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978-0-521-11647-3 - The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa

Edited By James Herbert Srawley

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OF
GREGORY OF NYSSA

EDITED BY

JAMES HERBERT SRAWLEY, M.A.,

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PREFACE.

THE *Oratio Catechetica* exhibits perhaps better than any other single work the characteristic features of the mind and thought of its author. As such it serves as an introduction to the study of Gregory of Nyssa. The present edition is intended to render assistance to students in placing the treatise in its proper historical setting, and to supply such illustrative comment as seemed necessary.

While much has been written in recent times upon Gregory's teaching, the problems connected with the text and exegesis of his works have received scant attention. The labours of Krabinger, Forbes, and Oehler are the only serious contribution in modern times to the former, while the volume of translations in the *Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* is the first English contribution to the latter.

The text of the present edition is based upon a collation of the more important MSS of the treatise, the majority of which have not hitherto been used for the purposes of an edition. The editor is indebted to

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the Managers of the Hort Fund for the grants which have made it possible for him to obtain collations or photographs of these MSS. He has also to acknowledge much kindness and personal assistance rendered to him by the authorities of the various libraries to which he has had access. In this connexion a special debt of gratitude is due to Dr Mercati of the Vatican Library, and to M. Omont of the National Library, Paris. To Mr C. H. Turner he is indebted for valuable information and suggestions in connexion with the textual problems of the treatise. His thanks are also due to Dr H. Jackson for useful references and suggestions, and to the Rev. J. F. Bethune-Baker for criticisms and discussions of particular passages. Above all he has been indebted throughout to the unfailing courtesy and kindness of the General Editor of the present series of Patristic Texts, Dr A. J. Mason, who has placed his advice unreservedly at the service of the present editor, and who has read through the whole work in manuscript and proof, and offered numerous suggestions and criticisms.

The more important works to which reference has been made are mentioned in the Notes, and more fully in the List of Books given in the Introduction.

J. H. S.

Easter, 1903.

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§ 1. ON THE CHARACTER, DATE, GENUINENESS,
AND LITERARY HISTORY OF THE *ORATIO*
CATECHETICA.

THE central period of the literary activity of Gregory of Nyssa falls within the years 379—394. Within those years must be placed nearly all his more important works. It was the death of Basil in 379 which brought him prominently forward, and placed him in the position of the champion of Catholicism in Cappadocia. The time was rich in opportunities. The year which preceded the death of Basil had witnessed the fall of Arianism and the triumph of the Nicene cause, for which Gregory had borne his witness not only in teaching, but by submitting to banishment at the hands of an Arian governor¹.

In the stirring events of the years which followed Gregory played an important part. It was his own position as one of the foremost leaders of the Nicene cause in the East, rather than the importance of his see, which led to his being summoned to the Council of Constantinople in 381, and to his being named in the edict of the Emperor as one of the bishops with whom communion was required as a test of orthodoxy.

¹ See Basil *Ep.* 237, 239. Cp. Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 72 (ed. Ben.).

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At Constantinople he made the acquaintance of Jerome, who had been attracted thither by the fame of Gregory of Nazianzus, and it was on this occasion that Jerome heard Gregory recite his work against Eunomius¹. The period which followed the Council of Constantinople was full of hope for the leaders of orthodoxy. Arianism, though still fairly strong in the East, had received its death-blow at Adrianople. The way was opened for the restoration of the Catholic faith. In that task Gregory of Nyssa played a leading part. But with the restoration of the faith a fresh presentation of it in the terms of a scientific theology became necessary. That was a conviction which had already begun to occupy the minds of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. They were both students of Origen, whose theological system, though not accepted in its entirety, was the only adequate form of Christian scientific thought known to that age. The compilation of the *Philocalia*² is a testimony to their belief that Origen's thought contained the principles by means of which the faith might be presented as a rational theology. It is in their attempt to realize this dream of a 'league between Faith and Science'³ that the importance of the Cappadocian Fathers largely consists. Gregory of Nyssa shared this belief⁴, and was more deeply imbued with the spirit of Origen than either Basil or Gregory of

¹ Jerome *de Vir. Ill.* c. 128. The work which Jerome heard recited was probably an earlier draft of the work which we possess. See *infra*.

² On the *Philocalia* see the letter sent by Gregory of Nazianzus (about 382) to Theodosius, Bp of Tyana (*Ep.* 115). On the obligations of both Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus to Origen see Socrates *H. E.* iv 26.

³ Cp. Harnack *H. of Dogma* (Eng. tr.) iv 89.

⁴ See *de Vita Moysis* (written in old age), p. 336 (Migne). *ἔστι γὰρ τι καὶ τῆς ἕξω παιδείσεως πρὸς συζυγίαν ἡμῶν εἰς τεκνογονίαν ἀρετῆς οὐκ ἀπόβλητον. καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἠθικὴ τε καὶ φυσικὴ φιλοσοφία γένοιτο ἂν ποτε τῷ ὑψηλοτέρῳ βίῳ συζυγὸς τε καὶ φίλη καὶ κοινῶν τῆς ζωῆς.*

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Nazianzus. The *Oratio Catechetica* approaches more nearly to the spirit of the *de Principiis* than any other work of the fourth century¹.

The attempt to establish the doctrines of orthodoxy by rational thought was both opportune and necessary. In the first place current religious conceptions had been profoundly affected by the influence of Neoplatonism. It was rather as an attitude of mind than as a philosophical system that Neoplatonism played a part in the moral culture of the heathen world. It influenced men's way of looking at religious truth, by leading them to dwell upon the inner world, the life of thought and spirit, and to find in it the explanation of the universe. The result was a more spiritual conception of God. According to Plotinus the Divine Being is of the nature of thought and is indivisible². This marked a great advance upon the materialistic conceptions of Deity which characterized Stoic teaching and popular thought, even within the Church³, and it rendered easier the task of those who had to state the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and defend it against the unitarian or tritheistic conclusions which so readily followed from a materialistic view of being. Again, the speculations of philosophers on the existence of hypostases within the Divine Being⁴ had made it easier to present to men's minds the unity and co-eternity of the Persons of the Godhead⁵. Once

¹ Cp. Harnack *H. of Dogma* (Eng. tr.) iv 334.

² See e.g. *Ennead.* v 1. 3 sq. Cp. Bigg *Neoplatonism* (S. P. C. K.), p. 166 sq.

³ Tertullian is an example. We have a later illustration in the anthropomorphism of the Egyptian monks.

⁴ On the Trinity of Numenius see Bigg *Bampton Lect.* p. 251. On the Trinity of Plotinus see *Ennead.* v 1. 6 sq.

⁵ There is of course a wide gulf between the Trinity of Plotinus and the doctrine of the Church. The former taught the unity and co-eternity of

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more, the widespread fatalism¹ of the age and the existence of Manichaeism² called for some adequate treatment of the Divine Providence³, the origin of evil, and the nature and destiny of man⁴. Lastly there was the task of justifying to current thought the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement.

Such were the circumstances under which the *Oratio Catechetica* was produced. The purpose of the treatise is stated in the opening words of the Prologue. It is intended not for catechumens, but for catechists, in order to enable them to present in a rational form to those whom they taught the contents of the Christian revelation. Yet it does not profess to set forth a complete system of doctrine. While it abounds in philosophic thought, the aim throughout is practical. The object of the writer is to enable the catechist to remove objections and to win conviction. When he calls to his aid the speculations of philosophers, he does so, not so much because he regards them as the necessary form of truth, as because they provide a common ground for argument. The apologetic character, in fact, is strongly marked throughout.

the hypostases, but excluded the idea of their co-equality. The Intelligence is inferior to the One, and the Soul is inferior to the Intelligence. Both Intelligence and Soul are emanations from the One, which is infinitely raised above them both. Cp. Bright *Age of Fathers* i p. 93.

¹ See Gregory's treatise *περὶ εἰμαρμένης*.

² Cp. *Or. Cat. prol. ἡ πρὸς τὸν Μανιχαῖον μάχη*, c. 7 *οἱ τοῖς Μανιχαϊκοῖς δόγμασι παρασπέντες*. Edicts were issued against them throughout this period. See reff. in Gieseler *Eccl. Hist.* (Eng. tr.) i 369 note 3.

³ See further notes on cc. 5—8.

⁴ Gr.'s polemic against Manichaeism also throws light upon his language on the *ἀποκατάστασις* in c. 26 (see notes) and his defence of human generation in c. 28.

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The work falls roughly into four divisions :

I. Chs. 1—4, in which he expounds the doctrine of the Trinity.

II. Chs. 5—8, in which he treats of the creation of man and the origin of evil.

III. Chs. 9—32, which deal at length with the Incarnation, removing objections, and showing its consistency with the moral attributes of God. In the same section Gregory treats of the method of the Atonement.

IV. Chs. 33—40, which treat of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and the moral conditions (faith and repentance) which are necessary for their right use.

The only indication supplied by the book itself as to its date is the reference in c. 38 (*init.*) to his earlier controversial treatises on the faith. This has generally been taken to refer, or at least to include a reference, to his work against Eunomius. That work had been taken in hand as a reply to Eunomius, who had answered Basil's refutation of his former apology by an 'Apologia Apologiae.' Eunomius' book had appeared either shortly before or shortly after the death of Basil¹. The rough draft (*τὰ σκεδάρια*) of Gregory's reply, as we gather from the prefatory letter to his brother Peter², had already been made before Gregory's return from Armenia, where he had been towards the end of the year 380, probably, as Tillemont thinks, for the consecration of his brother Peter as bishop of Sebasteia³. It was only in response to the urgent requests of friends that

¹ For a discussion of the question see Heyns (p. 55, note 1) and Diekamp *Gotteslehre d. h. Gregor. v. Nyss.* p. 126, note 2.

² p. 237 (Migne).

³ See Tillemont *Mém. Eccl.* ix 578.

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Gregory was led to publish his book. How far it was advanced at the time when Jerome heard Gregory recite it at Constantinople¹ it is difficult to say, but it seems probable that the completed work, which is by far the longest of all Gregory's works, was not published before 382 or 383². In 383 Gregory was present at a synod at Constantinople and delivered his oration *de Deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, which also contains an attack upon the Anomœans³. These works fully satisfy the description which Gregory gives in c. 38 of his previous controversial and critical works on faith⁴. Thus the *Or. Cat.* would seem to be later than 383. But it is probably not much later. Though the danger from the Anomœan teaching does not occupy a prominent place in the book, it is still before his mind⁵. It is probable then that the *Oratio Catechetica* was written in one of the years immediately following 383.

The title is given in the best MSS as *λόγος κατηχητικός*. Similarly Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 233) and Maximus, in his comment on Ps.-Dionys. *de Eccl. Hier.* iii. § 11, allude to it as *ὁ κατηχητικός*⁶. But in some MSS and in the Paris editions the words *ὁ μέγας* have crept into the title⁷.

¹ v. *supra* p. x. Rupp's suggestion (p. 134, note 4) that the last two books of Basil's *Refutation*, which are wrongly attributed to him, are the work which Gregory read to Jerome and Gregory Nazianzen, is devoid of any support. See Diekamp *op. cit.* p. 125, note 4.

² For a discussion of the relation of Gr.'s work to the apologies of Eunomius see Diekamp *op. cit.* p. 126, note 3.

³ On the date of this work see Ceillier *Auteurs sacrés* viii 353.

⁴ His shorter treatises *de Fide*, *Quod non sint tres dñi*, and *de S. Trinitate* (which probably belongs to Gregory, rather than to Basil) were addressed to private individuals.

⁵ See *prol.* and cc. 38, 39.

⁶ Similarly Euthymius and the 'Disputatio Theoriani.'

⁷ The earliest MS which has the words *ὁ μέγας* is the Paris codex Gr. 1268 (Omont 294).

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Its genuineness is well attested, as it is referred to by a succession of later writers. It is quoted by Theodoret¹ in his Dialogues, and by Leontius of Byzantium in his treatise against Nestorius and Eutyches. John of Damascus in the *de Fide Orthodoxa* borrows largely from its language on the Trinity and again on the Eucharist. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople (ob. 733), in a work which Photius had read (*Bibl. Cod.* 233), refers to it. There are also clear reminiscences of some of its language on the Trinity in Ps.-Cyril *de S. Trinitate*. Euthymius Zigabenus in the twelfth century incorporates large sections of it into his *Panoplia Dogmatica*. In another twelfth century work containing the account of a discussion held between Nerses or Noreses, the Catholicos of Armenia, and Theorianus, who had been sent by the Emperor Manuel Comnenus to win him over to the doctrines of Chalcedon, there is a reproduction of Gregory's chapter on the Eucharist. But though the work is frequently cited as belonging to Gregory, a careful perusal of its contents excited the suspicions of orthodox readers. The traces of Origenistic teaching, especially on the ἀποκατάστασις, in the writings of one who ranked amongst the three great Fathers of the Eastern Church, needed explanation. Accordingly an attempt was made to prove that Gregory's writings had been interpolated by the Origenists. This idea first appears in the book written by Germanus, to which Photius refers. The work was entitled Ἀνταποδοτικὸς ἢ Ἀνοθευτός. In the first part of the book Germanus refuted the teaching of Origen on the purgation of wicked spirits. In the latter part he maintains that the works of Gregory of Nyssa had been falsified by

¹ For fuller reffs. see *infra*.

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the Origenists, who had inserted many passages from Origen's writings. The works to which he referred are, according to Photius, the *de Anima et Resurrectione*, the *Oratio Catechetica* and the *de Vita Perfecta*. But the idea of a universal restoration occurs too frequently in Gregory's writings¹ to be disposed of by a theory of interpolation, which further receives no support from any change of style.

An objection of a different character has been raised against the concluding chapter of the treatise by Aubertin², on the ground that Gregory, after treating of Baptism in cc. 34—36, and of the Eucharist in c. 37, again returns to Baptism in c. 40. But the objection is of little value, as the whole section, cc. 38—40, deals with the moral conditions which are essential to the life of grace, and as baptism marks the initiation into that life it is naturally chosen as the point of reference for his remarks.

The spurious addition to c. 40, found in the Paris editions and in some late manuscripts, is an extract from a work on the Incarnation by Theodore of Rhaithu, a monk of the seventh century, and its presence in the text is due to a blunder of transcription.

The *Oratio Catechetica* has received considerable attention in modern times as representing more adequately than any single treatise the characteristic features of Gregory's teaching. Ueberweg, who in his *History of Philosophy* (p. 326) speaks of Gregory as 'the first who sought to establish by rational considerations the whole

¹ Other passages in which Gregory teaches an ἀποκατάστασις are *de Hom. Opif.* c. 21, *in Psalmos* i 9, *Or. in illud Tunc ipse Filius* (of doubtful genuineness) p. 1316 (Migne), *de Mortuis* pp. 524, f. (Migne), *in Chr. Resurr. Or.* i pp. 609, f. (Migne).

² *de Sacram. Eucharist.* ii 487 (quoted by Rupp p. 147).

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complex of orthodox doctrines,' devotes a special section to this work.

Gregory's style has been frequently praised for its excellence. Photius speaks of it¹ as *γλυκύτατος καὶ λαμπρὸς καὶ ἡδονῆς ὡσὶν ἀποστάζων*. His rhetorical training² is manifested in the elaboration of his periods, his frequent use of digressions, and above all his love of similes³. At the same time these features combine to make his language often obscure and difficult of interpretation.

§ 2. ON SOME POINTS IN THE TEACHING OF GREGORY OF NYSSA.

The purpose of the *Oratio Catechetica* is to set forth in a manner suited to the needs of those engaged in the instruction of converts the contents of the Baptismal Creed. Gregory starts from the religious beliefs of the Greek and the Jew, and maintains that the Christian doctrine of God is the mean between Greek polytheism and Judaism. The former recognised a distinction of hypostases, the latter the unity of nature, in the Divine Being. He refers to non-Christian conceptions of a

¹ *Bibl. Cod.* 6.

² See the letter of Gregory of Nazianzus (*Ep.* 11, ed. Ben.) written to Gr., reproving him for his excessive devotion to rhetorical studies, which had led him to resign his office of *ἀναγνώστης*.

³ The *Or. Cat.* abounds in similes. Especially characteristic are the following: the mixture of water with the oil of a lamp (c. 6), the mind of man wandering at will over the universe (c. 10), the flame of the wick (*ibid.*), the dog letting fall his food to catch at its reflection in the water (c. 21), the comparison of Satan to a ravenous fish who swallows both hook and bait (c. 24), the doctor waiting for the disease to come to a head (c. 29), the snake which has received its death-stroke, but still shows signs of life (c. 30).

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Word of God, and further seeks to convince the Greek of the existence of a Word and Spirit of God by an appeal to 'general ideas,' based on the facts of human nature¹. On the other hand he seeks to lead the Jew, from indications contained in the Old Testament², to accept, as consonant with his earlier teaching, the Catholic faith. In dealing with the Greek his treatment is speculative. In dealing with the Jew he appeals to Scripture. In both cases he makes use of the facts of history. The miracles of Christ, the rise, growth, and extension of the Church³, all are adduced to confirm the impression of the truth of Christianity which has been gained from an examination of its contents. The argument from prophecy and Old Testament types, which played such an important part in earlier apologies, does not find a place in his treatment. But he states in the clearest way, when treating of the Incarnation, the moral argument. Again and again he appeals to the moral glory exhibited in God's plan of redemption⁴. The Incarnation was an exhibition of the Love of God and was consistent with, and worthy of, His moral nature. This he regards as the sole and sufficient answer to all objections. It is consistent with God's honour to succour the needy. Such a work supplied the most splendid occasion for the exercise of His power. That His power could condescend so low was a greater miracle than any of the wonders of Creation. That Gregory appeals to each of these three classes of arguments; speculative, historical, and moral, is, as Rupp says⁵, a proof of the impartiality of his judgment and of his theological acuteness.

¹ See *prol.* cc. 3, 1, 5.² See c. 4.³ See cc. 12, 18.⁴ See cc. 8 (*sub fin.*), 9, 15, 17, 20, 24, 26.⁵ *Gregors Leben und Meinungen* p. 246.

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Gregory, as has been already remarked, does not attempt a complete scientific treatment of his subject. His aim is not to produce a *de Principiis* suited to the needs of the fourth century and based upon the Nicene Creed. He has in view the immediate, practical needs of Christian teachers. Yet there are at least the outlines of a theological system in the *Oratio Catechetica*, and it is to this fact that its resemblance to the work of Origen is due.

The influence of Origen upon Gregory's work is seen in three points.

1. In the first place his general treatment of his subject shows how deeply he had imbibed the spirit of Origen. His attempt to illustrate and explain Christian truth with the help of the philosophical conceptions of Greek thought is inspired by Origen¹. Like his great master he too would seek to claim the philosophy of the heathen world as a friend and partner in the pursuit of the higher life².

2. Again, Gregory's exegesis of Scripture is derived, like that of Basil, from Origen. He expounds the principles of the allegorical method of interpretation in c. 32 of the *Or. Cat.*, where he is dealing with objections to the manner of Christ's death. All words and acts of the Gospel have, he declares, a higher and more Divine meaning³ than that which lies upon the

¹ Cp. Rupp, *l.c.* 'Origen is great by virtue of the single thought of bringing philosophy into union with religion, and producing thereby a theology. With Clement of Alexandria this was still a mere instinct. Origen gave it consciousness, and so Christianity began to have a science of its own.'

² Cp. *de Vit. Moysis, l.c. supra.*

³ κατὰ τὸν ὑψηλότερον τε καὶ θεϊότερον λόγον.

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surface. There is in all passages alike an admixture of the Divine element with the human. The voice or action proceeds after a human manner, while the hidden meaning¹ manifests the Divine element. So in the Death of Christ we can recognize the human element, the shame and weakness, while the outstretched arms of the Sufferer preach the Divine lesson of the all-embracing love of God. The early chapters of Genesis he treats, as Origen had done before him, as allegories. The stories of Paradise and the coats of skin² contain doctrines written in the form of a narrative and after the manner of history³. The coats of skin do not refer to literal skins. The inner meaning of the story, expressed in veiled language⁴, is that physical death was appointed by God as a merciful provision for undoing the effects of man's fall. Once more Gregory accuses the Jews of having misunderstood all that the Law had expressed in veiled language for those who were able to understand the inner meaning⁵. Such a method of exegesis was common in the age of Gregory. Allegorism was practised by all parties alike, when it suited their purpose. Some of these mystical interpretations of particular passages had passed into the current tradition of the Church⁶. The allegorical method was, moreover, particularly suited to the work of the apologist. It enabled him to claim the Old Testament in support of Christian belief and to harmonize it with the doctrines of the Church. At the same time it afforded him a weapon

¹ τοῦ κατὰ τὸ κρυπτόν νοουμένου.² cc. 5, 8.³ ἱστορικώτερον.⁴ δι' αἰνυμάτων (c. 8).⁵ ὅσα παρὰ τοῦ νόμου δι' αἰνυμάτων τοῖς μυστικῶς ἐπαίειν ἐπισταμένοις διήρηται.⁶ E.g. in c. 32 Gr. claims to have received the interpretation which he gives of the Cross ἐκ παραδόσεως.

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wherewith to repel the counter-claims of Judaism. Behind Gregory's use of allegorism, however, there is often a profoundly spiritual conception of the meaning of Scripture¹.

3. Once more it is in his whole conception of the Divine Providence that Gregory shows himself the disciple of Origen. To him, as to Origen, the history of the world represents a vast movement from a beginning to an end, embracing all created beings, and advancing towards a final unity in which God will be all in all². To both alike it is God's goodness which is the cause of Creation³. In the system of Origen, however, man does not occupy quite the same central position in Creation as he does in the teaching of Gregory. According to Origen man is but one factor in the world of spirits⁴. Gregory returns to the view of earlier Fathers and regards man as the sole cause and the end of Creation⁵. In him the two worlds of sense and spirit find a meeting-point⁶. Origen's view was necessitated by his belief in the pre-existence of souls

¹ See a fine passage in *c. Eunom.* vii p. 744 (Migne) διὰ τοῦτο πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος λέγεται, διὰ τὸ τῆς θείας ἐμπνεύσεως εἶναι διδασκαλίαν. εἰ περὶ αἰρεθείη τὸ σωματικὸν τοῦ λόγου προκάλυμμα, τὸ λειπόμενον Κύριός ἐστι καὶ ζωὴ καὶ πνεῦμα, κατὰ τε τὸν μέγαν Παῦλον, καὶ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου φωνήν. For further passages illustrating Gr.'s principles of exegesis see in *Cant. Cantic.* p. 756 sq. (Migne), and (on the *συγκατάβασις* of Scripture) *de Comm. Not.* p. 181 (Migne).

² St Paul's words, 1 Cor. xv 28, are a favourite text with Gr. as with Origen. Cp. e.g. *de An. et Res.* p. 104 (Migne).

³ See *Or. Cat.* c. 5. Cp. Origen *de Princ.* ii 9. 6.

⁴ See *c. Celsum* iv 99 (*Philocalia*, c. 20, p. 150, ed. Rob.) οἶμαι δὴ ἀποδειχθέναι ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων, πῶς ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ παντὶ λογικῷ τὰ πάντα πεποιήται.

⁵ *Or. Cat.* c. 5.

⁶ *Or. Cat.* c. 6 τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν γίνεται τις κατὰ θείαν σοφίαν μίξις τε καὶ ἀνάκρασις.

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and a pre-temporal fall, which Gregory rejects. But in his treatment of free-will and the origin of evil Gregory again shows himself the disciple of Origen¹. The possession of free-will was necessary to the perfection of that 'image of God'² in which man was made. The result of its possession was that the participation in good was made the reward of virtue. It is through this endowment of free-will that evil becomes possible. For evil springs from within and is due to the action of man's will in turning away from what is good. Evil has no substantive existence but arises from the absence of virtue. The insistence on man's free-will, which had characterized Origen's teaching when face to face with the predestinarian views of the Gnostics, was no less important at the time when Gregory wrote, in face of the fatalism which characterized heathen thought, and above all in view of the danger from Manichaeism. The conception of the negative character of evil Gregory shares with other teachers of his age. It appears in Athanasius and Basil, and is an indication of their common debt to Origen. At the same time it marks a point of contact with Platonism³, originating as it does in the identification of τὸ ἀγαθόν and τὸ ὄν⁴. But it is in the application of these two ideas of man's free-will and the negative character of evil to the larger question of the Providence of God that Gregory far outdistances his contemporaries and shows himself a thoroughgoing disciple of Origen. It is one of the merits of both teachers that they are able to assign a

¹ For Origen's treatment of free-will see *de Principiis* Bk iii (*Philocalia*, c. 21).

² For the whole of what follows see *Or. Cat.* c. 5.

³ See notes on c. 5.

⁴ Cp. Archer Hind *Timaeus of Plato* pp. 31—33.

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real importance to man's free-will in their system of thought. But man's free-will cannot defeat the final purpose of God, and evil, from its unsubstantial character, cannot be eternal. God must finally be 'all in all.' The purpose of God includes the redemption and restoration to God of all created spirits, Satan included. The purification of man is the work of grace. But those who have not passed through the gate of Baptism have none the less their own appropriate purification. The Divine Power in contact with evil acts as a refining fire. Satan himself will be purged by it and be led to acknowledge the justice and redemptive power of God. Then, when the purifying fire has done its work, there will arise from all Creation a chorus of praise¹. This doctrine of ἀποκατάστασις, which proved such a stumbling-block to later ages and led to the suggestion that Gregory's works had been interpolated, shows how completely Gregory had made his own the main outlines of Origen's system². In their conception of a purifying discipline in the after-life both Origen and Gregory are re-echoing the thoughts of Plato in the *Gorgias*³, but the former certainly believed himself to be interpreting the language of Scripture⁴, while the great text of St Paul, already referred to, supplied them both with the Scriptural basis

¹ See cc. 8, 26, 35.

² For ref. to Origen see notes on the passages quoted above. For other passages in which Gr. adheres to traditional language on the subject of future punishment see notes on c. 26.

³ For ref. see notes on c. 8.

⁴ E.g. 1 Cor. iii 15. For other ref. see Bigg *Bampton Lect.* p. 230. Gr.'s teaching on the *κάθαρσις* applies to a different stage in the history of the soul from that of the Western doctrine of Purgatory. The former takes place after the resurrection, the latter between death and judgment. Again the former deals with the purification of the bad, the latter with the purification of the good. See Mason *Purgatory* pp. 18—20.

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which they sought for their belief in the final restoration of all created spirits to God.

In his treatment of human nature in the *Or. Cat.* Gregory departs from Origen, who adopted St Paul's terminology of 'body,' 'soul,' and 'spirit.' It suited better the purpose of Gregory's apology to adopt the simpler division into 'intelligible' and 'sensible' or 'invisible' and 'visible,' in order that he might exhibit man as the centre of creation and the meeting-point of the two worlds of matter and spirit. At the same time his method enables him to assert the closeness of the union between the two¹.

Once more Gregory appears to emphasize more clearly than Origen the antithesis of God and the world. Thus when dealing with Creation in its relation to God he no longer uses the antithesis of τὸ νοητόν and τὸ αἰσθητόν, which would place all spiritual beings in the same category, but abandoning here Plato and Origen, he draws a contrast between 'created' and 'uncreated'.² This enabled him to assert the transcendence of God, an idea on which he is continually dwelling in his other works³.

It is a sign of Gregory's independence of thought and versatility of mind that, while he has shown himself a true disciple of Origen and has followed him in some

¹ He uses the words *μίξις, ἀνάκρασις, συνανάκρασις* of this union. See c. 6. Gr.'s treatment of the union of soul and body, and the relation of his thought to that of Plotinus is discussed by Bergades *de Universo et de Anima hominis doctr. Greg. Nyss.* §§ 9–13.

² c. 27.

³ Cp. *de An. et Res.* p. 92 sq. (Migne), esp. the words 'Ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐκ παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ ἐπέκεινα ἢ θεὰ φύσις. See also c. *Eunom.* ii p. 473 (Migne), iii p. 601, *de Hom. Op.* c. 11. This feature, which Gr. shares with Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzen, marks a point of contact with the Neoplatonists. See, however, Diekamp *op. cit.* pp. 183, 184.

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of his most daring speculations, he has also shown himself susceptible to influences from another teacher who led in his day a reaction from Origen, and even figured as one of his most determined opponents.

The influence of Methodius upon Gregory's thought in the *Oratio Catechetica* is unmistakable, and extends not only to important conceptions, but even to similarity of literary expression¹. In the first place Gregory shares Methodius' conception of the place occupied by death in the Divine order. According to Gregory² death was a temporary institution³, not a necessity of man's nature. It affects only the physical or sensuous part of man, and the work which it fulfils in the remedial purpose of God⁴ is to free man's physical nature from the evil implanted in it by sin, by dissolving it and refashioning it⁵ in its original beauty. He illustrates this by the case of a potter, who, when he finds that some ill-disposed person has filled with molten lead the vessel which he has fashioned, breaks up the unbaked clay and remodels it. Methodius' account is similar. According to him 'God devised death that by this means we might be rendered

¹ The illustration of the potter in *Or. Cat.* c. 8 appears to be derived from Methodius *de Resurrectione* Lib. i c. 44 (ed. Bonwetsch, p. 146). Again the description of death in *Or. Cat.* cc. 16, 35 recalls the language of Method. *de Resurr.* Lib. i c. 38 (ed. Bon. p. 132) οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ὁ θάνατος ἢ διάκρισις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος. Gr.'s description of the 'angel of the earth' and the φθόνος of Satan (*Or. Cat.* c. 6) recalls the passage in Method. *de Resurr.* Lib. i c. 37 (ed. Bonw. p. 130). For the coats of skin (*Or. Cat.* c. 8) cp. Method. *de Resurr.* Lib. i c. 39 (ed. Bonw. p. 136). The illustration derived from human generation (*Or. Cat.* c. 33) is found in Method. *de Resurr.* Lib. ii c. 20 (ed. Bonw. p. 235).

² *Or. Cat.* c. 8.

³ οὐχ ὡς δεῖ παραμένειν ἀνδ *ibid.* πρὸς καιρὸν.

⁴ τὸν τὴν κακίαν ἡμῶν λατρεύοντα, *ibid.*

⁵ πρὸς τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κάλλος ἀναστοιχειώσει.

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altogether free from blemish and injury¹; and he explains his meaning by the two illustrations of the worker in metal and the potter. Yet in adopting the point of view of Methodius with regard to the physical nature of man, Gregory shows his originality by combining with it the idea of the purification of the soul by the practice of virtue in this life and the purificatory discipline of the after-life². Starting from this conception of the redemption of the body, we find that both Methodius and Gregory take the same view of the redemptive work of Christ. According to the somewhat confused language of Methodius, Adam represents the whole of humanity which was assumed by Christ³. When man went astray, Christ the Shepherd came to seek him and ‘bare him up’ and ‘wrapped Himself around him⁴’ that he might not again be overwhelmed and swallowed up by the waves and deceits of pleasure. ‘For in this way the Word assumed man, in order that, overcoming the serpent, He might through Himself destroy the condemnation which had followed upon man’s ruin. For it was fitting that by no other should the Evil One be overcome, but by him whom he had deceived and over whom he was boasting that he had gained the mastery; for in no other way was it possible that sin and condemnation should be destroyed, unless that same man, on whose account it had been said, “Earth thou art and unto earth shalt thou return,” should be refashioned⁵ and

¹ *de Resurr.* Lib. i c. 42 sq. (ed. Bonw. pp. 142 sq.).

² *Or. Cat.* c. 8 *ἐν μὲν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ζωῆ τὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς φάρμακον εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν τοιούτων προσετέθη τραυμάτων. εἰ δὲ ἀθεράπευτος μένοι, ἐν τῷ μετὰ ταῦτα βίῃ τεταμένται ἡ θεραπεία.*

³ See *Convin.* iii 6 οὕτω δὴ πάλιν καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀνειληφότι Χριστῷ τὸν Ἀδὰμ πάντες ζωοποιηθῶσιν (ed. Jahn, p. 19). Cp. also iii 4, 7, 8.

⁴ *ibid.* βασιτάσαντος αὐτὸν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀμφισσαμένου.

⁵ ἀναπλασθεῖς.

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undo the sentence which on his account had issued forth upon all, that, as in Adam formerly all die, even so again in Christ, who assumed Adam, all should be made alive¹.

There are resemblances in this exposition to the earlier teaching of Irenaeus², but the many points of contact with Methodius' conceptions and the form in which he illustrates them³ seem to show fairly conclusively that Gregory chose the latter as his model. According to Gregory⁴ Christ assumed humanity for the purpose of knitting together in an inseparable union the body and soul which had been severed in death, and recalling the primal grace⁵ which had belonged to human nature. As the principle of death had passed throughout the whole of human nature, so the principle of life resulting from Christ's Resurrection passes to all. He first united the soul which He had assumed in an indissoluble union with His own body by His resurrection. Then on a larger scale⁶ he inaugurated the same union for all humanity. Thus He becomes the 'meeting-ground'⁷ of life and death, by arresting the process of dissolution in man's nature, and Himself becoming

¹ *ibid.* Cp. also the words in c. 7 *ὅπως ὁ Κύριος, ἡ ἀφθαρσία νικήσασα τὸν θάνατον, εὐήχως τὴν ἀνάστασιν μελωδήσῃ τῇ σαρκί, μὴ ἐάσας αὐτὴν κληρονομηθῆναι πάλιν ὑπὸ τῆς φθορᾶς.* See also the mystical application to the Church of the story of the creation of Eve, *ibid.* c. 8. The reff. throughout are to Jahn's edition.

² See Harnack *Hist. of Dogma* (Eng. tr.), vol. iii p. 105 (cp. ii 239 ff.).

³ See *supra*, p. xxv, note 1.

⁴ *Or. Cat.* c. 16.

⁵ *ὡς ἂν ἡ πρώτη περὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον χάρις ἀνακληθεῖται.* Cp. c. 35 *ὥστε τῆς κακίας ἐν τῇ διαλύσει τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκρυσίσεως πάλιν διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως σώων καὶ ἀπαθῆ καὶ ἀκέραϊον καὶ πάσης τῆς κατὰ κακίαν ἐπιμιξίας ἀλλότριον ἀναστοιχειωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον.*

⁶ γενικωτέρῳ τινὶ λόγῳ.

⁷ μεθόριον.

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the originating principle of the union of the severed portions¹.

In these somewhat realistic expositions of the work of redemption we find certain clearly marked conceptions which are held in common by Methodius and Gregory. There is the same idea of the purpose of death as a means of removing the evil which had entered man's physical nature through the Fall. There is the same idea of Christ's union with humanity as a whole. And lastly there is the same conception of the reconstitution of human nature through the Resurrection of Christ. These conceptions form the leading features of Gregory's doctrine of redemption.

Gregory's treatment of the Incarnation exhibits in detail many points of resemblance to that of Athanasius. As we have seen his general conceptions follow in the main those of Methodius. It is rather on the apologetic side that his expositions recall those of Athanasius. Both writers recognize the importance of history. They both appeal to the miracles of Christ², and to His Virgin-Birth and Resurrection; also to the witness of facts as exhibited in the rise and growth of the Church and in the decline of heathenism and Judaism³. They both deal with the question 'Why did not God restore man by a mere fiat?'; though they answer it in different ways⁴. Both appeal to the immanence of God in Creation in order to justify the idea of an Incarnation⁵. Both treat

¹ See further the expositions in *Or. Cat.* cc. 32, 35, esp. the words in c. 32, ἡ τοῦ μέρους ἀνάστασις ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν διεξέρχεται, κατὰ τὸ συνεχές τε καὶ ἠνωμένον τῆς φύσεως ἐκ τοῦ μέρους ἐπὶ τὸ ὅλον συνεκτιδομένη.

² *Or. Cat.* cc. 12, 13. Cp. *Ath. de Inc.* cc. 18, 38, 49, 50.

³ *Or. Cat.* cc. 13, 18. Cp. *Ath. de Inc.* cc. 40, 46, 55.

⁴ *Or. Cat.* cc. 15, 17. Cp. *Ath. de Inc.* 44, *Or. c. Ar.* ii 68.

⁵ *Or. Cat.* c. 25. Cp. *Ath. de Inc.* cc. 41, 42.

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of the necessity of the death of Christ¹, but Gregory has emphasized more clearly than Athanasius the fact that death was necessary in order that Christ's assumption of human nature might be complete. The particular manner of the death, Crucifixion, is also discussed by both writers, though more fully by Athanasius². Both see in the outstretched arms of Christ a manifestation of His purpose to unite all men to Himself³. While Athanasius asserts that man's ills could not be cured by any external remedy⁴, Gregory maintains that man needed to be touched in order to be cured⁵. On the other hand Athanasius emphasizes far more clearly than Gregory the purpose of the Incarnation to restore in man the knowledge of God which had been blurred by sin⁶. In one or two respects Gregory added to the expositions given by Athanasius, as when he deals with the question why the Incarnation was delayed, and answers it by the analogy of the physician who waits till the disease has reached a climax before applying a cure⁷.

Gregory deals with the question, why sin has not ceased to exist since the Incarnation, by adducing the simile of a serpent⁸ which has received its death-blow, though life continues for a time in its extremities. And again he answers the question why grace has not come to all by saying, in language that recalls Butler in later times, that God has left something to man's initiative and made him free to accept or refuse God's offer⁹. On

¹ *Or. Cat.* c. 32. Cp. Ath. *de Inc.* cc. 21, 22.

² *Or. Cat.* c. 32. Cp. Ath. *de Inc.* cc. 23—25.

³ *Or. Cat.* c. 32. Cp. Ath. *de Inc.* c. 25.

⁴ Ath. *de Inc.* c. 44. ⁵ *Or. Cat.* c. 27. ⁶ *de Inc.* cc. 11—19.

⁷ *Or. Cat.* c. 29. Cp. Ath. *Or. c. Ar.* i 29, ii 68.

⁸ *Or. Cat.* c. 30. ⁹ *ibid.*

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the whole, however, Gregory's treatment of the Incarnation lacks the completeness and profundity which is found in Athanasius¹.

What has been said above of Gregory's relation to Origen has served also to bring into notice the debt which both Fathers owe to Plato. Gregory's other works exhibit his intimate acquaintance with Plato's Dialogues², and show how freely he employed Plato's thoughts in setting forth the doctrine of the Trinity³. Yet Gregory fully understood the limits within which Platonism might be of service to the theology of the Church. It was at best a useful ally, which might be enlisted to strengthen and illustrate his exposition of the faith. It is thus that he employs the Platonic psychology to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity in the opening chapters of the *Oratio Catechetica*⁴.

¹ In his treatment of the Divine Word in *Or. Cat. c. 1* Gr. uses language which resembles that of Athanasius, e.g. his statement that God was never without a Word (cp. *Or. c. Ar. i 19*), and his contrast between the Divine Word and its transitory, human counterpart (cp. *Or. c. Ar. ii 35*).

² See passages quoted by Diekamp *Gotteslehre d. h. Gregor. v. N.* p. 33.

³ E.g. in the treatises *c. Eunomium, Quod non sint tres dii* and *de Comm. Notionibus*. See Rupp *Gregors Leben und Meinungen* p. 136. Bardenhewer (*Patrologie* p. 278) speaks of him as 'anticipating the extreme Realism of the Middle Ages.'

⁴ Of the influence of the later Platonists there is in the *Or. Cat.* apparently little trace. Similarly there is only a sparing use made of Aristotle. In his chapter on the Eucharist (c. 37) Gr. employs the Aristotelian antithesis of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*, and 'form' (*εἶδος*) and matter. But in this case he was probably only availing himself of terminology which had entered into the current eclectic philosophy of the day. His treatment of *εἶδος* in other works (e.g. *de Hom. Op. c. 27*) shows the influence of both Methodius and Origen. See Diekamp *op. cit.* p. 44, note 2. See further notes on ἀλλοιωτικῆς and reff. to Aristotle's doctrine of nutrition in c. 37.

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We may now proceed to consider some points in the teaching of the *Oratio Catechetica* in which Gregory's independence of earlier Fathers is most apparent. First in order stands his presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity. His treatment of the subject is somewhat slight when compared with the length at which he discusses the Incarnation. There were two reasons for this. His earlier works had expounded at full length his ideas upon the subject¹. And again it is assumed by him that in an apologetic work such as the *Oratio Catechetica* professes to be, there was less need to deal at length with objections to this doctrine than was the case in the doctrine of the Incarnation. The 'general ideas' of the Greek might be regarded as predisposing him to believe that there was a Word of God and a Spirit of God, while the indications in the Old Testament of hypostases within the Godhead might serve to convince the Jew². But in what he does say his treatment is original and suggestive. He is the first Father to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity from the psychology of human nature. Starting from the Platonic analysis of human consciousness as consisting of *νοῦς*, *λόγος*, *ψυχή*, he proceeds to argue that in the case of the Godhead this implies three distinct hypostases within the Divine Being. The Divine Logos and Spirit must correspond to the Divine Nature and be proportionately higher than their human counterparts. They must accordingly be living and have life in themselves. And in order to have life in the fullest sense they must be personal, possessing will and the power to perform what they will. Gregory's illustration is based upon the

¹ Cp. c. 38.

² Cp. the opening words of c. 5, where he also states the difficulties likely to be felt about the Incarnation. Cp. also c. 9.

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belief, which he exhibits in other works, that human nature is a mirror, which faithfully reflects the traits of its Divine archetype¹. At the same time Gregory is conscious of the inadequacy of our faculties to explore the mode of the existence of Deity, and he acknowledges that we can only attain a moderate degree of apprehension of the Divine Being².

Another contribution which Gregory makes to Christian thought in the *Oratio Catechetica* is his treatment of the relation of the work of redemption to the attributes of God³. These he represents as four, power, righteousness, goodness, and wisdom⁴. The goodness of God was shown in his desire to rescue man, His wisdom in the method chosen to carry into effect this desire⁵. The power of God, which is not in its exhibition divorced from love⁶, was shown in the surpassing wonder of God's condescension, which enabled Him to come down to the level of man. Such humiliation was a wonder no less than that a flame should stream downwards, instead of upwards⁷. The righteousness of God was displayed in His manner of dealing with the great adversary of man⁸. In treating of this question Gregory

¹ Cp. *de An. et Res.* p. 41 (Migne) οὕτως ἐν τῇ βραχύτητι τῆς ημετέρας φύσεως τῶν ἀφρόστων ἐκείνων τῆς θεότητος ἰδιωμάτων αἱ εἰκόνες ἐκλάμπουσιν : *de Mortuis* p. 509 (Migne) ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς ἐν τῷ κατόπτρῳ μορφῆς ἡ εἰκὼν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον σχηματίζεται· ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς χαρακτήρος, τὸ ἔμπαιον νενοήκαμεν· κατὰ γὰρ τὸ θεῖον κάλλος τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδος ἀπεικονίζεται. οὐκοῦν θῶν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐαυτῆς βλέπη ἡ ψυχὴ τότε δι' ἀκρίβειας ἐαυτὴν καθορᾷ. There are many such passages. The passage in *Quid sit ad imag. Dei* p. 1333 (Migne), which recalls Gr.'s language in the *Or. Cat.*, cannot be adduced in illustration, as the treatise is almost certainly a later work, probably by Anastasius Sinaita. See Ceillier viii 248.

² c. 3 *in*it.

³ cc. 19—26.

⁴ c. 20.

⁵ c. 23 *sub fin.* Cp. c. 20.

⁶ Cp. c. 24, τὰ ἐφεξῆς τοῦ μυστηρίου διασκοπήσωμεν, ἐν οἷς μάλιστα δεικνύται συγκεκραμένη τῇ φιλανθρωπία ἡ δύναμις.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ cc. 21—23, 26.