for his actions. The character and value of passions and appetites are regulated by reason and the use to which they are put.

> And these are all those phenomena within us that we call "passions," which have not been allotted to human nature for any bad purpose at all, but according to the use which our free will puts them to, these emotions of the soul become the instruments of virtue or of vice.[95]

The "passions" therefore can be an asset to man's spiritual life. He himself determines whether he will make good or evil use of them and consequently he can apply his reason to dominate and control his emotions.

> Supposing then, that our reason, which is our nature's choicest part, holds the dominion over those imported emotions (as Scripture allegorically declares in the command to men to rule over the brutes), none of them will be active in the ministry of evil; fear will only generate within us obedience, and anger fortitude, desire will procure for us the delight that is Divine and perfect. But if reason drops the reins . . . then these instincts are changed into fierceness, just as we see happens amongst the brutes.[96]

And when this latter happens, and man allows his reason to lose control over the passions and non-rational impulses, then man's whole life is dragged down to the sinful state, and he becomes a slave to his passions.

> For when a man draws down his mental energy to the irrational and forces his reason to become the

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[95] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 61AC; LNPF, V, 442; cf. De Virginitate, MPG, XLVI, 392CD; Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, XI, MPG, XLIV, 1009AC; De Beatitudinibus, I, MPG, XLIV, 100.

[96] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 61B.

> servant of his passions, there is effected a transformation of the good character to the image of the irrational, his whole nature being re-marked after that design as his reason cultivates the beginnings of his passions and increases them from a few to a multitude.[97]

Gregory became extremely engrossed with this concept of catharsis, and under the influence of Origen's theory of apocatastasis, carried the idea beyond human life. He claimed that if a person could not attain catharsis in the present life, then he would have the opportunity to do so in the next life, and that further purification of the soul without the body would be possible and necessary in eternity until such time as the last traces of evil were completely erased from the soul. He wrote:

> I think our Lord teaches us this: those still living in the flesh must as far as they can separate and release themselves from its habits by a virtuous life that after death they may not need a second death to cleanse away the remnants of the clinging flesh.[98]

> Contemplation and discernment belong to the God-like part of the soul . . . if then from diligence here or catharsis hereafter, our soul become free from the coalescing of the passions and what is irrational, nothing will hinder it from contemplation of the beautiful.[99]

## The Mystic Vision or the Mirror of the Soul

Contemplation of God is possible because man, created in the image of God, is able to know God according to the ancient axiom, "like is known by like." Gregory adopted the Platonic formula of the eye beholding rays of light by virtue of the nature of light as part of the eye.

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[97] De Hominis Opficio, MPG, XLIV, 192D-192D; cf. Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, VIII, MPG, XLIV, 944D.

[98] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 88A; cf. De Beatitudinibus, II, MPG, XLIV, 1217D.

[99] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 89B.

> The eye enjoys the rays of light by virtue of the light which it has in itself by nature that it may apprehend the kindred . . . The same necessity requires, as regards the participation in God, that in the nature that is to enjoy God there be something kindred to Him Who is to be partaken of.[100]

From this understanding of the image of God in man Gregory reached the conclusion that man is able to attain the mystic vision of God, in spite of the limitations of human and rational knowledge.

> The Divine Nature, whatever It may be in Itself, surpasses every mental concept. For It may be Itself inaccessible to reasoning and conjecture, nor has there been found any human faculty capable of perceiving the incomprehensible. For we cannot devise a means of understanding inconceivable things . . . Since such is He Whose nature is above every nature, the Invisible and Incomprehensible is seen and apprehended in another manner . . . If a man's heart has been purified from every creature and unruly affection, he will see the Image of the Divine Nature in his own beauty . . . You have within yourselves the standard by which to apprehend the Divine . . . If therefore, you wash off by a good life the filth that has been stuck on your heart like plaster, the Divine beauty will again shine forth in you . . . You are able to perceive what is invisible to those who are not purified because you have been cleansed; the darkness caused by material entanglements has been removed from the eyes of your soul, and so you see the blessed vision radiant in the pure heaven of your heart.[101]

In the Commentary on the Song of Song Gregory refers to the "mystic vision," which is a foretaste of the Beatific Vision of the future life, as "a divine and sober inebriation" (θεία τε καὶ νηφάλιος μέθη).[102] Anyone can, but everyone does not attain this vision. Those who wish to experience the mystic vision must literally "step out of themselves" according to Gregory, which means that they must return to the pristine

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[100] De Infantibus, MPG, XLVI, 113D, 176A.

[101] J. Quasten and J. C. Plumpe, editors. "Sermon on the Beatitudes VI," Ancient Christian Writers (London: Westminster, Md., 1946).

[102] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum X, MPG, XLIV, 992.

image of God in which they were created, by the purification of catharsis. When man is thus purified, he enters an ecstatic state, which Gregory describes as "sober inebriation," and his soul then becomes a "mirror" in which he can see God. This catharsis, however, means detachment from all earthly affections, otherwise as in the case of the stained surface of a mirror the glory and beauty of God cannot be truly reflected. Gregory expresses it thus:

> It will therefore be no detriment to our participation in the good, that the soul should be free from such emotions, and turning back upon herself should know herself accurately what her actual nature is, and should behold the Original Beauty reflected in the mirror, and in the figure of her own beauty. For truly herein consists the real assimilation to the Divine; videlicet, in making our own life in some degree a copy of the Supreme Being.[103]

Man cannot look upon the divine essence, but he can see the divine attributes of God as they are reflected in the mirror of the soul.

> If a man cull every sweet-smelling flower or aroma from the variegated meadows of virtue . . . thereby becoming perfect in every way, still he could not by nature fix his gaze on God the Word like the orb of the sun, but in himself so to speak he sees the sun in a mirror. For the rays of that true and divine virtue shine forth in the purified life through the freedom from irregular affection ( ἀπάθεια ), which emanates from them and they make that visible to us which is invisible and the inaccessible comprehensible forming the sun in our mirror.[104]

In the treatise On the Making of Man Gregory speaks of the mind as the mirror which reflects the good, when a man turns away from evil.

> The mind has been adorned with the likeness of the beauty of the archetype and like a mirror is conformed to the character of that which it expresses.[105]

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[103] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 89C; LNPF, V, 449.

[104] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum III, MPG, XLIV, 824AC, 953BC.

[105] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 161C.

But the illustration of the mirror is not a perfect one, because the mirror reflects that which is entirely outside itself, while the soul as a mirror reflects that which is within.

> When the Lord says, "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God," He does not, it seems to me, set God as an object of contemplation external to the soul; but He teaches us that he who has cleansed his heart from all creatures and from every passionate disposition sees in his own beauty the image of the divine nature.[106]

Gregory maintains that to reflect God in the soul one must have God within the soul.

> For purity ( καθαρότης ), freedom from irregular affections ( ἀπάθεια ), and removal from all evil ( ἀλλοτρίωσις ) is deity; if these are in you, God certainly is in you . . . Purity, holiness, simplicity, all such light some radiances of the divine nature by which God is seen.[107]

## On Virginity

Gregory of Nyssa dealt with this ascetic topic in the earliest of all his writings, De Virginitate, in a manner very different from most other Fathers of the Early Church. His purpose in writing this treatise was "to create in its readers a passion for the life according to excellence."[108] Gregory thought of the human life as an effort to develop in spiritual things, and he expresses himself in philosophic rather than Scriptural language. His basic premise is that the spirit must be freed in order that it may be drawn to the Divine Spirit. To be freed, the soul must attain "virginity." Virginity, he characterizes as "a necessary door of entrance

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[107] Ibid., VI, MPG, XLIV, 1269D.

[108] De Virginitate, MPG, XLVI, 318; LNPF, V, 303.

to the holier life."[109]

> [Virginity is] the channel which draws down the Deity to share man's estate, it keeps wings for man's desire to rise to heavenly things, and is a bond of union between the Divine and the Human, by its meditation bringing into harmony these existences so widely divided.[110]

Gregory contends that there is no greater praise of virginity than showing it,

> in a manner deifying those who share in her pure mysteries, so that they become partakers of His glory Who is in actual truth the only Holy and Blameless One; their purity and their incorruptibility being the means of bringing them into relationship with Him.[111]

From this very beginning of his literary output Gregory wrote out of a well-organized and completely thought-out and consistent body of doctrines. That is why he could re-use in his later writings, especially in the De Instituto Christiano, which he wrote in the last few years of his life, much of what he wrote in this, his first one.

In expounding his spiritual concept of virginity, Gregory saw the entire divine dispensation ( οἰκονομία ) as an inter-linking means of salvation. This begins with the Holy Trinity "comprehended in the idea of the Father incorrupt . . . in Him, Who has a Son and yet without passion has begotten Him." It shines forth equally "in His pure and passionless generation" in the metaphor of Christ, the Son, as the model of virginity. It is seen too "in the inherent and incorruptible purity of the Holy Spirit." And it accompanies "the whole supermundane existence" through the angelic powers of heaven; "never separated from aught that is Divine." Gregory then

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[110] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 325B; LNPF, V, 345.

[111] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 325; LNPF, V, 344.

links this further to humanity by projecting the example of "the stainless Mary," the Blessed Virgin.[112]

According to Gregory, virginity is the basis upon which all other virtues depend and the means through which a Christian prepares himself to change into something better than himself, so that he can attain the vision of God.

> It has been proved as well that this union of the soul with the incorruptible Deity can be accomplished in no other way but by herself attaining by her virgin state to the utmost purity possible--a state which, being like God will enable her to grasp that to which it is like, while she places herself like a mirror beneath the purity of God, and moulds her own beauty at the touch and the sight of the Archetype of all beauty . . . the real Virginity, the real zeal for chastity, ends in no other goal than this, videlicet the power thereby of seeing God.113

Again one sees that balance of grace and works as Gregory understood it when he recognized the fact that man cannot alone attain virginity, but must have the assistance of divine grace.[114] Gregory who had entered the married state feels that he is excluded from the state of virginity, because of his choice of "engagements of the secular life." He says:

> Would indeed that some profit might come to myself from this effort. I should have undertaken this labour with the greater readiness, if I could have hope of sharing, according to the Scriptures, in the fruits of the plough and the threshing floor the toil would then have been a pleasure. As it is, this my knowledge of the beauty of virginity is in some sort vain and useless to me . . . Happy they who have still the power of choosing the better way, and have not debarred themselves from it by engagements of the secular life, as we have, whom a gulf now divides from glorious virginity.[115]

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 335; LNPF, V, 356-357.

[114] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 318; LNPF, V, 333.

[115] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 325A; LNPF, V, 345.

But Gregory was not against marriage itself; rather, he exalted the state of virginity. He is of the opinion that "if anyone would make up his mind to measure exactly the difference between the two courses, married or unmarried, he would find it well-nigh that the state of virginity in preference to marriage is as great as that between heaven and earth."[116]

Gregory sees virginity as man's "fellow worker" to achieve the ability to live "for the spirit only,"[117] which condition he considers easier to attain through virginity than through marriage, which he does not wish to condemn or depreciate.[118] Furthermore, the "life of virginity" is stronger than death itself.[119] And Gregory even goes further and speaks of virginity as a "spiritual marriage" with the Lord, "the true Bridegroom," as the soul "becomes with Him one spirit, and by the compact of a wedded life has staked the love of all her heart and all her strength on Him alone."[120] Forthwith Gregory compares the two kinds of marriage, the earthly and the spiritual, showing that the two cannot exist simultaneously in the same person.[121] Those who will strive to achieve virginity through "philosophy" or the "human mind" with the assistance and guidance of Scripture and who exercise temperance by training the flesh should not depend on their own competence, but seek assistance from one trained in temperance:

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[116] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 328; LNPF, V, 345-346.

[117] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 351.

[118] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 352.

[119] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 359.

[120] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 360, 361.

[121] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 365-366.

> Therefore, since most embrace virginity while still young and unformed in understanding, this before anything else should be their employment, to search out a fitting guide and master of this way, lest, in their present ignorance, they should wander from the direct route, and strike out new paths of their own in trackless wilds.[122]

And finally Gregory speaks of virginity as "being crucified with Christ" in order to live and be glorified and to reign with Him:

> And the consequence of being crucified with Christ is that we shall live with Him, and be glorified with Him, and reign with Him.[123]

## Deification

Gregory of Nyssa did not originate the concept or term of deification ( θέωσις ), but he found it well established in Plato and especially in Neoplatonism and in the New Testament, particularly in the teachings of St. Paul and St. John. Neoplatonism taught that theosis was the return of the human soul to God through catharsis. St. Paul and St. John taught in the New Testament that theosis was the adoption of man by God through Christ's redemptive work. Theosis meant that man could participate in the immortality of God. Man became like God, attained homoiosis to divine nature by virtue of the Holy Spirit. Therefore theosis is the embodiment of the destination of reborn man and the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. From the study of the writings of the Early Fathers, Gregory accepted the formula: "God became Man, so that man should become God," and followed his brother Basil who taught that the supreme goal of man was "to become God" ( Θεόν γενέσθαι ).[124]

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[122] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 369.

[123] Ibid.; LNPF, V, 371.

[124] Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, MPG, XXXII, 89.

The concept of deification fits very well, therefore, into Gregory's theological-anthropology and reveals his psychological and pastoral concerns. It comes through persistently especially in his opposition to Apollinarianism where he stresses the idea that the salvation of man depends on the complete unity of human nature with God through Christ.[125] In his commentary on Corinthians 15:28 where St. Paul states that when all things are subjected to God, "then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone," Gregory says:

> The subjection of this body is called the subjection of the Son Himself for the reason that He is identified with His body, which is the Church.[126]

Thus Christ in His Mystical Body, the totus Christus ( πλήρωμα ), the Church unites all humanity to Christ and redeems, perfects, and deifies it. But theosis as understood and taught by Gregory of Nyssa is not "divinisation." Theosis in no way is a mystical union of divine and human nature, which is consummated in the absorption of the human by the divine. It is rather a term used to express the gradual unfolding of a dynamic awareness of the grace of God as the Holy Trinity in the life of a Christian through the inspiration and Person of the Holy Spirit. This process of awareness begins at the time of Baptism when the infant, child, or adult are received within the fellowship of the Church and develops as the Christian participates in the life and communion of the Church. The constant

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[125] Aversus Apollinarem, VI, MPG, XLV, 1123-1269.

[126] In Illud, MPG, XLIV, 1303.

efforts toward and final attainment of the state of sinlessness of Adam before the Fall is the goal of theosis or sanctification. It must be pointed out that the emphasis of the meaning of theosis is "sanctification" in Gregory of Nyssa as well as for the Eastern Fathers, and not "justification," which is foreign to Eastern Greek non-legalistic thought.

> Since the God who was manifested infused Himself into perishable humanity for this purpose, videlicet that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace, He disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption.[127]

The concept of theosis as "sanctification" led more readily to the transformation of man into "newness of life" as St. Paul suggested in Romans 6:4. And it is "sanctification" which helps man attain the homoiosis through the grace of God. Thus Gregory conceives of redemption as happening through the process of perfection and Christ's salvific mission.

> For since the method by our salvation was made effectual not so much by His precepts in the way of teaching as by the deeds of Him Who has realized an actual fellowship with man, and has effected life as a living fact, so that by means of the flesh which He has assumed, and at the same time deified everything kindred and related may be saved with it.[128]

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[127] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 93; LNPF, V, 505-506; cf. Athanasius, In Epistola ad Eustathius, MPG, XXV, 192, and MPG, XXVI, 1077; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, IV, MPG, VIII, 281; Gregory Thaumaturg, Paneygricus Origenis, 142; Cyril of Alexandria, MPG, LXXVI, 312.

[128] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 93; LNPF, V, 502; cf. Contra Eunomium, LIB. V, MPG, XLV, 179; LNPF, V, 179.

## Perfection

Gregory of Nyssa understood the mystical ascent of man to God as a process of perfection through stages of gradual purification. The goal of this state of perfection ( τελειότης ) was the gradual approach to the knowledge of truth ( γνῶσιν τῆς ἀληθείας ) or "the absolute good." Gnosis which Gregory deals with at the very beginning of his treatise De Instituto Christiano is the way to salvation[129] and its ultimate object is God, the Absolute Good.

> It is for this reason that the knowledge of truth, the saving medicine ( τό σωτήριον φάρμακον), is by the grace of our Saviour bestowed as a gift upon those who accept it eagerly . . . you have received this knowledge and divine love (τήν γνῶσιν καί τόν θεῖον ἔρωτα) worthily, and have directed it in accordance with the nature given to the soul.[130]

Gregory intends to show in De Instituto Christiano:

> What kind of road leads to this end, how it is fitting for those travelling upon it to treat each other, how it is necessary for those in authority to direct the chorus of philosophy and what suffering must be endured by those who are going to ascend to the peak of virtue and make their own souls worthy of the reception of the spirit.[131]

Gregory characterized this innate desire of the soul for the good as ἔρως and πόθος , Platonic concepts taken from the Symposium, as the insatiable desire for the agathon-kalon. Moses is the supreme illustration of a man who is the lover of beauty (ἐραστής τοῦ κάλλους ) according to Gregory[132] for whom the archetype of beauty and goodness (ἀρχέτυπον κάλλος)

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[129] De Instituto Christiano, VII, 41.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., VIII, 41; cf. "On the Christian Mode of Life," Pp. 127-128.

[132] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 401D, 404D.

is God Himself.[133] Thus God is the object of the infinite desire and love of those who recognize Him. Gregory describes this recognition of God as the seeing of the Beauty (θεᾶσθαι τὸ κάλλος)[134] a phrase he apparently borrowed from Plato who spoke of the theoria of the Idea of the Good. The road to this knowledge or perfection is through exercise (ἄσκησις). Therefore the ascetic life for Gregory is the whole path of philosophy (πᾶσα φιλοσοφίας ὁδός).[135] And the greatest achievement of this ascetic life is to be great in works but humble of heart,[136] attained by the knowledge of God ( θεογνωσία ) by contemplating one's own nature.

> If anyone withdraws his attention for a moment from his body and, emerging from the slavery of his passions and his carelessness, looks at his own soul with honest and sincere reason, he will see clearly how its nature reveals God's love for us and His intention in creating us.[137]

Thus Gregory places great emphasis on works ( ἔργα ) as the result of faith ( πίστις ), and sums up his teaching on perfection as follows:

> This, therefore is in my judgment the perfection of the Christian life, that in thought, in speech, and in all the pursuits of life there be a participation in all the names by which the name of Christ is made known so as to preserve perfectly in the entire body, mind, and spirit without admixture of evil, the holiness praised by Paul.[138]

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[133] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 868D, 877A; De Virginitate, MPG, XLVI, 296, 298; De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 429B; De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 89C.

[134] De Virginitate, MPG, XLVI, 289, 311.

[135] De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 83.

[136] Ibid., VIII, 66.

[137] Ibid., VIII, 40; cf. Fathers of the Church, p. 127.

[138] De Professione Christiana, MPG, XLVI, 285A.

But man cannot accomplish perfection alone. The Holy Spirit contributes to his efforts. Without the Holy Spirit, man falls short of his goal of salvation.

> For the grace of the Spirit follows quickly upon the person who perseveres in toil, destroying the seeds of evil, and it is not possible for the one abiding with God to fall short of his hope or to be neglected or unavenged.[139]

A Christian who has determined to make the "ascent" toward God cannot expect to receive assistance from the Holy Spirit automatically, but must constantly seek this assistance through prayer.

> So wicked and hard to cure and strong are those things possessed in the depths of our souls that it is not possible to rub them out and to remove them through human efforts and virtue alone unless through prayer we take the power of the Spirit as an ally and, in this way, conquer the evil which is playing the tyrant within us.[140]

And finally Gregory concludes his thoughts on perfection thus:

> That which seems to be formidable, namely that our nature is changeable, can serve as wings by means of which we fly to better things. To be incapable of being changed for the better would be a loss for us. He, therefore, who sees in our nature a tendency toward change should not grieve, but being changed always for the better and transformed from glory to glory, let him be so changed through daily increase as to become daily better and ever more perfect, persuaded that he has never arrived at the measure of perfection. Now, true perfection is limited by no boundaries.[141]

## Imitation

Gregory uses the term mimesis to define Christianity as the imitation of the divine nature. Werner Jaeger[142] has shown convincingly that Gregory

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[139] Fathers of the Church, p. 139; De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 57.

[140] Fathers of the Church, p. 139; De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 46.

[141] De Professione Christiana, MPG, XLVI, 285CD.

[142] Jaeger, Paideia, II, 233.

has in mind the Platonic meaning of "copy" or "reproduction" when he uses the term mimesis. Gregory uses the Platonic illustration of a painter who makes a portrait of the king for those who have not seen him. If the portrait is not a true likeness of the king, those subjects who do not know him would suppose the king to be like the image. Likewise if Christianity is defined as the "imitation of God," a non-Christian seeing a Christion behaving wrongly would think that God is like the Christian who misbehaves. But if he sees examples of Christians behaving properly, he will assume that the God of Christianity is good. Interpreting the passage, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), Gregory suggests that:

> The Lord was leading us in a special manner to the understanding of the Christian profession . . . for He who named Him the Father of those who have believed, the true Father wishes those begotten through Him to be like the perfection of the good perceived in him.[143]

And finally mimesis according to Gregory is shown to be:

> that the Gospel does not command human nature to be compared with the divine nature, but that we imitate God's actions as far as possible by our lives . . . to keep away from all evil as far as possible; to be free from all defilement in deed, and word, and thought. This is the true imitation of the divine perfection, of the perfection of the heavenly God.[144]

## The Meaning of Grace

Gregory of Nyssa teaches his doctrine of Grace chiefly in the De Hominis Opificio and identifies it with man's original state of blessedness in which man received God's love, having been created in the image

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[143] De Professione Christiana, MPG, XLVI, 245C.

[144] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 245D.

of God and possessing wisdom and freedom.[145] In his usual thorough way Gregory considered the meaning of Grace from two points of view: from the point of view of God, and from the point of view of man.[146] In presenting the itemized meanings from these two aspects, Gregory reviews the entire spectrum of his theology and anthropology. Thus Gregory traces grace ( χάρις ) of God through creation, the grace of prophecy, the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was Grace personified; the Grace of the Gospel, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

> Grace is the gift of the Master . . . no one asks payment for the gift he receives, but rather is the debtor. Therefore when we are illumined by baptism we are bound to feel goodwill to our benefactor.[147]

But here too Gregory's concept of man's cooperation with the Divine is emphasized:

> Do not think that Grace will save you, unless you endure much affliction for holiness' sake . . . and win the battle with the forces of evil.[148]

From the point of view of man, Gregory understands Grace as the original Grace, or the pristine state of man before the Fall. This was the state of man when he enjoyed a blissful fellowship with God the Father. Gregory refers to this Grace as the grace from the beginning ( ἡ ἐξ ἀρχῆς χάρις ) or the Archetypal Grace. It was in this original state of Grace that man was endowed with the Grace of free will, and the Grace of divine and sinless intellect. He also speaks of the Grace of the Image.

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[145] F. Cayre, Manual of Patrology and History of Theology, translated by H. Howitt (Paris: Desclee and Company, 1936), I, 442.

[146] A. S. Dunstone, "The Meaning of Grace in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa," The Scottish Journal of Theology, XV (1962), 235-244.

[147] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 429-432.

[148] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 428.

> So you though you may be unable to look at the source of light, yet if you run to the Grace of the Image prepared within yourselves from the beginning, you have within yourselves what you seek.[149]

The phrase "Grace of faith" is employed in instances that suggest the idea of conversion. Baptism is referred to as the Grace of Rebirth ( μυστική χάρις ), the Grace of initiation. And in the context of the Eucharist, sacramental Grace, our soul is fed when we receive Grace from Him. Gregory also speaks of the Grace of Wisdom, Grace of the Priesthood, Grace of peace, Grace of the Resurrection, Grace of Immortality, the Grace of the Adoption as full sons of God. Thus we can see that for Gregory, Grace is a word that conveys every conceivable aspect of God's favor to man as it was worked out in human history.

## Faith and Works

St. Paul would not approve of faith as genuine if it did not bear the fruit of works. However, it was St. James who emphasized the concept of "works," arguing that "faith by itself, if it has not works, is dead."[150] Gregory of Nyssa, writing before the Pelagian Controversy broke out in the Western Christian Church, treated philosophically the role that both faith and works play in the salvation of man. Gregory's views in this matter were the views of the Eastern Christian Church. This view he expressed as a balance between divine grace ( χάρις ) and justice ( δικαιοσύνη ) thus:

> It is the grace of the Spirit that gives ( δωρεῖται ) eternal life and unspeakable heavenly joy, but the love ( ἔρως ) of doubled effort, which is the fruit which

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[149] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 433.

[150] James 2:17.

> makes a soul worthy ( ἀξίαν παρέχει ) to receive the gifts and to enjoy ( ἀπολαῦσαι ) the grace. When the work of righteousness ( ἔργον ) and the grace of the Spirit ( πνεύματος χάρις ) come together in the same soul, they fill the soul with blessed life by their mutual support; but when they are divorced ( διαζευγεῖσαι ) from one another they offer the soul no gain. For the grace of God cannot enter a soul that rejects salvation, and the power of human virtue is not in itself sufficient to elevate to the form of [divine] life a soul that does not partake in grace.[151]

Thus the grace of God is a gift but it requires a corresponding worthiness ( ἀξιοῦσθαι ) on the part of man. This worthiness of man, is due to divine initiative, but the person who receives this grace must make the effort to try and be recognized as worthy. Man of himself is not and cannot ever be worthy, but his struggle to become worthy determines whether he will be considered worthy.[152]

Gregory did use the term συνελθοῦσαι to describe the coming together of grace and works when he wrote: "when a just act and grace of the Spirit coincide ( συνελθοῦσαι ), they fill the soul into which they come with a blessed life."[153] But this term is used to express the thought that the grace of God cooperates with man's moral endeavors. This distinction is basic to Gregory's theology and his doctrine of perfection. It is upon this distinction that Gregory can contend that man can receive paideia, which he expresses in his particularly descriptive term morphosis.

Gregory also used a variety of words to convey the meaning of synergy

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[151] De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 46.

[152] I would agree with Jaeger that it is anachronistic to apply such terms as "Semipelagian" and "synergism" with their later connotations and developments to Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory wrote before these terms were employed in the controversies which brought out more highly defined meanings and definitions of grace and predestination.

[153] De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 47.

( συνεργία ), the balance between grace and works, in his theory of divine assistance to man's struggle for perfection. Among these terms are such words as: βοήθεια, συμμαχία, συναγωνίζεσθαι, προσθήκη χαρισμάτων, συνάπτεσθαι, συνεπιλαμβάνεσθαι. This variety indicates that in his time and thought the matter had not become rigidified into a scholastic pattern and term. Gregory delineates this divine assistance as the work of the Holy Spirit.[154] In describing the function of the Trinity at Baptism, Gregory speaks of the words of the Lord which He gave as the rule of the baptismal invocation, and specifically emphasized the function of the Holy Spirit:

> How in the name of the Holy Spirit? Because He is the power of perfecting all.[155]

Man's worthiness, his personal ἀξία, is only mentioned by Gregory in the De Instituto Christiano and in reference to receiving the Holy Spirit. According to Gregory this is the only criterion of perfection, and he makes it very clear that worthiness is not determined by men, but only by the Holy Spirit.

## The Mystical Ascent of the Soul

In spite of his pursuance of the thought of catharsis beyond the present life and the speculations of apocatastasis, Gregory of Nyssa is primarily concerned with what man does with his life here on earth. Gregory understands this to be ideally the ascent ( ἀνάβασις ) toward God. He has a variety of characteristic terms for this effort: ἀνάβασις, χειραγω-

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[154] Contra Eunomium, LIB., I, MPG, XLV, 348; LNPF, V, 65; De Santa Trinite, MPG, XLVI, 235; LNPF, V, 328, 329; De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 415; LNPF, V, 519.

[155] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 417; LNPF, V, 520.

γία τῶν ἀσθενούντων, τελείωσις τῶν προκοπτόντων, ἔλλαμψις, ἀτελεύτητος εὐφροσύνη, ἐν Θεῷ διαμονή .[156] All of these terms indicate ascent to God by deification.

Gregory's treatise On the Life of Moses is an attempt to formulate his theory of "the ascetic life,"[157] and he projects his theory of the mystical ascent of the soul at the same time. This he does in the second part of the treatise where he gives an allegorical interpretation ( θεωρία ) of Moses as the symbol of the mystical ascent of the soul to God. Gregory here, as in his other writings, approaches the matter from a theological and soteriological perspective and bases his doctrine on Holy Scripture. Thus Moses emerges as a prototype of the progressively ascending process of the purification of the human soul, a typology, so to speak, of the image ( τύπος ) of Christ, "Who is all perfection."[158] Gregory was intent on urging his readers "to learn how to follow the Lord" ( ἀκολουθῆσαι Θεῷ).[159] To follow the Lord one can have Moses as his guide, for Moses took that road towards perfection ( τελείωσιν) through a progression of steps, which Gregory describes as "an increment towards moral excellence," ἡ πρός τό κρεῖττον ἀεί γινομένη τοῦ βίου ἐπαύξησις ὁδός.[160]

Moses' going up on Mount Sinai provided Gregory with the terminology and the concept of ascent, the striving toward and the reaching perfection,

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[156] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 297-429, passim.

[157] Werner Jaeger, Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), p. 138.

[158] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 405C.

[159] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 408D-409A.

[160] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 369.

which he describes as: ἄπαυστον πρὸς τὰ ἄνω πορείαν, πρόοδον πρὸς τὸ καλόν, ἀνωφερῆ καὶ δυσπόρευτον πορείαν ἀρετῆς, ἄνοδον πρὸς τὸν Θεόν .[161]

Gregory suggests fleeing from evil as the way to become like God:

> Now the way which leads human nature back to heaven is none other than that of avoiding the evils of the world by flight; on the other hand, the purpose of fleeing from evils seems to me precisely to achieve likeness to God.[162]

Gregory explains that to become like God one must become just, holy, and good. Furthermore Gregory claims that when one attains these perfections he will "automatically and without effort" pass from this earthly life to life in heaven. And his claim rests on the assumption that the "distance" between the Divine and the human is "not a local one," and when virtue is truly separated from evil, man has "seized God with his mind."[163]

The goal of the Mystic Ascent is to achieve the theoria, the vision of the Heavenly Tabernacle:

> Who will follow Moses as he proceeds through these truths and raise his mind to such heights? Passing as it were from one peak to another in his rise to the things above, he is ever rising higher than he was before . . . and then, he enters into the hidden, invisible sanctuary of the knowledge of God. Yet he does not remain there, but proceeds to the tabernacle not made by human hand. For here at last is the true goal which the soul reaches when it has been raised up by an ascent of this sort.[164]

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[161] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 377C, 388B, 401A, 405D.

[162] De Oratio Dominicana II, MPG, XLIV, 1119.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Jean Danielou and Herbert Musurillo, editors. From Glory to Glory (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 129-130.

The deeper meaning and purpose of the ascent is to be found in Gregory's thoughts on the Sacraments.

## Sacramental Theology

Gregory of Nyssa makes the point in his treatise Against Eunomius that the "strength of Christianity" is not to be found in philosophical speculation, but in the "power of regeneration by faith" and is the "participation in mystical symbols and rites."[165] In the 33rd through the 40th chapters of the Oratio Catechetica, Gregory endeavors to trace the workings of the grace of Redemption through the two dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Gregory's sacramental theology is in the tradition of the early Fathers of the Church and is expounded in three general categories found in three separate treatises:

1. In the treatise On the Baptism of Christ, is found the explanation of the sacramental symbols which are mentioned in the Old Testament.[166]

2. In the treatise Against Those Who Put Off Baptism, Gregory emphasizes the mystical initiation ( μυσταγωγία ), in which he explains the symbolism of the sacramental rites and refers to Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River and the Epiphany.[167]

3. In the Great Catechism, Gregory provides a strictly theological exposition of the sacraments,[168] and the application of the grace of Redemption through the two sacraments.

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[165] Contra Eunomium, LIB. XI, MPG, XLV, 880BC.

[166] In Diem Luminum sine in Baptismum Christi, MPG, XLVI, 577-600.

[167] Adversus Eos qui Differunt Baptismum, MPG, XLVI, 415-432.

[168] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLVI, 9-106.

Baptism

Gregory of Nyssa considers Baptism as a sacramental initiation into Christ's death and resurrection which is absolutely necessary for salvation, and at the same time marks the point where the mystical life of the Christian begins.

> And as He, that Man from above, having taken deadness on Himself, after His being deposited in the earth, returned back to life the third day, so every one who is knitted to Him by virtue of his bodily form, looking forward to the same successful issue, I mean this arriving at Life by having, instead of earth, water poured on him, and so submitting to that element, has represented for him in the three movements the three-days-delayed grace of the resurrection.[169]

Gregory clarifies this concept theologically and in reference to the Atonement. Just as Christ's death purified human nature, and His resurrection restored humanity, so too Baptism attains the same effect. But sin is not completely destroyed by Baptism, for this would require complete death.

> For in His death, not only were things that once were put asunder, but also things that had been disunited were again brought together so that in this dissolution of things that had naturally grown together, I mean, the soul and body, our nature might be purified, and this return to union of these severed elements might secure freedom from the contaminations of every foreign admixture. But as regards those who follow this Leader, their nature does not admit of an exact and entire imitation . . . this imitation . . . consists in the effecting the suppression of that admixture of sin, in the figure of mortification that is given by the water, not certainly a complete effacement, but a kind of break in the continuity of the evil.[170]

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[169] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 88BD; LNPF, V, 503.

[170] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 89AB; LNPF, V, 503.

The one who is baptized receives the Holy Spirit. In this manner God is in him. He is united with Christ by spiritual rebirth, and becomes the son of God by adoption as he puts on the divine nature.[171] Gregory deals with Baptism in detail because:

> the dispensation of the washings, whether we choose to call it baptism or illumination or regeneration . . . is a part of our revealed doctrines.[172]

Baptism is "another birth" in contrast to "that first birth which leads only to the existence of mortality." This "other" birth is:

> a birth which neither begins nor ends with corruption, but one which conducts the person begotten to an immortal existence, in order that, as what is begotten of a mortal birth has necessarily a mortal subsistence, so from a birth which admits not corruption that which is born may be superior to the corruption of death.[173]

Gregory furthermore mentions the "process" by which Baptism is administered when he says:

> It is prayer and the invocation of heavenly grace, and water, and faith, by which the mystery of regeneration is accomplished.[174]

Gregory uses several typologies of Biblical record in speaking of Baptism. He compares Baptism to "the crossing of the Red Sea."[175] He speaks of the River Jordan as one of the rivers of Paradise. In this symbolism of of the Jordan Gregory stresses in an original manner the concept of Baptism as a return to the Garden of Eden.[176] He seems to have developed his

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[171] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 104B; LNPF, V, 508.

[172] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 77D; LNPF, V, 500.

[173] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 78; LNPF, V, 501.

[174] Ibid.

[175] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 589D.

[176] Against Those Who Put Off Baptism, MPG, XLVI, 420CD.

thought from an idea taken from the Gnostics[177] and contrasted the rivers that flow out of Paradise with the Jordan River which flows back to Heaven and has its source in Christ. Baptism then becomes for Gregory the "true Jordan" which covers the whole world, because it is consecrated by Christ's Baptism, and grows into a great stream, and "It brings back those who have been reborn by the Spirit."[178]

Gregory considers the "entrance into the baptistry" as a symbolism of the accessibility of man to the Garden of Paradise and a sign that Heaven itself is once again open to man, and the "sword and flame no longer prevent his approach."[179] For Gregory "the change of garments" at Baptism signifies the removal of the "fig leaves" that man put on after his Fall, and the recovery of "the tunic of incorruptibility."[180] Again the Jordan River is taken to be a figure of Baptism in the traditional manner, such as the cure of Naaman the leper,[181] and the entry of the Jews into the Promised Land.[182]

Gregory also uses Pauline symbolism such as the removing of the "old man" as a filthy garment, and refers to "the river of grace" which produces fruits of the Spirit. But he also uses Johannine terms of "water" and "Spirit."

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[177] Baruch by Justin, in Gnosticism: A Sourcebook of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period, edited by R. M. Grant (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 96.

[178] Against Those Who Put Off Baptism, MPG, XLVI, 420C.

[179] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 600AB.

[180] Against Those Who Put Off Baptism, MPG, XLVI, 421A.

[181] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 592CD.

[182] Against Those Who Put Off Baptism, MPG, XLVI, 421A.

> He intended, through the birth from above, to make us sons of the day and sons of the light by water and Spirit--we who formerly were by nature sons of wrath; and so He Himself led the way for such a birth . . . all who are born to life of this spiritual birth thus become brothers of Him who first was reborn by water and Spirit.[183]

In reply to those who question "the regeneration that takes place through the water" Gregory says:

> Show me the mode of that generation which is after the flesh, and I will explain to you the power of regeneration in the soul . . . How does the fluid and formless substance become man? To speak concisely, everywhere the power of God and His operation are incomprehensible and incapable of being reduced to rule, easily producing whatever He wills, while concealing from us the minute knowledge of His operation.[184]

Gregory places great emphasis on the power of invocation and efficacy of prayer and insists that God is present "when invoked for the sanctification of the baptismal process."

> He has promised that He will always be present with those that call upon Him, that He is in the midst of those that believe, that He remains among them collectively and has special intercourse with each one . . . The invocation by prayer, then, which precedes this Divine Dispensation constitutes an abundance of proof that what is effected is done by God.[185]

Gregory is careful to avoid any "mechanical" interpretation of Baptism. The water of itself does not produce Baptism, rather it is the Divine power which "transforms what is born with a corruptible nature into a state of incorruption."[186]

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[183] *De Baptismo*, *MPG*, XLVI, 592CD.

[184] *Ibid.*

[185] *Oratio Catechetica*, *MPG*, XLV, 85B; *LNPF*, V, 501.

[186] *Ibid.*

> And this gift is not the water that bestows . . . but the command of God, and the visitation of the Spirit that comes sacramentally to set us free. But the water serves to express the cleansing.[187]

Baptism regenerates man and makes it possible for him to be in the Resurrection. Gregory explains that by regeneration he is "thinking of the restoration to a blessed and divine condition, separated from all shame and sorrow."[188] Gregory also explains that the triple immersion of Baptism is only an "enactment" of Christ's burial and Resurrection on the third day, but not "an exact and entire imitation, but receives now as much as it is capable of receiving." Therefore Baptism is an "imitation" of Christ's burial and resurrection and not "a complete dying" which would have been "identity" and the evil of our nature would have completely vanished.

> But since . . . we only so far imitate the transcendent Power as the poverty of our nature is capable of, by having the water thrice poured on us and ascending again up from the water, we enact that saving burial and resurrection which took place on the third day, with this thought in mind, that as we have power over the water both to be in it and arise out of it, so He too, Who has the universe at His sovereign disposal, immersed Himself in death as we in the water, to return to His own blessedness.[189]

With all this Gregory seems to indicate that since death is the final demand that sin makes on man, and since that demand has been satisfied through the "death" of Baptism, the demonic powers can no longer hold a "legal" claim on man if he has "died" with Christ in baptism. And therefore

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[187] De Baptismo, MPG, XLVI, 417; LNPF, V, 519.

[188] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLVI, 92B; LNPF, V, 504.

[189] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 88B; LNPF, V, 503.

the newly baptized person has no personal sin for which he has to answer.[190] Gregory considers Baptism as the means through which we regain immortality which Adam had lost for mankind.[191]

In his treatise On the Baptism of Christ, Gregory enumerates the benefits which mankind receives through baptism and concludes with thanksgiving for this great gift, in which he indicates that baptism is the instrument for the restoration of man to his original state in relation to God.

> For Thou, verily, O Lord art the pure and eternal fount of goodness, Who didst justly turn away from us, and in loving kindness didst have mercy upon us. Thou didst hate and were reconciled; Thou didst curse, and didst bless; Thou didst banish us from Paradise, and didst recall us; Thou didst strip off the fig-tree leaves, an unseemly covering, and put upon us a costly garment; Thou didst open the prison, and didst release the condemned; Thou didst sprinkle us with clean water, and cleanse us from our filthiness. No longer shall Adam be confounded when called by Thee, nor hide himself, convicted by his conscience, cowering in the thicket of Paradise. Nor shall the flaming sword encircle Paradise around, and make the entrance inaccessible to those that draw near; but all is turned to joy for us that were the heirs of sin: Paradise, yea, heaven itself may be trodden by man.[192]

The Eucharist

Gregory considers the Eucharist to have been foretold in the Old Testament. He explained in excellent commentaries three texts of the eschatological meal in the Eucharistic sense.

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[190] De Baptismum Christi, MPG, XLVI, 581A.

[191] Contra Macedonianos, XIX, MPG, XLV, 1324D.

[192] In Baptismo Christi, MPG, XLVI, 597-600B; LNPF, V, 524.

[193] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 989A.

1. In his commentary on Proverbs 9:5, "Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine I have mixed," Gregory speaks in a Eucharistic sense,[193] as he does in reference to the "cup of wisdom" in the book of Proverbs generally.

2. In his sermon On the Ascension Gregory comments on Psalm 22:5 (LXX) "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows," which he considers as important for the ancient sacramental liturgy.[194]

3. Commenting on the first verse of Chapter 5 of the Song of Solomon and especially on the invitation to "Eat O friend and drink; drink deeply, O lovers," Gregory sees in this Christ's mystical invitation to partake of the Eucharist.[195]

In his theological interpretation of the Eucharist, Gregory follows the line of reasoning that he held in the exposition of Baptism, and sees the Eucharist as a necessary remedy for human corruptibility, designed to help men become immortal:

> That body to which immortality has been given by God, when it is in ours, translates and transmutes the whole into itself . . . The immortal Body, by being within that which receives it changes the whole to its own nature . . . in no other way can anything enter within the body but by being transfused through the vitals by eating and drinking.[196]

And in order to enter our bodies by eating and drinking, the glorious Body of Christ assumes the appearance of bread and wine.

> If the subsistence of every body depends on nourishment and this is eating and drinking, and in the case of our eating

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[193] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 989A.

[194] On the Ascension, MPG, XLVI, 692AB.

[195] Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 989C.

[196] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 93BC; LNPF, V, 504-505.

> there is bread and in the case of our drinking water sweetened with wine . . . Rightly, then do we believe that now also the bread which is consecrated by the Word of God is changed into the Body of God the Word. For that Body was once, by implication, bread, but has been consecrated by the inhabitation of the Word that tabernacled in the flesh.[197]

Baptism begins the new life of immortality, but the Eucharist is the source of sustaining power to keep that life "alive." Due to the weakness of human nature the baptized Christian needs to feed continually on Christ through the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

> But since the human being is a twofold creature compounded of soul and body, it is necessary that the saved should lay hold of the Author of the new life through both their component parts . . . the body comes into fellowship and blending with the Author in another way . . . When then, is this remedy to be? Nothing else than that very Body which has been shown to be superior to death, and has been the First-fruits of our life . . . in like manner that body to which immortality has been given it by God, when it is in ours, translates and transmutes the whole into itself . . . the immortal Body, by being within that which receives it, changes the whole to its own nature.[198]

This "change" should not be conceived as the divine nature absorbing the human nature, which was distinguished from deification above[199] by labeling such absorption as "divinisation." What is meant here is receiving again of the "race of immortality," which Gregory has shown "that in no other way was it possible for our body to become immortal, but by participating in incorruption through its fellowship with that immortal Body."[200]

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[197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Supra, p. 83.

[200] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 98BC; LNPF, V, 504-505.

## Philanthropia

The concept of philanthropia is ancient and was inherited from the classical Greek period, where it was used for gods' "love of man," and in the course of time of the "love of man for man."[201] The study of philosophy and especially the revival of Stoicism which emphasized ethics, brought into Christian terminology the word philanthropia, in spite of the fact that the Christian concept of agape had limited its use especially in the New Testament as "hospitality" in Acts 28:2, and as "God's love for man" in Titus 3:4. On the other hand, with the increased usage of the term philanthropia in the fourth century A.D. by the pagan writers as well as by the Christians, it becomes apparent that philanthropia had a restricted meaning: the love of God for man, and the love of man for his fellowman, but not the love of man for God. This latter meaning was a thought in which the term agape could have no substitute as we shall see in the next section on agape.

The pagan Themistius (c. 375) wrote many orations in which he speaks of philanthropia, the love of mankind, as the supreme virtue of the emperor[202] and his "divine weapon."[203] Themistius essentially was endeavoring to prove, in a subtle way, that Hellenism and not Christianity was the basic philosophy or "religion" of the imperial office.[204] Gregory, taking his

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[201] R. Reitzenstein, Wenden und Wessen der Humanitas in Altertum (Straussburg: Philol. Hist. Kl., 1907); cf. Glanville Downey, "Philanthropia in Religion and Statecraft in the Fourth Century, A.D.," Historie, IV (1955), 199-208.

[202] Themistius, Oratio I, 10CD.

[203] Ibid., XXXIV, 62.

[204] Downey.

lead from Clement of Alexandria[205] and from Origen,[206] made philanthropia a central theme in connection with his theory of the Incarnation. Gregory taught that philanthropia is "a special characteristic" (ἴδιον γνώρισμα) of the divine nature, which through the wisdom of God provided for Christ's coming to save mankind:

> If, then, philanthropia--love of man--be a special characteristic of the Divine nature, here is the reason for which you are in search, here is the cause of the presence of God among men. Our diseased nature needed a healer. Man in his fall needed one to set him upright. He who had lost the gift of life stood in need of a life-giver, and he who had dropped away from his fellowship with good wanted one who would lead him back to good. He who was shut up in darkness longed for the presence of the light. The captive sought for a ransomer, the fettered prisoner for some one to take his part and for a deliverer he who was held in the bondage of slavery.[207]

Gregory upholds the wisdom of God as the process in which God's Goodness was expressed through philanthropia.

> For as David says, "He had not come to save us had not 'goodness' created Him such a purpose" (Ps. 104:4,5; 118:65,66,68); and yet His goodness had not advanced His purpose had not wisdom given efficacy to His philanthropia-love for man.[208]

Philanthropia brought about the Incarnation and is therefore a proof of God's omnipotence.

> In order therefore to make this also clear, let us take a survey of the sequel of the Gospel mystery, where that Power conjoined with philanthropia-Love is more especially exhibited. In the first place, then, that the omnipotence of the Divine nature should have had strength to descent to the humiliation of humanity, furnishes a clearer proof of that omnipotence than even the greatness and supernatural character of the miracles.[209]

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[205] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, VII, 3.

[206] Origen, Contra Celsum IV, 17; cf. A. Von Nygren, Eros & Agape, translated by Philip S. Warson (Philsdelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 374.

[207] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 48AB; LNPF, V, 487.

[208] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 57; LNPF, V, 491.

[209] Ibid., MPG, XLV, 64BC; LNPF, V, 494; cf. Leys, pp. 88-89, 95.

Thus for Gregory, God's philanthropia in relation to the Incarnation becomes equivalent to agape. The Incarnation, the descent to lowliness, reveals "a superabundant exercise of power" indicating the omnipotence of God, for nothing can "check" the power of God. Not even the laws of nature themselves can set limits to philanthropia. This claim of Gregory is depicted by the simile of the flame "streaming downwards," to show how Divinity altered the "natural operation," and miraculously descended from its height and entwined with human nature, "in order to secure that the ransom in our behalf might be easily accepted by him who required it," for the salvation of man.

> It is the peculiar property of the essence of fire to tend upwards; no one, therefore, deems it wonderful in the case of flame to see that natural operation. But, should the flame be seen to stream downwards, like heavy bodies, such a fact would be regarded as a miracle; namely how fire still remains fire, and yet, by this change of direction in its motion, passes out of its nature by being borne downward . . . in like manner . . . the Diety by a personal intervention works out the salvation of man.[210]

In many instances where the idea of agape is clearly implied, Gregory uses the term philantropia rather than agape, especially in the sense of Divine agape descending on man (ἡ δὲ κατάβασις τὸ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἔργον διασημαίνει).[211]

Gregory was not only a theoretician, but he carried his theories into practice. In his concept of philanthropia of man for man he had many practical things to say. Among the first, Gregory describes the condition of the poor and needy.

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[210] Ibid.

[211] Commentarius In Canticum Canticorum, Hom. X, MPG, XLIV, 988A.

> The present time has brought us a great abundance of naked and homeless. A host of prisoners before the door of everyone. And the stranger and immigrant is not absent, and everywhere you see the hand extended that begs. To these, home is the out-of-doors. Havens, the stoas and the crossroads and the most deserted parts of the agora. Like the night birds and owls they nest in holes. Their clothes are patched rags; produce is the good intentions of the merciful; food, whatever falls from the passerby; drink, just what is for the animals; the town fountain; cup, the hollow of their hands; treasury, their pocket, when it doesn't have holes and holds what is put in; table, their knees held together; bed, the ground; bath, the river or lake, which God gave to all. Their life is that of a vagabond and wild, not because it was that way from the beginning, but because of misfortune and need.[212]

He urges everyone to do something to help these poor and destitute persons.

> Come to the help of these, you who fast. Become generous to the unfortunate brethren. That which you abstained from in your food give to the hungry. Let the just fear of God equalize all. Cure through your prudent temperance two passions which oppose each other--your satiation, and the hunger of your brother. This is what the doctors do--some they force to limit their food, and others they increase, so that by addition and subtraction the health of each may be restored. Heed this good admonition. Let the word open the doors of the rich. Let the counsel lead the poor man toward him that has . . . Let each be concerned for his neighbor. Let not another receive the treasure that is for you. Embrace the suffering like gold. Embrace the torment of the unfortunate as your own health, as the good of your wife, your children, your servants, and your entire house.[213]

But Gregory sees that others beside the poor and beggars need help, for example the lepers. Their lamentable condition fills him with sadness. His sense of philanthropia, as a personal concern for fellowman is disturbed when he sees the Christians avoid and completely neglect these poor creatures and righteous indignation inspires Gregory to use rhetoric to urge apathetic Christians to cultivate and practice philanthropia. In his second homily

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[212] In Pauperibus Amandis, I, MPG, XLVI, 453.

[213] Ibid.

On the Love of the Poor, he says:

> Seeing the man in such a condition do you not respect him who is like you? Do you not feel merciful toward one of the same race? But are you only disgusted at the misfortune . . . When then? Is it enough, in order not to transgress the law of nature, to tragically relate their sickness and with words describe their disease in their memory? Or rather are there needed works to show them our sympathy and mutual love? Certainly, because whatever is a description in regard to real things, this is what words are without works. As the Lord said, salvation depends not on sayings, but on doing the works of salvation. Therefore let us undertake to put into practice this command for them. Let no one say that it is enough to put them far away from our society, and send food there for them.[214]

## Agape--Love

Gregory of Nyssa accepted St. Paul's evaluation of agape as the supreme Christian virtue and quoted almost entirely the 13th chapter of II Corinthians in his treatise De Instituto Christiano,[215] suggesting to the monastic communities that only if agape is the motivating force can true brotherhood ( ἀδελφότης ) be realized.

> For this teaching we have the authority of God's own Apostle who announces a subduing (I Corinthians 13:8-13) and a ceasing of all other activities, even for the good, which are within us, and finds no limit for love alone. Prophecies, he says, shall fail; forms of knowledge shall cease; but "Love never faileth) which is equivalent to its being always as it is: and though he says that faith and hope have endured so far by the side of love, yet again he prolongs its date beyond theirs, and with good reason too; for hope is in operation only so long as the enjoyment of the things hoped for is not to be had; and faith in the same way is a support in the uncertainty about the things hoped for . . . but when the thing hoped for actually comes, then all other faculties are reduced to quiescence, and love alone remains active, finding nothing to succeed itself. Love, therefore, is the

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[214] Ibid., II, MPG, XLVI, 471.

[215] De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 59.

> foremost of all excellent achievement and the first of the commandments.[216]

In the section on the Mystical Ascent of the soul it was pointed out that Gregory taught that the goal was perfection ( τελειότης ) through several stages. These stages are spelled out as avoiding evil and becoming like God, just, holy, and good. In his treatise On the Beatitudes, Gregory interprets each Beatitude as a stage in the spiritual ascent--a step up and nearer to union with God. He does not specify any particular number of steps but says:

> Those who wish to ascend a stair raise themselves, when they have mounted the first step, from that to the next above; the second step leads them again to the third, this to the next, this in turn to the next. And in this way he who ascends finally arrives, by always raising himself from the step on which he is to be the next one, at the top step . . . It seems to me that the Beatitudes are arranged as the rungs of a ladder, and that this makes the successive ascent easy of contemplation.[217]

But there are also stages within each stage. In dealing with agape, as a step upward, it becomes necessary for Gregory to identify three stages, that is, apatheia, pistis, and finally agape. Perfection allows the union ( ἕνωσις ) of man's soul with God, which is deification.[218] Furthermore, Gregory takes the Johannine "God is Love" and expands it in its practical application:

> For the life of the Supreme Being is love, seeing that the Beautiful is necessarily lovable to those who recognize it,

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[216] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 96B; LNPF, V, 450.

[217] De Beatitudinibus, II, MPG, XLIV, 1208C.

[218] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 96C.

> and the Deity does recognize it, and so this recognition becomes love, that which He recognized being essentially beautiful.[219]

Gregory's mystical agape is at the same time a Christocentric mysticism, because he upheld a dynamic theosis based on the Incarnation of the Word of God. This is noted in his Commentary on the Sons of Songs, where not only is it shown that man is led by faith to agape, but also that God's love is the basis for man's love of God:

> The bride says: "Because I am wounded with love." Here she explains the dart that has gone right through her heart, and the Bowman is Love. From the Scriptures we learn that "God is Love" (I John 4:8) and also that "he sends forth His only begotten Son as His "chosen arrow" (Isaiah 49:1) to the elect, dipping the triple point at its tip in the Spirit of life. The arrow's tip is faith, and unites to the Bowman whomsoever it strikes. As the Lord has said: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30) "and we will come, and will make our abode with him: (John 14:23) . . . As the soul then is raised up by these divine elevations, she sees within herself the sweet dart of love that has wounded her, and she glories in the wound: "I am wounded with love." Indeed it is a good wound and a sweet pain by which life penetrates the soul; for by the tearing of the arrow she opens, as it were, a door, as entrance into herself.[220]

Eros

Beside the terms philanthropia and agape Gregory also uses the term eros, which is a specialized form of agape.

> For agape that is strained to intensity is called eros. And no one should be ashamed of this, whenever the arrow comes from God and not from the flesh.[221]

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[219] Ibid.

[220] Commentarius In Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 852AB; cf. Danielou and Musurillo, pp. 178-179.

[221] Commentarius In Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 1048CD.

Thus we see that Gregory, although using the Hellenistic term eros, is careful to make his meaning clear that he is referring to the "heavenly" and not the "vulgar" eros. Gregory's use of the term ἔρως is completely different from the Platonic concept. Gregory understands eros as "heightened and intensified agape"[222] which sweeps the soul out of itself into the "ecstacy" of "sober inebriation."[223] This means that for Gregory eros has to do with the ascent of man's soul to God and unity with Him. Eros therefore in Gregory's thought is not a selfish possessive desire, but rather a selfless intense attraction toward "passionless passion."[224] It becomes clear from Gregory's explanation that God initiates eros, which pierces the heart "to the depths" and creates the spiritual yearning of man for unity with God.

> Therefore no one need be ashamed of being wounded by the "arrow of Eros" for it does not have to do with bodily or material things. And that "wound" is the result of a heart inflamed with love for things divine.[225]

## Apocatastasis--Universalism

Gregory's understanding of evil and his teaching of catharsis as indicated above led him to the acceptance of Origen's theory of "the restoration of all" (ἀποκατάστασις πάντων ) or Universalism. According to Gregory of Nyssa, evil is a lack (στέρησις ) of virtue, and therefore does not

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[222] Commentarius In Canticum Canticorum, Hom. VII, MPG, XLIV, 1048C.

[223] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 989B.

[224] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 772A.

[225] Ibid., MPG, XLIV, 1048C.

exist per se.[226] On occasion Gregory speaks of an eternal hell[227] but there is no doubt that he taught that ultimately evil would be completely erased, following Origen's lead. Primarily Gregory was opposing the heresy of Manes, who taught "that the God of the universe is actually the Maker of this alien production" (evil)[228] for he could not possibly conceive of God as the creator of evil. As we have seen Gregory teaches that sin resulted from man's misuse of his free will. He further accepted Origen's explanation that God will be "all in all,"[229] but only when evil has passed away.

> But, He that becomes "all" things will be "in all" things too; and herein it appears to me that Scripture teaches the complete annihilation of evil. If, that is, God will be "in all" existing things, evil, plainly, will not then be amongst them; for if anyone was to assume that it did exist then how will the belief that God will be "in all" be kept intact? The excepting of that one thing, evil, mars the comprehensiveness of the term "in all." But He that will be "in all" will never be in that which does not exist.[230]

Origen taught that there would be many stages of existence in the "next world" until finally through the process of such successive purgations ( καθαρότης ) the consummation shall arrive when the primitive perfection ( ἀρχαία μορφή ) of the original beauty ( τὸ ἐκ φύσεως κάλλος ) of the soul is attained. Gregory, however, recognized only two "stages" or worlds, the present and the next. If catharsis or purification is not attained in the

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[226] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 27CD; cf. Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 28C, 32B.

[227] De Pauperibus Amandis, I, MPG, XLVI, 461A; 484A.

[228] Contra Eunomium, I, MPG, XLV, 247; LNPF, V, 83.

[229] 2 Col. 15:28.

[230] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 97; LNPF, V, 452-453.

present it will be in the next when the apocatastasis will be realized. This will be accomplished by the eternal or "unquenched fire," the avenging flame (ἄσβεστος, αἰώνιος φλόξ),[231] which will eventually consume all evil. Not only all humans will be saved, according to Gregory, but even Satan will be cleansed, will repent and will be sanctified.

> When after long periods of time, the evil of our nature which now is mixed up with it and has grown with its growth has been expelled, and when there has been a restoration of those who are now lying in sin to their primal state, a harmony of thanksgiving will arise from all creation as well from those who in the process of the purgation have suffered chastisement as from those who needed not any purgation at all . . . and healing the introducer of evil himself.[232]

And finally Gregory ends his treatise On the Soul and the Resurrection thus:

> When such, then, have been purged from it and utterly removed by the healing processes worked out by the Fire then every one of the things which make up our conception of the good will come to take their place; incorruption, that is, and life, and honour, and grace, and glory, and everything else that we conjecture is to be seen in God, and in His Image, man as he was made.[233]

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[231] Ibid., MPG, XLVI, 27CD.

[232] Oratio Catechetica, MPG, XLV, 68-69; LNPF, V, 496.

[233] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 100; LNPF, V, 468.

## CHAPTER IV

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In Chapter III the attempt was made to isolate the main anthropological doctrines of Gregory of Nyssa and draw them out of his ascetic writings, along with related passages from his exegetical works and from his Great Catechism. These doctrines were treated as twenty separate topics with sub-headings, where clarity required it, in the interest of a more concentrated review of Gregory's deeper meaning and for the purpose of further understanding his teachings.

Gregory of Nyssa, like the other two Cappadocians, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus, was a defender of the faith as set forth in Nicene theology, but he surpassed both of them in depth of thought and in systematic methodology. Gregory was not satisfied with a dry enumeration of theological doctrines. He had contributed to the science of theology with his dogmatic writings and polemical treatises against the heretics. He had participated in the Second Ecumenical Council and had contributed to the formulation of doctrines that were adopted by that Council, and developed the first Christian mystical theology, but his major contribution is undoubtedly the creation of the first Christian science of anthropology. Gregory felt the need to grasp the inner meaning and knowledge about God and translate it into meaningful language for the common person. In his efforts to describe and characterize the Divine nature, Gregory turned to the study of God's creation, man, hoping thus to approach the incomprehensible through the comprehensible.

Gregory of Nyssa recognized in man his ability for change, because everything created is subject to change. Through the exercise of his

free will man can change and does, for the better or the worse. When man chooses evil he falls from the grace of God. And man did just that. But that is not the end for man, because man can rise, and in this he has the assistance of God Himself. God in His infinite love for man has established and set into motion a divine plan for man's ransom and eventual return to Him, even to the extent of sacrificing His Son Jesus Christ, who became man to atone for and to save mankind. Gregory emphasized the fact that "the dispensation of God . . . is that the Deity by a personal intervention works out the salvation of man," because of "His goodness."[1]

Gregory was concerned to show what part man himself plays in his salvation; but he also shows how men can go about accomplishing what is necessary to receive this free gift of God's salvation. Thus Gregory often borrowed Platonic and Neo-Platonic terms, which were familiar to the people of that time, to shed light on the Scriptural text. Gregory was interested in philosophy only in so far as it helped in the understanding of theology. Holy Scripture was for him the "rule" and "measure" of every doctrine, and he accepted only that which was not contradictory to the Bible.[2] The Platonic antithesis between "being" and "non-being," and the biblical "created" and "uncreated" drove Gregory to deeper theological and anthropological research.

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[1] Oratio Catechetica, XXIV, Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), XLV, 65A. Hereafter Migne's edition will be referred to as MPG and Gregory of Nyssa's works will be referred to only by title of writings and place of reference without his name; A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, edited by Philip Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), V, 494. Hereafter Eerdmans' edition will be referred to as LNPF.

[2] De Anima et Resurrectione, MPG, XLVI, 49B; cf. Commentarius in Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 781A.

In the De Instituto Christiano, Gregory brings evidence to prove that man can mould and shape himself ( μορφωθῆναι ) through his own efforts and use the means which God provided for him to attain this high purpose.

In De Vita Moysis, Gregory shows how man can follow the example of Moses and mould himself through a gradual, step-by-step process of spiritual purification ( κάθαρσις ). This road of knowledge ( γνῶσις ) through exercise ( ἄσκησις ) is the "discipline of the Lord" (παιδεία Κυρίου),[3] which Gregory characterizes as the morphosis of man.

In the De Perfectione, Gregory addresses himself to the problem of the monk Olympius, who was seeking guidance to attain "the life according to virtue" so that he could become more perfect. Gregory treated the topic of perfection in the context of monasticism.

Monasticism with its askesis was a living witness to the fact that the Eastern Fathers of the Christian Church understood and emphasized the role of man in the work of salvation to be a positive effort of "practicing what they preached." Basil the Great organized and founded monasticism in Asia Minor, and set up the discipline for monasticism with his Ascetic Rules[4] to provide the physical and spiritual facilities in cenobitic communal life through which individuals could promote themselves to a greater personal perfection.

It was Gregory of Nyssa, however, who provided a supplement to Basil's works and writings and presented a philosophical interpretation of the ascetic ideal in his treatise, De Instituto Christiano. Now that this

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[3] Heb. 12:5.

[4] E. F. Morison, St. Basil and his Rule: A Study in Early Monasticism (Oxford: 1912); W. K. L. Clarke, St. Basil the Great: A Study in Monasticism (Cambridge: 1913).

treatise has definitely been established as Gregory's work, and not an outline of Macarius' Great Letter,[5] it can be ascertained with confidence that Gregory looked on the Christian religion as the way to "knowledge of being" ( γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων). For Gregory the Christian Faith is the supreme truth and infallible guide and canon of every doctrine, because it is of divine origin.[6] Furthermore, Christianity, for him, is the method by which the Christian can separate and liberate his soul from all material slavery to the senses and ascend and return to God[7] through the process of catharsis.

After this short introduction into Gregory's fresh approach to religious thought through anthropology, it becomes necessary to return to the matter of the twenty sub-headings mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. After reading Gregory's ascetic works and other writings as well as many monographs, a definite pattern of thought emerges: (a) Man's creation in the image of God with divine attributes and free will; (b) Evil and the virtues and man's potential for both; (c) The choice of evil as seen in the Fall of man; (d) Man's ability to return to God; (e) The elevation, transformation and return of man; (f) The intervention of God and His Grace in man's redemption; (g) Man's part in his own salvation, and the use of the Sacraments; (h) Agape which gives content to faith and hope; (i) Apocatastasis: a second chance, if one does not succeed in gaining salvation in this world.

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[5]Werner Jaeger, Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), pp. 9-11.

[6]Contra Eunomium, LIB. II, MPG, XLV, 465D.

[7]De Instituto Christiano, Gregorii Nysseni Opera, edited by Werner Jaeger (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952), VIII, 41.

The study of these sub-headings point to one inescapable fact that the basic and integrating element of Gregory's theological and anthropological thought is the concept of morphosis.

Beginning with Gregory's doctrine of Man as the Image of God one can see that morphosis is the underlying concept on which he builds his religious anthropology. In the De Hominis Opificio, Gregory singles out man as the "special" creation of God, created in the "image and likeness of God" with "sovereign authority" over the rest of creation. As such man was endowed with an immortal soul, making him a citizen of the visible and invisible worlds. Man was also given a mind, appetites, senses, and a will to freely choose between good and evil. Man as a creation is changeable. His human nature, his intelligence, his reason, his desires and weaknesses can be changed and developed, and consequently are subject to morphosis. And morphosis in this context means the return of fallen man to the state of purity, freedom from passion, blessedness, and the regaining of all those attributes, which he received when he was created in the likeness of God.[8]

The Fall of Man, the desire for sensual pleasures, the tendency toward evil affect man's decision for or against good, but these in themselves are not decisive, for he has free will, and therefore can be influenced by morphosis. Here the moral edification of man enters into the picture. Virtue was lost in the Fall, but the aftermath of the Fall is one continuous striving to regain the image and likeness of God. The exercise and development of the virtues is nothing more than morphosis in the context of the

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[8] De Hominis Opificio, MPG, XLIV, 153; LNPF, V, 391.

mystical ascent, the "steps" of rising on the "rungs" of the ladder of the Beatitudes toward human perfection. Man can see the Deity, the goal of his perfection, in the mirror of his own soul.

Catharsis, too, is another practical way of explaining the process of morphosis by the method of purification. Even virginity becomes a matter of morphosis as Gregory explains it. He does not limit virginity to the physical state, but rather understands it as a spiritual attitude, so that it may be attained even in marriage.

Deification as the process of gradual dynamic awareness of God's grace, the appropriation of sanctification through the sacraments and the transformation of man into "newness of life" is definitely a process of morphosis. No less is perfection a morphosis, since it is a state reached through the gradual approach to the knowledge of truth on the road to salvation.

The word imitation gives its own evidence of morphosis. Mimesis implies the avoidance of evil and freedom from defilement and therefore indicates of itself imitation of the divine nature, through the process of morphosis.

The Grace of God involves morphosis in so far as God gives His assistance to man especially through Christ's salvific mission. Without this assistance man is incapable of exercising virtue, and what he does is without value.

In no other area is morphosis seen as such a vital element as in the matter of faith and works in connection with man's salvation. Gregory seems to take the position that God has done his part, and continues to try and save man through Christ's redemptive work and the Holy Spirit's presence through the Sacraments and the Church, and hence it is up to man to do his

share also. This consists of carrying out all the exercises that lead to man's perfection.

This same thought is carried through the doctrine of the Mystical Ascent of the Soul. Gregory understands this process of the soul being brought to "the full flower of its beauty," "in the renewal of its birth" not as a simple or single step; rather it is a process of steps, a series of gradual degrees of development toward the goal of perfection (τελειότης ).[9] Man cannot and does not accomplish even his own part and share in his salvation alone. Here, too, he needs the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which comes to help him when he makes the effort and contributes to his own progress ( προκοπή ).[10]

This assistance of the Holy Spirit also comes through the Dominical Sacraments, primarily Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. But here again the assistance is not automatic, but requires the desire and seeking after by man, and this requires morphosis.

But the matter does not end here for the Christian. He must not limit his Christianity to mere faith, but "faith working through love."[11] Therefore Gregory develops his teaching of agape on the lines of St. Paul as philanthropia, love for fellow man expressed by assistance to others through self-sacrifice. The purpose, of course, is to mold a Christian character in the context of morphosis.

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[9] De Vita Moysis, MPG, XLIV, 401B; Tractatus in Psalmos, MPG, XLIV, 449B, 457B, 465C, 481B, 592C; Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, MPG, XLIV, 876B.

[10] The Fathers of the Church, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetic Works, translated by V. W. Callahan (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967), p. 139; De Instituto Christiano, VIII, 57.

[11] Gal. 5:6.

The elimination of death and evil and even eventual apocatastasis in Gregory's thought, although never accepted by the Church, are nevertheless natural and logical conclusions as a consequence of carrying out the idea of morphosis beyond the realm of this world.

In Gregory of Nyssa, Christianity in the fourth century A.D. had reached a point where it began to draw its own conclusions from the great Greek contribution concerning man and his spiritual development. The Greek experience had developed the concept of paideia as the means through which man could evolve into his highest potential of perfection. Although the other Cappadocian Fathers had dealt specifically with Greek paideia as a separate topic in their writings, it was Gregory of Nyssa who to a greater degree than Basil and even more than Origen himself was able to see Greek paideia "as the formative process of human personality,"[12] and "formed something entirely new in this inter-marriage of Hellenism and Christianity."[13]

Gregory of Nyssa, especially in his anthropology, restated, extended, and supplemented the Platonic concept of paideia as the process of forming or moulding human personality (morphosis) by providing it with a Christian content. Even a casual reading of Gregory's writings make one stand in awe of his profound and spiritual depth. A short study such as this thesis cannot hope to completely fathom the depths of Gregory's thought, but it can point out the need for deeper and more concentrated concern over those

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[12]Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 86-87.

[13]J. Quasten, Patrology, III (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), 274.

matters with which Gregory dealt and the spirit in which he approached them. It seems much of that to which Gregory addressed himself in the fourth century A.D. is even more pertinent today, for he speaks with great Christian wisdom on the basic problems that modern man faces and has not truly resolved over the past fifteen centuries.

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