

RECONSIDERING *APOKATASTASIS* IN ST GREGORY OF NYSSA'S *ON THE SOUL AND RESURRECTION* AND THE *CATECHETICAL ORATION*

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Abstract: This article addresses St Gregory of Nyssa's notion of *apokatastasis*, aiming at distinguishing it from the concept of universal salvation imputed onto it by modern scholarship. Refuting the consensus that the saint claimed the inevitable eschatological salvation of everyone, it will focus on two of the Nyssen's works – *On the Soul and Resurrection* and the *Catechetical Oration* – maintaining that whilst he did express the legitimate Christian hope that all things will be restored to God, nevertheless he emphasised the free cultivation of virtue in the here and now as having an impact on our experience of the afterlife. Moreover, this article will demonstrate that the saint contextualised *apokatastasis* within the person of Christ and his Church, meaning that, whilst in the ages to come all will be given the possibility to return to God, it is especially significant that we begin this process *hic et nunc* within the ecclesial context.

St Gregory of Nyssa used the term *apokatastasis* (ἀποκατάστασις) or 'restoration' in different ways and in a variety of contexts,¹ but it predominantly appears in his writings with reference to the eschatological restoration of humanity's God-intended state, through the general resurrection.² Nevertheless, insofar as it is related to the eschatological experience – which, it will be shown, is not exclusively

circumscribed by the ‘last things’ – this article will refer to *apokatastasis*, the eschaton, the life or ages to come, etc., as mutually inclusive terms for the same state of being often expressed by the Nyssen with reference to the complete eradication of evil when God will reconcile all things to himself³. In fact, the resurgence of interest in St Gregory’s writings since the Second World War⁴ is directly related to his treatment of these themes, more specifically, his response to the Manichean belief that evil has an ontological significance, which he affirmed compromised God’s goodness.

Taking up this general track, many scholars, vexed by the profound evils that took place in the twentieth century,⁵ came to see in St Gregory’s writings a view of universal salvation, the belief that, since God is entirely good and evil must cease to exist, at the eschaton all people will inevitably be saved.⁶ On the surface, all of this seems consonant with Christian tradition. But just because the saint shared in the legitimate Christian hope⁷ that all will be saved and evil entirely destroyed when God will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28)⁸ at the eschaton, this does not necessarily mean that he believed that this would take place regardless of our freedom or apart from the ecclesial experience;⁹ both of which are devalued in the doctrine of a strict universalism put forward by many modern scholars, irrespective of their interest in the Nyssen’s works.¹⁰ For this reason, in this article *apokatastasis* will be distinguished from universal salvation in an attempt to appreciate the contribution of theodicy and free will along with the roles of Christ and the Church in St Gregory’s eschatological thinking. In order to do so, it will examine two of his major texts addressing these themes. The first of these is *On the Soul and Resurrection*, which is often regarded as providing the most comprehensive account of the saint’s doctrine of universal salvation.¹¹ The second is the *Catechetical Oration*, which is not only notable for its references to *apokatastasis* but which provides a comprehensive outline – indeed an existential metanarrative¹² – of Christian faith and history; thereby acting as a holistic lens through which to view the dialogue, which is narrower in scope.¹³

I will begin by contextualising St Gregory’s views on *apokatastasis* in *On the Soul and Resurrection* in light of his reaction against the Manichean worldview that prompted him to engage with the problem

of evil and free will. These aspects, heretofore remaining insufficiently addressed by scholars in relation to the Nyssen's views of *apokatastasis*,¹⁴ will contribute to my contention that the saint did not affirm the inevitability of universal salvation. Rather, and despite some inconsistencies, he posited that although it is possible to be purified in the future life, nevertheless it is important to strive freely for virtue in the here and now. I will then turn to his *Catechetical Oration*, where it will be demonstrated that whilst the saint was preoccupied with the same Manichean challenge, he once again emphasised our freedom and moreover affirmed the possibility of salvation in the life to come. However, in stark contrast to the dialogue which seldom mentions Christ in relation to the eschaton,¹⁵ in the catechism St Gregory ingeniously framed *apokatastasis* within the person of Christ and his Church; claiming that although all things have already been restored eschatologically within the person of Jesus, nevertheless it remains for us to actively participate in this 'realised' *apokatastasis* through our free imitation of (and communion with) Christ within the Church. In this way, it will be shown that the *Catechetical Oration* constitutes the proper lens through which to read and understand the Nyssen's references to *apokatastasis* in *On the Soul and Resurrection*; for it is in the former treatise that the saint places this topic within the sacred ecclesial context anchored in the person of Christ.

Evil, Free Will and *Apokatastasis* in *On the Soul and Resurrection*

Written just after the death of his older brother St Basil in 379, *On the Soul and Resurrection* unfolds as a dialectic discussion between St Gregory and his dying sister St Macrina, whom he used as a mouthpiece to espouse his views; an attempt not unlike that of Plato, who consistently employed his master Socrates as the principal exponent of his own ideas.¹⁶ The dialogue begins with a concrete set of circumstances that are adversely affecting the disposition of one of its interlocutors, in this case St Gregory, whose confidence in the survival of the soul after death was weakened by both the recent passing of his brother and his sister's ailing health. Taken at face value, in this text the Nyssen transformed his personal grief into a positive pretext for addressing contemporary challenges facing the Church, which

is evident in the contrary propositions that he makes to his sister, who, in her role as a spiritual Mother and guide, deftly refutes them in order to establish the veracity of the Christian approach towards the nature of the soul, death, and the resurrection. Having established the survival of the soul, its nature, and the emotions in the first three chapters consecutively,¹⁷ the concept of the *apokatastasis* appears for the first time in chapter four when, in discussing the condition of the soul after death, St Gregory asks his sister whether or not Hades should be considered topographically. Macrina suggests that Hades is a state of being, only to be met with the following question by St Gregory:

“What then,” I said, “If the opponent should cite the apostle who says that all rational creation at the restoration of the universe looks toward the Governor of the whole? [πᾶσαν λέγοντα τὴν λογικὴν κτίσιν ἐν τῇ τοῦ παντὸς ἀποκαταστάσει πρὸς τὸν τοῦ παντὸς ἐξηγουόμενον βλέπειν] Among the rational creation he mentions certain subterranean beings, saying in his Epistle to the Philippians that to Him every knee shall bend of heavenly, earthly, and subterranean creatures.”¹⁸

The paraphrase of Philippians 2:10 appears in connection with St Gregory’s views on the *apokatastasis* and ostensibly implies universal salvation. St Macrina’s response also seems to confirm this, insofar as she claims that, in seeing the “harmony of all the rational nature in the good which at some time will come into existence,”¹⁹ St Paul was inspired to designate the three cosmic realities (the heavenly, earthly, and subterranean),²⁰ going as far to say that, at the *apokatastasis*, “the confession of Christ’s lordship will be unanimous even from the demons.”²¹ In the following chapter, however, the saint contradicts any notion of universal salvation within the context of an interpretation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), where, in her exegesis, his sister affirms that the parable discloses a great doctrine concerning humanity’s original participation in “the good things of paradise”²² that was revoked by the “impulse of the free will”²³ towards evil and resulted, providentially, in death.²⁴ This death, continues St Macrina, divided human life into two parts; the part inside the body of a limited duration, and the part outside the body (i.e. the soul), of an eternal duration.²⁵ Nevertheless,

The divine Providence gave us power because of His love for humankind to have each of these (I mean the good and the evil) in whichever we wish [ἐν ᾧ τις βούλεται], either in this short and transient life or in those endless ages whose limit is infinity [τοὺς ἀτελευτήτους ἐκείνους αἰῶνας, ὧν πέρασ ἡ ἀπειρία ἐστίν].²⁶

The unavoidable conclusion that can be drawn from this passage is that free will helps to secure a human being's participation in good or evil either in this age, or in the 'endless ages' to come marked by the *apokatastasis*. St Macrina then goes on to explain the existential difference between those who "store up good for the subsequent age [τῷ ἐφεξῆς αἰῶνι τὸ ἀγαθὸν ταμιεύονται],"²⁷ and those who do not. The former, she asserted, manage their present "life with critical reasoning and self-control," whereas the latter, having neglected to train their reasoning, and, failing to examine what is better, "save up nothing for the life hereafter."²⁸ Then, in remarking upon the chasm separating the rich man and Lazarus in the parable, she highlighted the extent to which our free will affects our experience of the eschaton, stating:

So this is the gulf [τὸ χάσμα], in my opinion, which does not come from the opening of the earth but is made by the decisions of human lives divided towards opposite choices. He who has definitely pursued pleasure for this life and has not cured his misguided choice by repentance makes the land of the good inaccessible to him hereafter [ἄβατον ἐαυτῷ μετὰ ταῦτα τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν χώραν ἐργάζεται]. He digs for himself this impassable necessity, like an immense pit which cannot be crossed [τὴν ἀδιάβατον ταύτην ἀνάγκην, καθάπερ τι βράθρον ἀχανές τε καὶ ἀπαρόδευτον καθ' ἑαυτοῦ διορύξας].²⁹

This claim, that the unrepentant will be separated from the "land of the good," precludes any notion of universalism transposed onto St Gregory by modern scholars. Instead, the saint (through Macrina) emphasised the need to become "athlete[s] of patience [τῆς ὑπομονῆς ἀθλητήν]"³⁰ in the present so that we may be granted admission into the "bosom of Abraham [κόλπον τοῦ Ἀβραάμ]"³¹ in the life to come. Conversely, those who have not cultivated "the life of virtue [τῆς κατὰ ἀρετὴν ζωῆς]"³² in the here and now will experience "another death [ἄλλου θανάτου]"³³ where,

... the deprivation of the things which they consider good becomes a flame burning the soul [τῶν ... ἀγαθῶν στέρησις φλόξ γίνεται τὴν ψυχὴν διασμύχουσα], which needs but does not obtain a drop from that sea of good things which surges around the holy ones.³⁴

Based on this, the holy and the unholy seem to be permanently transfixed on either side of an eschatological divide, with the latter prevented from partaking in the “good things” surging around the former. Surprisingly, in chapter six there occurs a discussion on whether or not the desiring impulse is left in the soul after its purification from the passions, with St Macrina suggesting that the soul can be freed from irrational emotions either by ascetic effort in this life or in the purification hereafter,³⁵ i.e. the eschatological state in the endless ages to come. In contradistinction, therefore, to the chasm that he posited between the “holy ones” and the unrepentant, St Gregory did in fact affirm the possibility of purification in the future life, which he gradually enunciated as the dialogue progresses to its end.

Before moving to an assessment of the nature and scope of this purification, it is important to account for this seeming inconsistency by analysing a feature that prefigures the Nyssen’s entire discussion of *apokatastasis*. Carefully illustrating the ontological difference between the soul and God in chapter six, St Gregory affirmed that despite their likeness (expressed here in terms of beauty),³⁶ human nature, being impoverished of the beautiful, constantly strives towards what it needs, i.e. goodness,³⁷ whereas the divine nature, which “surpasses every good,”³⁸ is completely self-sufficient, with nothing outside it,

... except evil only, which (paradoxical though this may be), has its being in non-being [ἐν τῷ μὴ εἶναι τὸ εἶναι ἔχει]; for there is no other origin of evil but the deprivation of being [οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη τίς ἐστι καὶ κακίας γένεσις, εἰ μὴ τοῦ ὄντος στέρησις]. That which may properly be said to exist is the nature of the good. So that which is not in true existence must be in non-existence.³⁹

For St Gregory, evil does not exist in “nature outside of free choice,”⁴⁰ meaning that “it really has no being”⁴¹ but, as something outside of

the wholly good creator, paradoxically subsists in non-existence.⁴² Interestingly, from this point onwards the text manifests more and more of a preoccupation with theodicy and the problem of evil; a preoccupation that could only be prompted by the immediate challenges faced by the Church in the epoch. Since the Nyssen rhetorically assumed the guise of the Church's opponents in the dialogue, we can infer that the only group he mentioned by name (with the exception of some generalities)⁴³ would constitute the main source of these challenges, i.e., the Manicheans,⁴⁴ whose cosmology positioned the 'Father of Greatness' (God) and the 'Father of Darkness' (Satan) as mutually opposed "co-eternal natures"⁴⁵ and the creation of materiality as an outcome of their violent conflict; a refashioning of the bodies of demons slain by the agents or demiurges of God into a series of heavenly and material worlds.⁴⁶ According to Baker-Brian, the demiurges responsible for this refashioning were essentially positive entities.⁴⁷ However, this does not detract from the fact that, for the Manicheans,

... evil existed independently of the good within its own realm, although it was co-eternal with it: like the good it was a nature (sometimes also called a principle) which ruled over a territory populated with companion worlds.⁴⁸

In the dialogue, St Gregory openly criticised the Manicheans for asserting that there existed "some material [i.e. evil] nature outside the divine Essence [...] equal with God in unbegottenness because its being would also be eternal."⁴⁹ Opposing this dualism, the saint exhibited the traditional Christian response towards Gnosticism; that the source of the creation lies in God's will and not in some external agent that would have compelled him to organise it; for this would, it is implied, compromise his absolute freedom to create. Indeed, the Manicheans had been accused by Christian authors of disparaging human freedom on account of their belief that matter impeded the will from pursuing goodness.⁵⁰ Although recent scholarship has demonstrated that for the Manicheans this did not lead to an absolute determinism,⁵¹ nevertheless their belief in the body's natural tendency towards evil opened up the possibility for unethical behaviour, as attested to by St Augustine, an ex-Manichean 'hearer,' in

his *Confessions*.⁵² It was this threat of libertarianism – coupled with their belief in the ontological existence of evil – that compelled St Gregory to criticise their erroneous belief that “the Creator of human nature is evil.”⁵³ This reference appears in his *Catechetical Oration*, where the Nyssen refuted the Manicheans on several occasions;⁵⁴ and although it seems that St Gregory has here confused the responsibility of the demiurgic agents of the ‘Father of Light’ with the ‘Father of Darkness’ (for the former, as creators of the universe, are in fact entirely good according to Manichaeism tradition), this accusation is a logical outcome of his position on theodicy, which, though inexplicit, is inferable from the text and can be construed as follows: since evil does not exist (outside of human free will) because God, being entirely good (and beyond the good), cannot be responsible for anything apart from goodness, then any theological system that posits the ontological significance of evil must, by way of inference, attribute the source of evil to its creator figure(s).⁵⁵ The fact that for the Manicheans the world was created from the flayed skins of demons would have only contributed to the saint’s resolve in asserting that God will annihilate every trace of evil in the ages to come.

All of this is relevant to our topic, for although the saint distinguished between the respective eschatological experiences of the righteous and the unrighteous, the challenges put forward by the Manicheans – namely, that God is the cause of evil and that human beings, enslaved by materiality, are unable sufficiently to exercise their freedom – seem to have influenced St Gregory’s view of *apokatastasis*, which he rarely addressed apart from the problem of evil and the freedom of the will, both of which are pertinently inter-related in the following statement:

... evil must be altogether removed in every way from being, and, as we have said before, that which does not really exist must cease to exist at all. Since evil does not exist by its nature outside of free choice, when all choice is in God, evil will suffer a complete annihilation [Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἔξω τῆς προαιρέσεως ἡ κακία εἶναι φύσιν οὐκ ἔχει, ὅταν πᾶσα προαίρεσις ἐν τῷ Θεῷ γένηται, εἰς παντελεῖ ἄφανισμὸν ἡ κακία μὴ χωρήσει] because no receptacle remains for it.⁵⁶

It is clear for St Gregory that God and evil cannot co-exist, but the latter's "complete annihilation," which the saint asserted will occur when "all choice is in God" at the *apokatastasis*,⁵⁷ is complicated by his description of the purifying fire in the ages to come. In a manner consonant with his interpretation of the Lukan parable, he described this fire as "sleepless" (τῷ ἀκοιμήτῳ πυρὶ), lasting both "for an age" (τῷ αἰωνίῳ πυρὶ)⁵⁸ and "the entire age" (πρὸς ὅλον αἰῶνα).⁵⁹ Concerning the first two phrases, both ἀκοιμήτῳ and αἰωνίῳ are missing from the most recent English translation of the dialogue.⁶⁰ These omissions may have been deliberate; as any faithful translation of his above remarks would contradict the scholarly consensus that upholds the Nyssen's universalistic view of salvation, which is difficult to maintain if he is seen to be affirming the permanent existence of the purifying fire; implying as it does that some persons, instead of choosing God, may choose to reside in evil at the eschaton.

When taken at face value the saint seems to be contradicting himself in these passages; on the one hand he asserted the salvation of all and the complete eradication of evil, and, on the other, that the fire needed to purge evil is 'sleepless', i.e. everlasting. The only solution to this inconsistency is to view any allusion to universal salvation in St Gregory as an expression of God's intention for humanity, which is in fact attested to when his holy sister states that God has "one goal [...] some straightway even in this life purified from evil, others healed hereafter through fire for the appropriate length of time."⁶¹ That we can choose either to accept or ignore this purification is confirmed by the saint's many exhortations that we freely undertake the virtuous path. Hence, although the nature and scope of purification may be universal insofar as God intends that all be saved, whether or not this will happen depends entirely upon our free will;⁶² denoting a synergetic dimension to salvation that may preclude it as a possibility for those who do not willingly cultivate virtue.⁶³ This means that although the saint clearly did not preclude the possibility of the purification of all leading to a universal salvation in the future life, neither did he assert it with absolute certainty; perhaps on account of his awareness of the vicissitudes of the human will affected by the passions.

Related to the Nyssen's views on purification, that which will inevitably take place at the *apokatastasis* for all people (i.e. universally), in St Gregory's mind, was the resurrection from the dead,⁶⁴ which he articulated in various ways throughout the dialogue, depending on the challenge presented, but which was predominantly signified by "the restoration of our nature to its original condition [τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκαταστάσις]."⁶⁵ This return to an "original condition" is not necessarily clarified in the dialogue. Assessing the significance of the image of God within us in St Gregory's *On the Making of Man*, Daley suggested that this original state was conditioned by the teleological mark imprinted on human beings from the outset. Thus it is precisely this image that is,

... created as the final reality of human existence by the same divine act that created them 'male and female,' but now marred by the tensions and ambiguities of fleshly existence (*De Hom Opif* 16).⁶⁶

In other words, for the saint protology conditioned teleology and vice-versa, so that the goal for which humanity was created, lost after the fall from the paradisaical life, will be reconstituted at the eschaton. Ludlow was therefore right in claiming that "Gregory's idea of the perfection of humankind is more a forward-looking attainment of an ideal than a retrospective restoration to an actual previous state."⁶⁷ In other words, this restoration is not entirely cyclical, but neither is it merely circumscribed by the two points – the beginning and the end – of the historical continuum. For, in addition to St Gregory's aforementioned emphasis on cultivating virtue in the here and now, he did mention in this dialogue, however briefly, the significance of the present ecclesial experience with reference to *apokatastasis*.

This discussion unfolds in relation to the following allegorical interpretation of Hebrews 8-10. The approach is based on St Paul's typological depiction of the tabernacle in Hebrews 9:11 as signifying "the greater and perfect tent [διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειότερας σκηνῆς]," which is related by the Nyssen to God's appearance as the "true tabernacle [ἡ ἀληθῆς σκηνοπηγία]"⁶⁸ in the person of Christ, who, at the eschaton, will "inaugurate for human nature the feast of the tabernacle of our destroyed

dwelling which would again be covered with a body when the elements should come back together.”⁶⁹ After relating this feast once again to Psalm 117:27, the resurrection is described by St Macrina as a universal celebration “established for all the rational creation.”⁷⁰ This feast is contrasted to the current spiritual circumstances, which Macrina delineates with reference to the conditions of entry into the temple mentioned in Hebrews, which is a type of the Church. Those who adhere to false beliefs remain outside its enclosures, whereas,

... among those who have come inside by the strength of their confession, those who have cleansed themselves in advance by purifications and chastity are honoured more than others; and among these, those who have dedicated themselves to this life already have fullness, so that they are counted worthy to enter into the inner mysteries [καὶ τούτων οἱ ἀφιερωθέντες ἤδη τὸ πλεόν ἔχουσιν, ὥστε τῆς ἐσωτερικῆς ἀξιουῶσθαι μυσταγωγίας].⁷¹

It is later made clear that these inner mysteries, which pertain to the inner life of the Church – its sacraments, liturgical rhythms, etc. – are in fact reserved “only for those who are cleansed by the purifying bath.”⁷² This means that whilst purifications, chastity, and those aspects pertaining to a virtuous life are necessary to experience these mysteries, nevertheless initiation into the sacred ecclesial context remains a prerequisite. What is strange is that St Gregory then jumped to further ruminations on the annihilation of evil in the future life and the union of all creatures in “one and the same joy,”⁷³ without describing how initiation into the Church and the cultivation of virtue contributes to our experience of the *apokatastasis*. Even his culminating ruminations on the resurrection – as restoring us to the “passionless beatitude [ἀπαθῆ μακαριότητα]”⁷⁴ of our original, God-intended state before the onset of evil – fail to address how it is that we might anticipate, in the here and now, this eschatological experience within the Church, which is Christ’s body. In fact, in this text there is a conspicuous lack of Christological reflection with reference to the *apokatastasis*, made all the more surprising by the fact that it is precisely Christ’s resurrection that remains the basis for the general resurrection at the eschaton.⁷⁵ It is my suggestion that this lack of Christ-centered eschatological reflection is an

outcome of the Nyssen's preponderant concern for the problem of evil and free will; for, as we have demonstrated, it is mainly in light of these topics that he reflected upon the *apokatastasis*. His claim, appearing just before the above interpretation of Hebrews, that "the mystery of the resurrection is being proclaimed to the Church,"⁷⁶ hence remains unsubstantiated in this particular work. For this reason, we must now turn to his *Catechetical Oration*, where, after addressing similar themes to those in the dialogue, he thoroughly contextualised the *apokatastasis* within both the person of the Son of God incarnate – Jesus Christ – and his Church.

Evil, Free Will, and *Apokatastasis* in the *Catechetical Oration*

The purpose of St Gregory's *Catechetical Oration* is reflected in its prologue, which is addressed to "the presiding ministers of the mystery of godliness" who "have need of a system in their instructions, in order that the Church may be replenished by the accession of such as should be saved."⁷⁷ Composed after *On the Soul and Resurrection*, it is impossible to ascertain a precise date for the treatise. It could be that the role conferred on the Nyssen by the second ecumenical council in Constantinople to re-establish order in the churches of Pontus,⁷⁸ may have compelled him to formulate a comprehensive guide to ingrain the catechists of the Church in the main tenets of Christianity, thus facilitating an inner renewal of both clergy and laity conducive towards the stability and growth of God's people.⁷⁹ This would place the composition of the text sometime in the 380's. In any case, the *Catechetical Oration* begins with a demonstration of the unity and diversity within Holy Trinity (with a specific focus on pre-incarnational Christology, as well as Pneumatology) and progresses to an illustration of the God-intended paradisaical state of humanity, its fall from this state and its subsequent salvation in the incarnation of the Son and Logos as Jesus Christ. It then examines the method by which we may interiorise this salvation within the Church. Moreover, the text is interspersed with – and culminates in – nuanced ruminations on the *apokatastasis*.

Without having this as its focus, the general scheme of the *Oration* encompasses all of creation history from beginning to end. But it soon becomes clear that as the saint moved from one topic to another, his abiding concerns were precisely the same as those reflected in *On the Soul and Resurrection*; to address the problem of evil in light of God's goodness and to maintain the freedom of humanity created in God's image.⁸⁰ Concluding his exposition on God the Logos at the end of chapter four and the beginning of chapter five, St Gregory outlined the compatibility between God and humanity, manifested in the fact that the latter was "born for the enjoyment of the divine good [ἐπι τῇ τῶν θεῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπολαύσει γενόμενον],"⁸¹ or the reaching of "divine eternity."⁸² Goodness and divine eternity are here two complementary ways of expressing participation in God's life leading to deification, although St Gregory did not use the term (i.e. θέωσις or its derivatives) in this context.⁸³ Instead, in this chapter he framed this desire and enjoyment within the paradisaical narrative, related by Moses in "a style more in the way of history"⁸⁴ which – as can be seen from his interpretation – is not to be understood literally, but as a metaphor denoting that human nature, being a "summary of all things that characterise Deity"⁸⁵ – including life, thought, skill, and "all those excellences that we attribute to God"⁸⁶ – was at its beginnings good and "in the midst of good."⁸⁷ St Gregory then immediately opposed those who, basing their assumptions on the present conditions of life (i.e. after the fall from that God-intended state), cast doubt upon the paradisaical experience and its related aspects (the divine resemblance in the soul, freedom from suffering, and eternal life).⁸⁸ For him, this was tantamount to doubting God's goodness and to suggesting that humanity was made by its creator "in the midst of evil."⁸⁹ This assertion initiates a series of reflections maintaining God's goodness by affirming that he made human beings for a specific purpose, to participate in his particular good,⁹⁰ which he enables them to do by endowing them with the "most excellent and precious of all goods [τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ τιμιωτάτου τῶν ἀγαθῶν]," namely the gift of "being [their] own master and having a free will."⁹¹ So, of all those aforementioned attributes of the deity which are imparted by God to human beings, for St Gregory the freedom of the will was the most important; for it is this freedom which not only testifies that human beings are created in the

image of their maker (alternately expressed in *On the Soul and Resurrection* with reference to ‘likeness’), but which enables their “participation of the good to be the reward of virtue.”⁹² But since this life of goodness or the paradisaical experience, as a reward for the cultivation of virtue, does not characterise the present circumstances – which are described as evil – it was important for St Gregory, in upholding God’s goodness, to identify the source of evil not in the divine will, but as engendered within the will of human beings “at that moment when there is a retrocession of the soul from the beautiful,”⁹³ i.e. God. Therefore, reiterating a theme that we have seen was prevalent in *On the Soul and Resurrection*, St Gregory affirmed that it is not God who is the “author of the present evils.”⁹⁴

That all of this is once again directed against the Manicheans is evidenced in the text. For although St Gregory explicitly referred to them only once regarding the problem of evil (see above), he continued to readdress this topic throughout the treatise, grouping the Manicheans amongst the opponents of the Church on several occasions.⁹⁵ The Nyssen then moved to an emphasis of the non-existence of evil in a further attempt to demonstrate that since God is the creator of things that are, he cannot be the creator of that which does not exist apart from the “motion of our self-will” which has contracted “a fellowship with evil.”⁹⁶ In order for this evil to be eradicated, death was permitted by God to affect human nature in an external manner with reference to the body; for internally the soul remains destined for immortality.⁹⁷ Even so, the dissolution of the body is not permanent, and St Gregory continued that when evil is altogether removed by the resurrection at the *apokatastasis*, then human beings will be restored to their original beauty; the God-intended state. But that this restoration does not equate to universal salvation is confirmed by the saint’s ensuing reflections on the healing of the soul, which, when not undertaken in this life through the ‘medicine’ of virtue, is “dispensed in the life that follows this.”⁹⁸ This assertion echoes a similar statement concerning purgation in his *On the Soul and Resurrection*,⁹⁹ and, just as was the case in that text, there is no indication here as to whether or not the future healing of the soul, described as a painful purgation, will automatically be applicable to all people – thereby resulting in universal salvation.

Concluding that this purgation does in fact lead to universal salvation, Ludlow asserted that this “experience of revelation/punishment [will be] a passive one ... its effect will be that humans will have no freedom to choose between good and evil.”¹⁰⁰ But this assertion is compromised both by St Gregory’s silence concerning the nature of the will in the future life as well as his insistence, appearing elsewhere in the text, that the prize of goodness or the paradisaical experience in this life, reached through virtue, would be impossible if God “had subjected humankind to the yoke of a strong compulsion, as if he would drag it unwillingly, as if it were his lifeless tool, towards the right.”¹⁰¹ Given the saint’s belief that God will not compel us to accept him in the here and now, there is no reason to presume that he will do so in the hereafter.

We have seen, on the one hand, that in *On the Soul and Resurrection* the Manichean disparagement of God’s goodness and human freedom clearly influenced St Gregory’s formulations of *apokatastasis*, which only appear in relation to these themes. On the other hand, although it is clear that the same themes addressed in the *Oration* are similarly in response to the Manichean threat, nevertheless the references to the *apokatastasis*, whilst often taking place within the scope of an assessment of evil and free will, are thoroughly contextualised within the person of God the Son, who, after waiting for “long periods of time [μακρὰς περιέρχεται περιόδους]”¹⁰² submits himself to “the condition of a human body”¹⁰³ for our salvation. It is to the Christological context of *apokatastasis* that I now turn.

The Christological Context of *Apokatastasis* in the *Catechetical Oration*

After his above reflections on the *apokatastasis* with reference to the purification of the soul, the saint briefly reiterated the position on first-stage Christology outlined at length at the beginning of the *Oration*, before turning to a lengthy illustration of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ (i.e. incarnational Christology); through which he affirmed that the Lord has already recalled humanity to the “original state.”¹⁰⁴ Acting as a pretext for this is a refutation of those who would deny the divine economy of God in the person of the incarnate Son and Logos – his birth, death, and resurrection. But of immediate interest to

us is the end of the twenty-fifth chapter, where St Gregory defines the incarnation and the resurrection in terms of a ‘realised’ eschatology, where the fullness of God’s presence expected at the last things of the historical continuum have already taken place:

For all things depend on Him Who is, nor can there be anything which has not its being in Him Who is. If, therefore, all things are in Him, and He in all things, why are they scandalised at the plan of Revelation, when it teaches that God was born amongst people, that same God whom we are convinced even now is not outside humankind. For although this last form of God’s presence amongst us is not the same as that former presence, still His existence amongst us equally both then and now is evidenced; only now He Who holds together Nature in existence is transfused in us; while at that other time He was transfused throughout our nature, in order that our nature might by this transfusion of the Divine become itself divine, rescued as it was from death, and put beyond the reach of the caprice of the antagonist. For his return from death becomes to our mortal race the commencement of our return to the immortal life.¹⁰⁵

Not only is God the Logos ever-present in all things that have come into being through him, but at the present time he remains within human beings because by his incarnation “he was transfused throughout our nature” through which he destroyed death, rescued us from the devil, and made us divine. For this reason, it is perhaps pertinent to speak of a ‘realised’ *apokatastasis*, insofar as all those aspects pertaining to the eschaton, the resurrection of the dead, the defeat of Satan, the divinisation of humanity – in other words, the return to the God-intended, paradisaical experience – have already taken place in the person of Jesus. However, it does not follow that the universal salvation that many contemporary scholars impute on the saint’s vision of the last things has already happened for all people.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary, the Nyssen’s concluding statement above that Christ’s “resurrection from the dead initiates our journey towards eternal life” – as well as his persistent emphasis on human freedom – imply an existential process that, beginning in the here and now (and culminating in the hereafter), should be undertaken as a willing response to Christ’s divine initiative.

Utilising his favoured motifs of healing/purification, St Gregory delineated this initiative beginning with Christ's deception of Satan, affirming that it was not by pure deity alone "but by Deity veiled in a human nature, [that] God, without the knowledge of His enemy, got within the lines of him who had man in his power,"¹⁰⁷ so that,

He who first deceived man by the bait of sensual pleasure is himself deceived by the presentment of the human form. But as regards the aim and purpose of what took place, a change in the direction of the nobler is involved; for whereas he, the enemy, effected his deception for the ruin of our nature, He Who is at once the just, and good, and wise one, used His device, in which there was deception, for the salvation of him who had perished, and this not only conferred benefit on the lost one, but on him, too, who had wrought our ruin.¹⁰⁸

'Deceiving' the deceiver by virtue of his unprecedented assumption of the human nature – which as we have seen recapitulates the whole of humanity – the Son of God bestows benefits not only on the human race, misguided by the devil's machinations, but on the tempter also. Before explaining just how these benefits have been bestowed, St Gregory broadened the scope of this discussion by affirming that the Christ experience facilitates a general transition from "death to life," "darkness to light," and "corruption to incorruption" which results in "an obliteration of what is worse, and a passing away of it into nothing."¹⁰⁹ In other words, the "approach of the divine power [ὁ προσεγγισμὸς τῆς θείας δυνάμεως]"¹¹⁰ in the incarnation, acting like fire, purges evil *in toto* from both the nature of Satan and the human nature with which it has been mixed.¹¹¹ Both natures, created pure but defiled through sin are compared to gold that has been mixed with a lesser, corrupting metal. It is not until the gold-refiners burn up the "foreign and refuse part in the consuming fire [τῆ δια τοῦ πυρὸς δαπάνη τὸ ἀλλότριόν τε καὶ ἀπόβλητον]"¹¹² that it is returned to its original luster. The difficulty posed by this particular chapter is obviously the possibility of the salvation of the devil, which we have seen was implied in *On the Soul and Resurrection* with St Gregory's statement concerning the potential salvation of the demons,¹¹³ not to mention his insistence on the

complete eradication of evil. St Gregory repeated this at the end of the twenty-sixth chapter:

These and the like benefits the great mystery of the incarnation bestows. For in those points in which He was mingled with humanity, passing as He did through all the accidents proper to human nature, such as birth, rearing, growing up, and advancing even to the taste of death, He accomplished all the results before mentioned, freeing both man from evil, and healing even the introducer of evil himself.¹¹⁴

Although many scholars take for granted the Nyssen's belief that even Satan will be saved at the *apokatastasis*,¹¹⁵ here the devil's healing is clearly articulated with reference to the incarnation, which, we have seen, can be described as a realised *apokatastasis*. However, in an earlier passage in the same chapter St Gregory remarked hypothetically that the healing of the devil would depend upon its free acceptance of the benefits of the incarnation; just as the healing/salvation of human beings presupposes an existential process whereby they freely cultivate the virtuous path. Hence we may infer that although its healing was made possible by the transfiguration of all things in Christ's incarnation, it was not in fact actualised because Satan has never willingly accepted the Lord or his exhortations to virtue.¹¹⁶

In *On the Soul and Resurrection*, the purgation of fire was only discussed with reference to the general resurrection at the eschaton. In the *Oration*, we see that the purgation is first discussed with reference to the incarnation and life of Christ, who in his own person purges the accretions of evil afflicting both the demonic and the human natures. All of this reinforces our contention of a realised *apokatastasis* in the incarnation that has yet to be worked out on a personal level in the lives of human beings, and indeed will not become universally available until the 'last things,' which the saint went on to describe in a manner that resonates with his analogous reflections in *On the Soul and Resurrection* (see above)

... when after long periods of time [ταῖς μακραῖς περιόδοις], 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 [ἀποκατάστασις]

of those now lying in sin to their primal state [τὸ ἀρχαῖον], a harmony and thanksgiving will arise from all the creation as well as those who in the process of the purgation have suffered chastisement, as from those who needed not any purgation at all.¹¹⁷

The restoration of our original, God-intended state, whilst already having been inaugurated in Christ's person, has nevertheless not yet taken place on a universal scale, and will not take place until the "long periods of time" initiated by the eschaton mentioned above. St Gregory was not here affirming universal salvation, but instead he was pointing to two possible existential conditions in the ages to come, albeit in a negative sense. The first is marked by the need for purification in order for this restoration to be completed, and the latter is not. Recalling his statement in *On the Soul and Resurrection* that "some straightway even in this life [will be] purified from evil,"¹¹⁸ in the thirty-fifth chapter of the *Oration* St Gregory went beyond his emphasis on the life of virtue as the means by which one can immediately and directly participate in the eschatological state, thereby obviating the necessity of purification in the life to come. For it is in these final chapters that St Gregory addressed the relationship between *apokatastasis* and the ecclesial experience as facilitated by baptism¹¹⁹ and gradually interiorised through an imitation of Christ and participation in the Eucharist, thereby placing it in its proper context, which is the experience of Christ's body – the Church.

The Ecclesial Context of *Apokatastasis* in the *Catechetical Oration*

St Gregory began the thirty-fifth chapter of the *Oration* with an exposition on the mystery of baptism, which he described as a thrice immersion in water, making it clear that an 'objective' restoration, here expressed in terms of deification, has already occurred in the person of Jesus on account of his incarnation:

But the descent into the water and the triple immersion of the person in it, involves another mystery. For since the method of 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 along with it [ἵνα διὰ τῆς ἀναληφθείσης παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ συναποθεωθείσης σαρκὸς ἅπαν συνδιασωθῇ τὸ συγγενὲς αὐτῇ καὶ ὁμόφυλον], it was necessary that some means should be devised by which there might be, in the baptismal process, a kind of affinity and likeness [συγγενεία τε καὶ ὁμοιότης] between him who follows and Him Who leads the way. Needful, therefore, is it to see what features are to be observed in the Author of our life, in order that the initiation on the part of those that follow may be regulated, as the Apostle says, after the pattern of the Captain of our salvation.¹²⁰

It is not only human nature which is already saved or deified, but “everything kindred or related to it,” which, when read in light of the Nyssen’s description of the human person as a microcosm – a “commixture of the intellectual and sensible [ἐκ νοητοῦ τε καὶ αἰσθητοῦ ... μίγμα]”¹²¹ worlds – in chapter six, points to the entire created universe. Nevertheless, and to repeat a point stressed often in this article, although the Lord has effected the deification or restoration of all things in himself (and not exclusively by his teaching *per se*) this does not mean that we automatically participate in this restoration, either in this age or in the age to come. On the contrary, St Gregory once again highlighted the significance of our freedom, affirming that we can only begin to participate subjectively in this deification by means of baptism, which establishes “a kind of affinity and likeness” between Christ’s followers and the Lord himself. The act of following Christ is highlighted as a necessary outcome of baptism, which, in this instance, consists of an ensuing *imitatio Christi* that the saint described as follows

... it is imperative on all those who have an equally earnest desire for the Good as He has to be followers by the path of an exact imitation [μίμησις] of Him Who leads the way into salvation, and to carry into action what He has shown them.¹²²

This means that for the saint, baptism on its own does not suffice; rather, it is to be followed by our free cultivation of good works based on the example given in Christ, which he expressed as an exact imitation of “Him Who leads the way into salvation,” including his burial and resurrection.

The latter is accomplished through the thrice immersion in the water, which Nyssen described as an element akin to that of earth, a metaphor meant to point out the need for our personal connection with Christ through baptism.

Now earth and water have a mutual affinity [τὴν συγγένειαν ἔχει γῆ τε καὶ ὕδωρ]. Alone of the elements they have weight and gravitate downwards; they mutually abide in each other; they are mutually confined. Seeing, then, the death of the Author of our life subjected Him to burial in earth and was in accord with our common nature, the imitation which we enact of that death is expressed in the neighbouring element. 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 that 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.¹²³

Having already expounded the affinity or *συγγένεια* established between us and Christ by his assumption of human nature, St Gregory elaborated on the affinity between the natural elements of earth and water in order to explain the manner in which we, through baptism, imitate and actually participate in the death and resurrection of the Lord. Christ submitted himself to the former element, that is, the earth, and, on account of the natural relationship between the two – expressed by St Gregory in terms of their weightiness and downward gravitation – we are called to submit ourselves to the latter, that is, water, so that by submerging and rising from it we might partake of the “three-days-delayed grace of the resurrection.” The saint went on to explain that in Christ’s death, not only were things that were once together put asunder – i.e. the soul and the body – but things “that had been disunited were again brought together.”¹²⁴ In other words, in the separation of Christ’s soul and body sin was destroyed, so that upon their reunion in his resurrection the “foreign admixture”¹²⁵ of sin might have no place. In this way, the incarnate One’s resurrection constitutes the basis for the general resurrection at the eschaton. St Gregory continued that divine providence introduced death into human nature for precisely this purpose, so that sin and evil which affect both soul and body, “having flowed away at the dissolution” of the two, might be eliminated when we

are refashioned as “sound, passionless, stainless, and removed from any touch of evil.”¹²⁶ In Christ, therefore, humanity, and “everything kindred and related to it,” is restored. The *apokatastasis* has already taken place. But the saint explained that although in Christ’s resurrection we have already been restored, this process has not yet been consummated for the rest of humanity:

But as regards those who follow this Leader, their nature does not admit of an entire and exact imitation, but it receives now as much as it is capable of receiving, while it reserves the remainder for the time that comes after (τῷ μετὰ ταῦτα ταμιεύεται χρόνῳ). In what, then, does this imitation consist? It consists in 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 evil, two things concurring to this removal of sin – the penitence of the transgressor and his imitation of death.¹²⁷

Here, the saint reiterated what he wrote in chapter twenty-five concerning our restoration as taking place after long periods of time. But whilst the restoration to our intended condition as participants in God’s life, beginning *hic et nunc*, will not be consummated until “the time that comes after” or the age(s) to come, still the saint made an important qualification; that this restoration will only occur in those who “follow this Leader,” Jesus Christ. This means that although Christ has inaugurated the *apokatastasis* – the eschatological state – in his very person, our participation in this state depends on our willing acceptance and assimilation of this profound mystery, expressed by St Gregory as beginning with both penitence and the imitation of death in baptism.

This immediate participation in Christ through baptism, effectuating a kinship with his death and resurrection and a break with evil, is an outcome of faith that resides within the will. Drawing on the bipartite constitution of the human being, St Gregory explained that although the blessing that springs from these two things – i.e. the “faith and water”¹²⁸ – constitutes the soul’s union with God, nevertheless the body needs an antidote to “undo the mischief introduced” to it “by the poison”¹²⁹ of evil. This antidote is the “immortal body [ἀθάνατον σῶμα]”¹³⁰ of Christ in the

Eucharist, which, “by being within that which receives it, changes the whole to its own nature.”¹³¹ In explaining how the fullness of the body of Christ is disseminated to myriads of the faithful but never diminished, the Nyssen embarked on a lengthy analogy between the human body and its main sources of nourishment, namely bread and wine, which, when consumed, become identical with the one who consumed them. In a similar manner, the body which the Logos assumed as the person of Christ, “by partaking of the nourishment of bread [and wine] was, in a certain measure, the same with it.”¹³² The fact that God assumed a human body, which was sustained by bread and wine and is thus likened to them, makes it possible even now for the Logos to consecrate both the bread and the wine for the purposes of our deification,¹³³ so 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.¹³⁴

The Christian journey for St Gregory is thus properly contextualised within the ecclesial experience. Indeed, it remains nothing other than a participation in Christ leading to deification, beginning with baptism and continually sustained by both the imitation of Christ mentioned above and the partaking of the Eucharist, which happens in the liturgical assembly. In relating beginnings to their final purposes or ends, the saint went on to suggest the impact of this journey upon the way human beings will experience the *apokatastasis* at the end of the present age, with reference to baptism:

... the great resurrection, essentially vaster though it be, has its beginnings and causes here; it is not, in fact, possible that that should take place [i.e. the resurrection], unless this had gone before; I mean, that without the laver of regeneration [baptism] it is impossible for the man to be in the resurrection; but in saying this I do not regard the mere remoulding and refashioning of our composite body; for towards this it is absolutely necessary that human nature should advance, being constrained thereto by its own laws according to the dispensation of Him Who has so ordained,

whether it have received the grace of the laver, or whether it remains without that initiation.¹³⁵

At the great resurrection or the eschaton, the end to which all things are inherently disposed, the restoration that has already occurred in the person of Jesus will be distributed to all people. In other words, there will occur a general restoration or *apokatastasis* of all of humanity, baptised and unbaptised. But not all people will be “in the resurrection” in precisely the same way. St Gregory went on to explicate that the manner in which we will experience this *apokatastasis* will differ depending on whether or not we have, in the present age (or this life), been baptised and have freely undertaken the required imitation of Christ:

For not everything that is granted in the [great] resurrection a return to existence will return to the same kind of life. There is a wide interval between those who have been purified, and those who still need purification. For those in whose life-time here the purification by the laver [baptism] has preceded, there is a restoration to a kindred state. Now, to the pure, freedom from passion is that kindred state, and that in this freedom from passion blessedness consists, admits of no dispute. But as for those whose weaknesses have become inveterate, and to whom no purgation of their defilement has been applied, no mystic water [baptism], no invocation of the Divine power, no amendment by repentance, it is absolutely necessary that they should come to be in something that is proper to their case, - just as the furnace is the proper thing for gold alloyed with dross - in order that, the vice which has been mixed up in them being melted away after long succeeding ages [μακροῖς ὑστερον αἰῶσι], their nature may be restored pure again to God. Since, then, there is a cleansing virtue in fire and water, they who by the mystic water have washed away the defilement of sin have no further need of the other form of purification, while they who have not been admitted to that form of purgation must needs be purified by fire.¹³⁶

It is here that St Gregory made clear the fact that the ecclesial context is the proper framework for *apokatastasis*. This is something altogether missed by some scholars in their assessment of the Nyssen’s views, perhaps on account of a lack of ecclesial awareness and circumscription of the *apokatastasis* to the end of the historical continuum. Indeed, the ecclesial experience is explicitly devalued in, for example, Ludlow’s assertion

that the revelation in the afterlife “is much more effective than God’s teaching in this life and that it will eventually leave humans in no doubt as to what true good is.”¹³⁷ Undoubtedly this arises from a universalistic presupposition, but in St Gregory we see that although all of humanity will experience this restoration at the end of the age, purification in the Church (implying saturation in its teachings) remains the necessary prerequisite for a positive, deifying experience in the *apokatastasis*. Those who have been baptised and, as indicated above, have been purified both through the act of baptism, the ensuing imitation of Christ in virtue and the partaking of the Eucharist, will attain, according to the saint, to an immediate freedom from passion and a state of blessedness; which is none other than a restoration to the God-intended, paradisaical experience. As for those who have neither been baptised nor pursued Christ in the present age, St Gregory repeated an analogy that he used earlier with reference to the incarnation, that of purgation by fire, which will take place for “long succeeding ages” until they are finally restored to God. Nowhere, however, does he claim that this will result in the negation of freedom, as Ludlow has suggested.¹³⁸ To this end, the saint brought this treatise to a close by highlighting the dissimilarity between our own experience of goodness and punishment, and that which awaits the godly and sinners respectively in the life to come. Concerning the latter, he juxtaposes our immediate experience of a fire that can be extinguished to that fire which is “never quenched [οὐ σβέννεται]”¹³⁹ thereby echoing his interpretation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in *On the Soul and Resurrection* which implies the perennial existence of the cleansing fire.¹⁴⁰ But far from intending to instil fear in his readers, and in contrast to his own frequent suggestions that the eradication of evil will inevitably take place at the *apokatastasis* – which we saw above were articulated in direct response to the problems of theodicy and free will – the saint instead encouraged them to actively and freely

... lay down the foundations for that unspeakable blessedness during this short and fleeting life, and by a good choice to wean themselves from all experience of evil, now in their lifetime here, hereafter in eternal recompense.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

Far from espousing a belief in an inevitable universal salvation, St Gregory of Nyssa's view of *apokatastasis* was incredibly nuanced and complex; the result of the immediate challenges that he faced as a bishop of the Christian Church, inspired by and to an extent responsible for its eschatological tradition. In regards to the former, we saw in his *On the Soul and Resurrection* that he responded to the worldview of the Manicheans by refuting their position on the ontological existence of evil, affirming instead that, at the *apokatastasis*, our entirely good God will become "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Moreover, insofar as the same worldview posited evil's impediment to human freedom, St Gregory asserted that the cultivation of virtue in the here and now will directly impact upon our experience of the *apokatastasis*; some will be granted immediate entry into paradise, with others needing to be purified first. But nowhere does the Nyssen claim that this purification will take place automatically and apart from our freedom, and whilst he does remain silent on the concept of the free will in the eschaton, we cannot infer its annihilation. In fact, the inconsistency that appears in this text – and which reappears in the *Catechetical Oration* – between the complete eradication of evil at the eschaton and the eternal existence of the purifying fire (with reference to the Lukan parable) results from a tension in the Nyssen's approach to these challenges; the first being the emphasis on God's goodness, and the other being his emphasis on the need to freely cultivate virtue to avoid this fire. In any case, given the synergetic dimension of salvation we can presume that St Gregory here expressed the hope that whilst God desires everyone to be saved, whether or not this will take place depends upon our free will. But for St Gregory, this synergy must take place within a certain context that, whilst not clearly formulated in the dialogue, is persistently affirmed in his *Catechetical Oration*, which should act as the proper lens through which to read the former. Manifesting his formation in the ecclesial tradition, the *Catechetical Oration* clearly exhibits the saint's view of *apokatastasis* as part of an eschatological experience which has been fulfilled in the person of Christ (a 'realised' *apokatastasis*) and must be partaken of freely, but which has not yet been consummated on a universal scale. This is significant because many scholars, in their attempt to infer

an inevitable universal salvation from St Gregory's works, have often done so in a simplistic manner which not only circumscribes St Gregory's vision of *apokatastasis* to the last things of the historical continuum (i.e. an exclusively 'future' eschatology), but which compromises our free participation in the saving work of Christ; a saving work which, the Nyssen frequently emphasised, must be actively interiorised through virtue in the ecclesial context beginning with baptism and participation in the Eucharist. Hence, the ostensible necessary universalism in St Gregory's works seems to be a construct advocated by scholars unable to reconcile the eschatological hope that God will be "all in all" and the reality of synergy within the ecclesial context. But this conclusion should not be interpreted as exclusivist – for although the saint affirmed the Church as the proper context for our personal *apokatastasis* in the Lord, still those who have not purified themselves in the here and now will be given an opportunity to do so in the future life; an opportunity which signifies the infinite riches of God's mercy and love for a humanity that he desires to save in its entirety.

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Notes

¹ Cf. Giulio Maspero, 'Apocatastasis,' in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero, trans. Seth Cherny (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 55-56.

² Ibid, 56.

³ Cf. John A. McGuckin, 'Eschatological Horizons in the Cappadocian Fathers,' in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. Robert J. Daly,

SJ (Brookline, MA: Baker Academic, 2009), 206. Fr McGuckin in fact gave a pertinent summary of the Nyssen's eschatological thinking, treating, along with *apokatastasis* in relation to divine participation, the saint's notion of *epektasis*, which will not be explored herein. Ibid, 207-208.

⁴ Not surprisingly, the tragedies of World War Two compelled some scholars to explore the avenue of universalism. John Hick affirmed that if God does not finally reconcile all people to himself, this would impede his ultimate goodness. Thus, he asserted "the ultimate salvation of all God's children." John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Great Britain: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 345, 361. But Hick's pluralistic views on religion detract from traditional patristic theodicy, an attitude that may have influenced the foremost exponent of universalism in the writings of St Gregory, Morwena Ludlow, who demonstrates a familiarity with Hick's work. Cf. Morwena Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and (Post) Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143, 287.

⁵ Morwena Ludlow, *Universal Salvation: Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, The Oxford Theological Monographs Series (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3-4.

⁶ Among the scholars who claim that St Gregory's espoused universalism, the *Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* mentions H. U. von Balthasar, S. Lilla, J. Gaith, M. Pellegrino, M. Ludlow and G. Maturi. Cf. Giulio Maspero, 'Apocatastasis,' 57.

⁷ Brian E. Daley has consistently, and very prudently, expressed the Nyssen's views on *apokatastasis* in terms of a hope, though still affirming his universalism. Cf. Brian E. Daley, SJ, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Wiltshire, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 86 and 'Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101. Ludlow affirmed that in his views "Gregory was expressing more than a hope," which, she suggested, should be viewed more as an assertion. Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 96.

⁸ This Pauline verse is the basis of an eponymous treatise, translated with a lengthy introduction by Brother Casimir, O.C.S.O, 'When (the Father) will subject all things to (the Son), then (the Son) himself will be subjected to him (the Father) who subjects all things to him (the Son) – A Treatise on First Corinthians 15:28 by Saint Gregory of Nyssa,' *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 28:1 (1983): 1-25. This title omits the last phrase "so that God may be all in all." In any case, this short treatise should be read not only in light of the saint's reaction to the problem of evil – which it will be shown constitutes one of the main thrusts for his views on *apokatastasis* – but also in relation to his opposition to the Eunomian and Arian belief that the Son is ontologically inferior to the Father. Cf. Ilaria Ramelli, 'Gregory of Nyssa's

Trinitarian Theology in *In illud: tunc et ipse filius: His Polemic against "Arian" subordinationism and the ἀποκατάστασις,* in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*, ed. Volker Henning Drecoll and Margita Berghaus (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 440.

- ⁹ In defining universal salvation for *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (referenced above) Thomas Talbott distinguished between a theistic universalism – “that every created person will sooner or later be reconciled to God” – and a Christian universalism, but he defined the latter as a specific version of the former: “the Christian doctrine that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed means whereby God destroys sin and death in the end and thus brings eternal life to all.” This led him to assert a “*necessary universalism*: the view that in no possible world containing created persons does God’s grace fail to reconcile all of them to himself.” Briefly, he suggested that we are never fully free to reject God (perhaps because of our ignorance or misinformation concerning him), and that, eventually – and through a process of trial and error – God will reconcile us to himself. For this reason, he gave no insight into how we might actively and freely pursue God in this life. Thomas Talbott, ‘Universalism,’ 452, 455-57.
- ¹⁰ Ludlow, for instance, has summarised the arguments of both Talbott and Hick (both of whom published for decades on this subject) in all of her works referenced in this article. As suggested above with reference to Hick, her familiarity with them perhaps influenced her approach to St Gregory’s view of *apokatastasis* where she claims not only that the Nyssen emphatically asserted that “all will be saved” but that “the afterlife experiences appear to leave little room for free choice,” and “that humans will have no freedom to choose between good and evil.” Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 96, 108, 110. Moreover, she did not mention the ecclesial context, which, it will be shown, was so central to St Gregory’s eschatological views.
- ¹¹ Harmon noted that this dialogue is a “key expression of Gregory’s eschatology.” Steven R. Harmon, ‘The Subjection of All Things in Christ: The Christocentric Universalism of Gregory of Nyssa,’ in “*All Shall be Well*”: *Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. Gregory Macdonald (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 50. Ramelli spoke of the dialogue as “one of the main works in which he discusses the question of apokatastasis.” Cf. Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, ‘Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007), 324.
- ¹² On the concept of the existential metanarrative as a form of patristic ‘historiography,’ see Mario Baghos, ‘St Gregory the Theologian’s Metanarrative of History,’ *Phronema* 26:2 (2011): 63-79; idem, ‘The Meaning of History:

Insights from St Gregory the Theologian's Existential Metanarrative' *Colloquium* 43:1 (2011): 17-38.

- ¹³ The precedent for selecting and relating these two texts has been established in Georges Barrois' article, 'The Alleged Origenism of St Gregory of Nyssa' *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 30:1 (1986): 12.
- ¹⁴ I am grateful to Fr Doru Costache for suggesting that Manichaeism may have triggered St Gregory's reaction that led to his view of *apokatastasis*. Indeed, apart from the broader Hellenistic background, few attempts have been made to contextualise St Gregory's view beyond its connection with Origen, who, according to Ludlow, was the first to systematically discuss the doctrine. Morwena Ludlow, 'Universalism in the History of Christianity,' in *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate*, ed. Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 191. There is a recent article which points out the ostensible continuity in their views by quoting at length the sixth chapter from the first book of Origen's *On Principles* which interprets 1 Cor 15:25 on universalistic grounds, taken up by St Gregory in his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. Ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, τότε [καὶ] αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ... (from 1 Cor 15:28). Cf. Ramelli, 'Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism,' 313. The article, however, does not include the first part of the above chapter, which clearly denotes that Origen himself approached universal salvation with extreme caution; cf. Origen, *De Principiis* 1.6.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4: *Tertullian (IV), Minucius Felix, Commodianus, Origen*, revised by A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 261.
- ¹⁵ This problem has been identified by Harmon in 'The Subjection of All Things in Christ,' 50.
- ¹⁶ Catharine P. Roth noted that the dialogue shows many parallels with Plato's *Phaedo* as well as his *Symposium*. For more see *On the Soul and Resurrection*, trans. Catharine P. Roth, Popular Patristic Series 12 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 11. For a comprehensive account of the philosophical background to St Gregory's writings, see Anthony Meredith S.J., *Gregory of Nyssa*, The Early Church Fathers Series (London: Routledge 1999), 59-75.
- ¹⁷ These chapters correspond to the English translation by Roth (see above) used in this article. They do not appear in the Greek text from the *Patrologia Graeca* referenced in this article.
- ¹⁸ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 4, at 62-63 (PG 46, 69C).
- ¹⁹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 4, at 63 (PG 46, 72A).

- ²⁰ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 4, at 63 (PG 46, 72A).
- ²¹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 4, at 64 (PG 46, 72B).
- ²² *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 70 (PG 46, 81B).
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 71-72 (PG 46, 81BC).
- ²⁵ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 71 (PG 46, 81C). Although this may sound like a Platonic musing, the saint does frequently maintain the truth of the resurrection of the body throughout the dialogue, as will be shown below. For more on the relationship between the soul and body in the Nyssen, see John L. Drury, 'Gregory of Nyssa's Dialogue with Macrina: The Compatibility of Resurrection of the Body and Immortality of the Soul,' *Theology Today* 62 (2005): 210-222.
- ²⁶ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 71 (PG 46, 81C).
- ²⁷ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 71 (PG 46, 84A).
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 71 (PG 46, 84B).
- ³⁰ Here I have translated ὑπομονῆς as "patience," whereas the English translation reads "endurance." *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 72 (PG 46, 84B).
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² *On the Soul and Resurrection* 6, at 76 (PG 46, 88A).
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 5, at 72 (PG 46, 84C).
- ³⁵ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 6, at 77 (PG 46, 89B).
- ³⁶ St Gregory, through the mouthpiece of his sister, established that the human soul, having become beautiful after evil has been cleansed from its nature, is hence able to contemplate the object of its desire, God, who is beautiful by nature. Ibid.
- ³⁷ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 6, at 78 (PG 46, 89C).
- ³⁸ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 6, at 79 (PG 46, 93A).
- ³⁹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 6, at 79 (PG 46, 93B).

- ⁴⁰ The Greek text reads: ἔξω τῆς προαιρέσεως ἢ κακία εἶναι φύσιν οὐκ ἔχει. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 7, at 85 (PG 46, 101A).
- ⁴¹ Here I have included my own translation of the Greek text which reads: τὸ ὄντως μὴ ὄν. The English translation, on the other hand, reads that evil “does not really exist.” Ibid.
- ⁴² Cf. Alden A. Mosshammer, ‘Non-Being and Evil in Gregory of Nyssa,’ *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 141-42.
- ⁴³ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 4, at 61, 63 (PG 46, 68A; 69C), and 9, at 98 (PG 46, 124A).
- ⁴⁴ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 9, at 98 (PG 46, 124A).
- ⁴⁵ Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), 110.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid, 113.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered*, 106.
- ⁴⁹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 9, at 98 (PG 46, 121D-124A). That this is the evil nature is clarified not only from Baker-Brian’s summary above, but also from St Augustine, *Confessions* 5.10, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, ed. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Group, 1961), 104.
- ⁵⁰ Cf. Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered*, 117.
- ⁵¹ Ibid, 116-117.
- ⁵² Cf. St Augustine, *Confessions* 5.10, 103.
- ⁵³ *The Great Catechism* 7 [i.e. the Catechetical Oration] in *Gregory of Nyssa: Selected Works and Letters*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 481-82.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. *The Great Catechism* ‘Prologue,’ at 473, 474, and 7, at 481. Although he only mentioned them explicitly in these passages, the text reflects a consistent engagement with the problems raised by the Manichean worldview.
- ⁵⁵ The argument was in fact made explicit in the *The Great Catechism* 7, at 481-82 (PG 45, 29A).

- ⁵⁶ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 7, at 85 (PG 46, 101A).
- ⁵⁷ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 7, at 86-87 (PG 46, 104BC).
- ⁵⁸ PG 46, 100A.
- ⁵⁹ PG 46, 101AB.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 7, at 84.
- ⁶¹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 115-16 (PG 46, 152A).
- ⁶² On more than one occasion Ludlow implies that St Gregory's notion of *synergeia* anticipates Pelagianism. Cf. Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 253, 268. As this article progresses we will see that the opposite is true, i.e. that, according to the saint, although we must actively and freely strive to imitate Christ within the ecclesial context, this is only possible because of the Lord's divine initiative, i.e., his realisation (and divinisation) of all things – including our humanity – in himself, and in the grace which he freely distributes within the ecclesial context (PG 45, 85D-88A; 97B).
- ⁶³ St Macrina declares: "This is why we must take care [...] either to keep our soul altogether pure and free from fellowship with evil, or, if this is utterly impossible because of our passionate nature, to limit our failures in virtue as much as possible to moderate lapses which can be easily cured." *On the Soul and Resurrection* 7, at 85 (PG 46, 101B).
- ⁶⁴ Which will occur at a time when "the fullness of the universe no longer allows an increase in quantity" and "the whole complement of souls will return again from their invisible and scattered condition to unity and visibility." *On the Soul and Resurrection*, at 103 (PG 46, 129B).
- ⁶⁵ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 113 (PG 46, 143A).
- ⁶⁶ Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 86.
- ⁶⁷ Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 49.
- ⁶⁸ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 104 (PG 46, 132B).
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 105.
- ⁷⁰ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 105 (PG 46, 132C).
- ⁷¹ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 105-6 (PG 46, 133B).
- ⁷² *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 106 (PG 46, 133C).

- ⁷³ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 106 (PG 46, 133CD).
- ⁷⁴ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 114 (PG 46, 148B). Through the person of his holy sister, the Nyssen in fact defined the resurrection as “the restoration of our nature to its original condition” which he implicitly articulated against the Manicheans as unaffected by “old age, infancy, nor the sufferings caused by the many kinds of diseases, nor any other type of bodily misery; for it is not likely that God created such things.” Describing the resurrection once again in light of his theodicy, he claimed that “the life without evil will not be subject to the conditions which have happened because of evil.” *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 108-112, 113.
- ⁷⁵ Harmon noted the “paucity of references to the person and work of Christ in connection with some of Gregory’s clearest affirmations of the universal restoration.” Harmon, ‘The Subjection of All Things in Christ,’ 50.
- ⁷⁶ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 104 (PG 46, 132A).
- ⁷⁷ *The Great Catechism* ‘Prologue,’ at 473 (PG 45, 9A).
- ⁷⁸ Cf. Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 53.
- ⁷⁹ An ecclesial parallel to the emperor Theodosius’ attempts to consolidate the empire and make “*Civis romanus* and the *Christianus catholicus*” interchangeable. Michael Angold, *Byzantium: The Bridge From Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 4.
- ⁸⁰ Cf. *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24C).
- ⁸¹ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 21D).
- ⁸² Ibid. The Greek reads τῆς θείας ἀδιότητος εἶη, which I have tried to render more accurately above. The English translation reads the “divine and eternal life.”
- ⁸³ Norman Russell pointed out that St Gregory primarily used the concept with reference to the transformation of the flesh assumed by the Son in the incarnation. Whilst the saint did also use it for humanity’s participation in the divine perfections, for the latter he preferred to speak of participation in the divine attributes leading to a ‘likeness’ to God. Cf. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, The Oxford Early Christian Studies Series (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 226.
- ⁸⁴ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24A). The original reads ιστορικώτερον ὁ Μωϋσῆς διεξέρχεται, ἐν δηγήσειως. At the suggestion of Revd Dr Doru

- Costache, I would prefer to render the original Greek here as “in a more sublime way of history.”
- ⁸⁵ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 21D-24A).
- ⁸⁶ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 21D).
- ⁸⁷ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24A).
- ⁸⁸ Cf. *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24B).
- ⁸⁹ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24B).
- ⁹⁰ Cf. *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24C).
- ⁹¹ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24C).
- ⁹² *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24CD).
- ⁹³ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 479 (PG 45, 24D).
- ⁹⁴ *The Great Catechism* 5, at 480 (PG 45, 25A).
- ⁹⁵ Cf. *The Great Catechism* ‘Prologue,’ at 473, 474, and ch. 7, at 481.
- ⁹⁶ *The Great Catechism* 8, at 482 (PG 45, 33B).
- ⁹⁷ *The Great Catechism* 8, at 483 (PG 45, 33CD).
- ⁹⁸ *The Great Catechism* 8, at 483 (PG 45, 36C).
- ⁹⁹ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 115-16 (PG 46, 152A).
- ¹⁰⁰ Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 110.
- ¹⁰¹ *The Great Catechism* 7, at 482 (PG 45, 32D).
- ¹⁰² *The Great Catechism* 15, at 487 (PG 45, 48C).
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ *The Great Catechism* 8, at 484-85 (PG 45, 40C).
- ¹⁰⁵ *The Great Catechism* 25, at 495 (PG 45, 66D-68A).
- ¹⁰⁶ For instance, Steven R. Harmon insightfully pointed to this realised *apokatastasis* (without calling it such) when he spoke of the incarnation and work of Christ as resurrecting the whole of human nature; saving the devil and his demons, and implementing the purgatorial suffering so that God may

be “all in all.” Harmon, ‘The Subjection of All Things in Christ,’ 59. But he did not go on to articulate this within the parameters of the already/not yet of the eschatological experience, nor did he explore how this *apokatastasis* is, according to St Gregory, interiorised through the virtuous path or the ecclesial life. This means that whilst scholars such as Ludlow have emphasised the Nyssen’s upholding of an inevitable *apokatastasis* at the eschaton, Harmon did the opposite by asserting that, according to the saint, it has already happened. In reality, both are true and need to be balanced out by taking into consideration St Gregory’s positive emphasis on the free undertaking of the Christian journey within the Church which begins in the here and now but will not be consummated until the hereafter.

¹⁰⁷ *The Great Catechism* 26, at 495 (PG 45, 68A).

¹⁰⁸ *The Great Catechism* 26, at 495 (PG 45, 68D).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ *The Great Catechism* 26, at 496 (PG 45, 69A).

¹¹¹ Cf. *The Great Catechism* 26, at 495-96 (PG, 45 68D - 69A).

¹¹² *The Great Catechism* 26, at 495 (PG 45, 69A).

¹¹³ Cf. *On the Soul and Resurrection* 4, at 64 (PG 46, 72B).

¹¹⁴ *The Great Catechism* 26, at 496 (PG 45, 69BC).

¹¹⁵ Ludlow claimed that “the salvation not only of sinners but also of devils accords with the direction of the rest of Gregory’s eschatology” and that “Gregory asserts that the devil *will* be saved.” Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 96. Meredith also mentioned, however briefly, that the *Catechetical Oration* speaks of “the ultimate salvation even of the devil.” Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 22.

¹¹⁶ “Therefore, even the adversary himself will not be likely to dispute that what took place [i.e. the incarnation] was both just and salutary, that is, if [εἴτερον] he shall have attained to a perception of the boon.” *The Great Catechism* 26, at 496 (PG 45, 69AB).

¹¹⁷ *The Great Catechism* 26, at 496 (PG 45, 69B).

¹¹⁸ *On the Soul and Resurrection* 10, at 115-16 (PG 46, 152A).

¹¹⁹ On the sacramental dimension of *apokatastasis*, see Maspero, ‘Apocatastasis,’ 63.

¹²⁰ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 502 (PG 45, 85D-88A).

- ¹²¹ *The Great Catechism* 6, at 480 (PG 45, 25D).
- ¹²² *The Great Catechism* 35, at 502 (PG 45, 88AB).
- ¹²³ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 503 (PG 45, 88CD).
- ¹²⁴ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 503 (PG 45, 89A).
- ¹²⁵ Ibid.
- ¹²⁶ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 503 (PG 45, 88D-89A).
- ¹²⁷ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 503 (PG 45, 89AB).
- ¹²⁸ *The Great Catechism* 36, at 504 (PG 45, 92D).
- ¹²⁹ *The Great Catechism* 37, at 504 (PG 45, 93B).
- ¹³⁰ *The Great Catechism* 37, at 505 (PG 45, 93C).
- ¹³¹ Ibid.
- ¹³² *The Great Catechism* 37, at 505 (PG 45, 96D).
- ¹³³ *The Great Catechism* 37, at 505-6 (PG 45, 97B).
- ¹³⁴ *The Great Catechism* 37, at 506 (PG 45, 97B).
- ¹³⁵ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 503-4 (PG 45, 92A).
- ¹³⁶ *The Great Catechism* 35, at 504 (PG 45, 92BC).
- ¹³⁷ Ludlow, *Universal Salvation*, 110.
- ¹³⁸ Cf. Ibid.
- ¹³⁹ *The Great Catechism* 40, at 509 (PG 45, 105A).
- ¹⁴⁰ In assessing the end of the *Catechetical Oration*, Daley prudently asserted that whilst the fire is eternal, “Gregory nowhere asserts that sinner will be punished eternally.” Of course it is our steadfast hope that no one will be punished eternally; nevertheless we cannot avoid the paradox inherent in the idea of a perennial, cleansing fire, which, eventually, will have no one in it to cleanse. Daley then turned to the Nyssen’s treatise *On Virginity* to state that “Christians who recognize the need for purification can begin it in this life through the practice of voluntary penance and asceticism – especially through celibacy – and through a life given to contemplating the truth and beauty of God.” Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 89. However, St Gregory’s emphasis on the

ecclesial context; of baptism, the Eucharist, and the imitation of Christ that were so prevalent in the *Catechetical Oration*, are not mentioned here.

¹⁴¹ *The Great Catechism* 40, at 509 (PG 45, 105B).

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