

# THE FALL OF MAN AND ORIGINAL SIN IN THE THEOLOGY OF GREGORY OF NYSSA

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THE question of the teaching of the Greek Fathers on original sin is as old as St. Augustine, and yet, for historians of dogma, it is still a living question. When St. Augustine was accused of innovation in teaching that Adam's sin passed to his descendants, he appealed to a number of the Western and Eastern Fathers. Among the latter we find two of the Cappadocians, St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen.<sup>1</sup> In early modern times the question again attracted attention. Petavius noted in his study of the Immaculate Conception that, "Graeci . . . originalis fere criminis raram nec disertam mentionem scriptis suis attigerunt."<sup>2</sup> Jean Garnier (1612-1681) states in his celebrated essay "De ortu et incrementis haeresis Pelagianae," that before the Bishop of Hippo the doctrine was obscure among the Latins as well as the Greeks.<sup>3</sup>

In modern times many monographs have appeared on various Greek Fathers. Competent scholars have examined their teaching in detail, yet diversity of opinion in regard to their doctrine on original sin is still common. In a study which appeared in 1924, Professor René Draguet maintained that many of the Greek Fathers refused to admit that man is born in a state of sin.<sup>4</sup> Draguet's position was questioned by Martin Jugie, the celebrated authority on the Greek Church.<sup>5</sup> Jugie not only contests Draguet's conclusions, but also takes exception to the way in which M. Tixeront, one of the most esteemed Catholic historians of dogma, treats the Greek Fathers in this connection.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Julianum*, II, 10, 33 f. (PL XLIV, 697).

<sup>2</sup> *Dogmata Theologica*, De Incarnatione, XIV, 2, 1.

<sup>3</sup> PL XLVIII, 669: ". . . tenebris involuta fides super ea re."

<sup>4</sup> R. Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps de Jésus-Christ* (Louvain, 1924), p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> M. Jugie, "Julien d'Halicarnasse et Sévère d'Antioche. La doctrine du péché originel chez les Pères grecs," *Echos d'Orient*, XXIV (1925), 136 ff.

<sup>6</sup> J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne*. (1931), II, 137-44.

Tixeront hesitates to ascribe to the Greeks the doctrine of original sin properly so called. Père Jugie has no such hesitation.<sup>7</sup>

Two treatises of the early nineteen-thirties are among the most extensive studies of the history of the doctrine of original sin which have yet appeared. One was written by the modernist, Joseph Turmel, and the other by Professor Gaudel of the University of Strassburg. A comparison of their evaluations of the early Greek Fathers reveals points of disagreement. Gaudel finds the doctrine of original sin in the writings of Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Origen, Methodius, and Athanasius among the Greeks who wrote before the Cappadocians.<sup>8</sup> Turmel maintains that Tatian fathered the doctrine by deforming the teaching of the Epistle to the Romans, and that Irenaeus, accepting the teaching of Tatian, insured its success in Christian theology. Turmel, too, admits that the doctrine is to be found in Athanasius, but denies its presence in Theophilus, Origen, and Methodius.<sup>9</sup> A surprising point of agreement is the opinion, common to Gaudel and Turmel, that the Cappadocians knew nothing of a doctrine of sin transmitted from Adam.

St. Augustine invoked the authority of two of the three great Cappadocians to defend his teaching on original sin. From his day to ours it is a commonplace to find the authors of Catholic theological treatises defending the orthodoxy of the Cappadocians, men too important in the history of Catholic thought to be abandoned lightly to the opponents of the dogma. Gregory of Nyssa's teaching is of special importance in this respect. A famed theologian in his own day, his reputation grew immeasurably after his death, so much so that we find him referred to as the acknowledged "Father of the Fathers" by an ecumenical council of the eighth century.<sup>10</sup> Although less gifted as an administrator than Basil, and less famous as an orator than Gregory Nazian-

<sup>7</sup> M. Jugie, *op. cit.*, p. 151: "Les Pères grecs, aussi bien et quelque fois plus clairement que les Pères latins ont enseigné l'existence d'un péché de nature transmis par la génération."

<sup>8</sup> A. Gaudel, "Péché originel," *DTC*, XII (1933), 275-606. For the earlier Greek Fathers cf. 317-63.

<sup>9</sup> J. Turmel, *Histoire des dogmes*, vol. I. *Le Péché originel. La Rédemption* (Paris, 1931), pp. 37-58.

<sup>10</sup> Second Council of Nicea, Actio VI, t. 5. (Mansi, Welter ed., Paris, 1902), XIII, 293.

zen, he excelled both of his fellow Cappadocians as a philosopher and as a theologian.

Because of the importance of the man, because of the doubt which still surrounds his teaching on original sin, and because, coming as he does shortly before the beginning of the fifth century, he should be a valuable witness to the pre-Augustinian traditions of the Greek Church, a determination of his doctrine is of some importance. Turmel ridicules attempts to save the orthodoxy of Gregory by appealing to the teaching of his brother, St. Basil, and his friend, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and maintains, not without justice, that the true way to determine his thought is by consulting his writings. Such is our present endeavor.

#### CREATOR AND CREATURE

Gregory's anthropological doctrine is based on the text of Genesis: "Let us make man to our image and likeness."<sup>11</sup> He rejects decisively both Manichean dualism and Gnostic emanationism.<sup>12</sup> God, who is the highest good and the plentitude of all goods,<sup>13</sup> is the Creator of all things.<sup>14</sup> The fact of creation established once and for all a fundamental distinction between God and creatures.<sup>15</sup> Hence, however fully man may share the perfections of God, however faithfully the image may mirror its prototype, it will always remain a created image, essentially inferior to its Creator. Although in its own order the created intelligible far excels the created sensible, all creation, whether intelligible or sensible, is equidistant from and subordinate to the Creator.<sup>16</sup> Gregory has illustrated this in connection with the natural immortality of angels and human souls. Whereas God is life itself, all other things merely participate in life.<sup>17</sup>

According to Gregory, heathen writers thought to glorify man by calling him a "little world," a being composed of the same elements

<sup>11</sup> Genesis, 1:26.

<sup>12</sup> *De Anima et Resurrectione*, (PG XLVI, 121c).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 91c.

<sup>14</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 12 (PG XLV, 888c). Cf. *Ibid.*, 8 (801c).

<sup>15</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 16 (PG XLIV, 181c).

<sup>16</sup> *Adversus Apollinarem*, 44 (PG XLV, 1229c). Cf. *Oratio Catechetica*, 27 (PG XLV, 72b).

<sup>17</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 8 (PG XLV, 797ab).

as the material world. In this they deceived themselves, since they failed to portray man's true greatness, which consists, as the Church has said, not in his likeness to the material world, but in his being the "image of God."<sup>18</sup> Man's creation as the "image of God" has set him apart from and above all the rest of visible creation, for man and man alone is such an image.<sup>19</sup>

Although Gregory singles out for special emphasis three communicated perfections, namely, reason, freedom, and immortality, these are only part of the total image. The true image of God participates in all the divine perfections, "for if God is the pleroma of perfections, and man is His image, surely the image too . . . has all perfections."<sup>20</sup> God has given man a royal character, clothing His image with virtue in place of purple, with immortality in place of a scepter, with a crown of justice in place of a diadem.<sup>21</sup>

We find in Gregory's descriptions of the "image of God" a failure to distinguish in so many words between what we call natural and supernatural gifts.<sup>22</sup> Whereas we speak of the power of reasoning and volition as natural to man, and of participation in the divine life as supernatural, Gregory makes no such distinction. For him, the image mirrors divinity, reflecting all the divine perfections in as perfect a manner as is possible for a created being. However, a failure to make an explicit distinction between the two classes of gifts does not mean that he considered them equally essential in the constitution of man as man. All the perfections of God are shared by the true image of God as he was created in the beginning, but some of these cannot be lost without destroying man's nature, whereas others are not essential to the nature, but merely to the perfection of the image of God. That

<sup>18</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 16 (PG XLIV, 179).

<sup>19</sup> "Know how greatly you have been honored above the rest of creation by Him who made you. Neither the heavens, nor the moon, nor the sun, nor the beauty of the stars, nor any of those things one sees in creation has been made in the image of God." *In Cantica Cantorum*, II (PG XLIV, 805c).

<sup>20</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 16 (PG XLIV, 184b). Cf. *Oratio Catechetica*, 5 (PG XLV, 21d).

<sup>21</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 4 (PG XLIV, 136d).

<sup>22</sup> On this point cf. F. Diekamp, *Die Gotteslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nyssa* (Münster, 1896), p. 69. Diekamp names Basil as one of the Fathers who is similar to Gregory in this failure to distinguish clearly between the natural and supernatural. The distinction was not a matter of dogmatic interest in the time of the Cappadocians.

some such distinction between natural and supernatural gifts was implicit in the doctrine of Gregory will become clear when we treat of the corruption of the image which was brought about through the sin of Adam.

Gregory's concept of man as the "image of God" raises a difficulty and leads him to some interesting speculation.<sup>23</sup> "How can man, mortal, subject to passion, and short-lived, be the image of the immortal, pure, and eternal nature?"<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the human race, even as it existed in paradise, is male and female, a distinction utterly foreign to the divine nature of which man is supposedly the image. How is it possible to explain the words of Scripture and the teaching of the Church in the face of this actual condition of mankind?

#### *A Double Creation*

Gregory bases his solution to the problem on an ingenious exegesis of the words of Genesis. He distinguishes two stages in the creation of man, a double creation of our nature, one to express the divine similarity, the other to distinguish the sexes. Holy Scripture says: "God created man to His own image; to the image of God He created him." At this point the creation according to the image is complete. Then, resuming the account of creation, Scripture says: "male and female He created them," thus signifying the addition of sexual differentiation to the image of God.<sup>25</sup>

Gregory confirms this exegesis by pointing to man's position in the realm of being. Man holds a middle position between two extremes, the divine and incorporeal nature on the one hand, and the irrational nature of the brute animal on the other. In man's composite nature is found something of each. Of the divine nature he has the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction into male and female. From irrational nature he has his bodily constitution and his formation as male or female.<sup>26</sup>

God added this differentiation of the human race into sexes because

<sup>23</sup> Gregory is careful to explain that his theory of a double creation is no more than a theory, and is not to be confused with dogmatic truth. *De Hominis Opificio*, 16 (PG XLIV, 185a).

<sup>24</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 16 (PG XLIV, 180b).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 181ab.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 181c.

of His prevision of man's sin. Man's creation as the image of God had given him a position of equality with the angels. Had he maintained that position, the human race would have perpetuated itself by some mysterious angelic mode of reproduction.<sup>27</sup> God, however, seeing the bias toward evil in man's created, and therefore changeable, nature, foresaw man's voluntary fall from rectitude and consequent loss of equality with the angels. God then mingled with His own image the irrational element of sexuality, substituting this inferior mode of propagation to the end that the determined number of human souls might be brought into existence.<sup>28</sup>

Gregory understands this first creation to have been antecedent to the creation of Adam, for "Adam did not yet exist."<sup>29</sup> Then too, since Adam is not named in this first account of creation, Gregory concludes that the "image of God" is predicated of the whole human race, and not limited to a part of the nature. Confirmation of this universality is found in the possession of reason by all men. Our whole nature, extending from the first man to the last, is one image of God, but to the image has been added the note of sexuality.<sup>30</sup>

This first state of man is an ideal state, prior to the formation of Adam and Eve and the primitive state of human existence in paradise. Gregory's theory, however, neither denies that man possessed a body in this ideal state, nor that the image of God is to be found in man even after the addition of sex.<sup>31</sup> We shall see that the first men in paradise, even though male and female, were, in Gregory's opinion, true images

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 (189ab). St. Thomas comments on this opinion of Gregory: "Respondeo dicendum quod quidam antiquorum doctorum, considerantes concupiscentiae foeditatem, quae invenitur in coitu in isto statu, posuerunt quod in statu innocentiae non fuisset generatio per coitum. Unde Gregorius Nyssenus dicit . . . quod in paradiso aliter fuisset multiplicatum genus humanum, sicut multiplicati sunt angeli absque concubitu per operationem divinae virtutis; et dicit quod Deus ante peccatum fecit masculum et feminam, respiciens ad modum generationis qui futurus erat post peccatum, cuius Deus praescius erat. Sed hoc non dicitur rationabiliter. Ea enim quae sunt naturalia homini, neque subtrahuntur, neque dantur homini per peccatum" (*Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 98, a. 2c).

<sup>28</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 17 (PG XLIV, 189cd).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 (204d).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 (185cd).

<sup>31</sup> Krampf understands Gregory to mean that if man had not fallen he would have had a refined, pneumatic body. A. Krampf, *Der Urzustand des Menschen nach der Lehre des hl. Gregor von Nyssa* (Wurzburg, 1889), pp. 15-16.

of God, and that the sexual faculty, which had been added to the image in prevision of the Fall, became operative only after the sin of Adam.

This theory of a double creation may also have been an attempt to solve the problem of evil, for this distinction into sexes brought with it the animal instincts which become passions in man.<sup>32</sup> These passions, which in the brute animals were so many means of self-preservation, tend to divert the divine element in man, his mind, to their service and cause man's defection from the higher good. However, in Gregory's concept of the double creation, it is not simply the will of God, but rather the foreseen sin of man which is the cause of this addition of the wellspring of the passions to the image of God.

It is probable that Gregory simply followed Philo in this theory of a double creation of man. Certainly there is a striking similarity in the two theories.<sup>33</sup> Gregory rejected Origen's theory of the pre-existence of individual souls, because he thought it implied the untenable theory of the transmigration of souls,<sup>34</sup> but sought some form of pre-existence in which the image of God would be neither male nor female. Philo's theory involved no real pre-existence of individual souls, and offered a way out of the difficulty with which Gregory was faced.

#### PARADISE

The story of Adam and Eve as given in Genesis is the source for Gregory's reconstruction of the primitive state of man. He does not hesitate to interpret the words of Genesis allegorically when a literal interpretation would conflict with his conception of the primitive state. Still, he always treats Adam and Eve as historical characters who enjoyed certain gifts before they committed the first sin, and lost those gifts as a result of that sin. Although a primary source, the story of Genesis is, in Gregory's opinion, cryptic, hinting at many things in a few phrases.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, he supplements the account of Genesis by attributing to the primitive state of man those blessings which Scripture says he will enjoy in the resurrection. In justification of this he

<sup>32</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 18 (PG XLIV, 192a).

<sup>33</sup> Compare Gregory's theory with Philo's description of man as the "image of God" in *De Mundi Opificio*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 28 (PG XLIV, 232a).

<sup>35</sup> *De Beatitudinibus*, II (PG XLIV, 1228a).

can offer his opinion that the resurrection is the restoration of our nature's pristine state.<sup>86</sup>

Gregory wrote no treatise on the state of man before the Fall, nor is his complete teaching on the subject to be found in any one of his works. His doctrine on the life of man in paradise must be gathered from references scattered throughout his writings. Frequently enough, as one might expect, it is implied in his enumerations of the evils which were the consequence of the first sin.

The fifth chapter of the *Oratio Catechetica* is a copious source of information about the condition of our first parents. Here Gregory states that God created man out of a superabundance of love and placed him in the midst of good. He implies that God could not have created man in his present fallen state. He refers to men in paradise as the "image of God" and mentions the necessity of immortality in that image.<sup>87</sup> Finally, contrasting our present state with that of man in paradise, he asks: "Where is the divine likeness in the soul? Where is the ἀπάθεια of the body? Where is the eternity of life?"<sup>88</sup>

This contrast is found again in the *De Beatitudinibus*. Here Gregory asks how one can refrain from mourning when he compares our present misery with the happiness of paradise. The high has been brought low; what was made in the celestial image is changed to dust; one created for immortality is corrupted by death; one who lived amidst the delights of paradise has been exiled to this unhealthy region; one accustomed to ἀπάθεια leads a life subject to passion and death; one who was ruler, subject to no master, is now dominated by wrath, fear, sickness, pleasure, and other tyrannical masters.<sup>89</sup>

Adam and Eve were originally endowed with immortality, supernatural life, and ἀπάθεια. Their possession of these gifts will be confirmed when we speak of their loss as a result of the sin of disobedience. Gregory makes no explicit mention of the "supernatural," but he certainly believed the first men to have been endowed with supernatural life.

The friendship of God and possession of supernatural life are im-

<sup>86</sup> *De Anima et Resurrectione*, (PG XLVI, 148a). Cf. *ibid.*, 155b; *Oratio Catechetica*, 8 (PG XLV, 33b, 36d, 37c).

<sup>87</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 5 (PG XLV, 21bcd).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 (24b):

<sup>89</sup> III, (PG XLIV, 1228bcd).



PLICITLY attributed to Adam and Eve when Gregory speaks of man in paradise as the "image of God," since supernatural life is one of the notes of that image. Furthermore, in the resurrection, which is merely the restoration of man's pristine state, man becomes the son of God and "steps out of his own nature."<sup>40</sup> This same sonship of God is a "gift beyond hope, a grace beyond nature."<sup>41</sup> We have not here a merely natural gift, but a supernatural relationship to God. Finally, anticipating Gregory's treatment of Adam's punishment, we find that the sin brought with it a twofold death, that of the body and that of the soul.<sup>42</sup> This death of the soul is separation from the true life. Gregory is not speaking here of a physical death of the soul, for even after the sin of Adam human souls remain physically immortal.<sup>43</sup> Neither does he mean that man lost any of his natural spiritual faculties in the Fall, since man's nature is found complete in the descendants of Adam after his sin.<sup>44</sup> The death of the soul which followed upon the first sin was the deprivation of that same supernatural gift which we are promised in the resurrection, the gift of grace by which we become the sons of God. Adam and Eve possessed that gift before sin brought upon them a "twofold death."

Gregory considered Adam and Eve immune not only from concupiscence, but apparently even from the natural necessities of animal life. This immunity is implied in the gift of *ἀπάθεια*. Again we look to the consequences of Adam's sin to determine the meaning of *ἀπάθεια*.<sup>45</sup> Gregory gives an allegorical interpretation to the "cloaks of skin" with which Adam and Eve were clothed after the Fall. These, he says, represent the likeness to the brute nature with which we were clothed

<sup>40</sup> *De Beatitudinibus*, VII (PG XLIV, 1280c).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1277c.

<sup>42</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 2 (PG XLV, 545ab).

<sup>43</sup> *In Ecclesiasten*, I (PG XLIV, 623a). Cf. *Oratio Catechetica*, 8 (PG XLV, 36b); *In Christi Resurrectionem*, III (PG XLVI, 678ab).

<sup>44</sup> This point is developed when we discuss the effects of original sin.

<sup>45</sup> This immunity from concupiscence and freedom from bodily ills is summed up by *ἀπάθεια* which, therefore, signifies more than freedom from concupiscence. Cf. *In Cantica Canticatorum*, II (PG XLIV, 800c), where *καθαρότης* is said to be the fruit of *ἀπάθεια*. It is only after Adam's sin that *ἀπάθεια* is lost. Krampf, *op. cit.*, p. 93, equates *ἀπάθεια* with the *justitia originalis* of St. Thomas. The word has a far wider meaning for Gregory than the moral indifference which it represented for the Stoics. Cf. Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, under *ἀπάθεια*.

when we became associated with passionate impulses.<sup>46</sup> What the cloaks of skin imply is indicated by the result Gregory assigns to the casting off of these cloaks in the resurrection. At that time we shall cast off all that came with the cloak, namely, "sexual intercourse, conception, birth, impurities, suckling, evacuation, slow growth to full age and power, old age, sickness, and death."<sup>47</sup>

If we consider the life of Adam and Eve in paradise to have been free of all the animal functions mentioned above, it would seem that Gregory conceived this primitive state as one in which man was immune to the natural demands of an animal nature. Adam and Eve were man and woman, since God had differentiated men by sex because of His prevision of man's sin, but the gift of *ἀπάθεια* rendered them immune from carnal desires until sin resulted in the loss of the gift. Gregory did not consider the multiplication of the human race to be a result of Adam's sin, but the mode of generation, a carnal generation which entails man's subjection to an animal mode of existence. When his adversaries claimed that sin had actually been profitable for the human race, since before Adam's sin there had been no marriage, and without the sin there would have been no reproduction, Gregory admits that the desire that tends to procreation was a result of the sin, but postulates an angelic mode of reproduction to ensure the continuance of the race in the hypothesis that man had not sinned.<sup>48</sup>

This interpretation of the primitive state of man seems to be the true doctrine of Gregory. It is in accord with his statement in the *De Virginitate* that man at the moment when he first breathed was destitute of his covering of dead skins and did not yet judge of what was good by taste or sight, but found in God alone all that was sweet, using for this delight only the partner whom God had given him.<sup>49</sup> It is in accord with his allegorical interpretation of the fruits of paradise, the eating of which gives no satisfaction to the appetite, but knowledge and eternity of life.<sup>50</sup> It is in accord with his teaching that

<sup>46</sup> *De Anima et Resurrectione*, (PG XLVI, 148c).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 148c-149a.

<sup>48</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 17 (PG XLIV, 188b-189a).

<sup>49</sup> *De Virginitate*, 5 (PG XLVI, 348c).

<sup>50</sup> *De Beatitudinibus*, III (PG XLIV, 1228a). Cf. *In Cantica Canticorum*, proem. (PG XLIV, 761a).

woman was to have been spared the pains of childbirth,<sup>51</sup> and man was to have been free of anxious toil upon the earth.<sup>52</sup>

In brief, Gregory considered the life of the first men in paradise a primal blessed condition,<sup>53</sup> a kind of angelic life.<sup>54</sup> Adam had a close resemblance to God and a godlike beauty of soul.<sup>55</sup> Adam and Eve possessed animal bodies, but enjoyed a special gift which made them immune from concupiscence, suffering and death. They lived in a garden of delights, and found in God alone all that was sweet. The condition of primitive man was far removed from that of man today.<sup>56</sup>

### *Adam's Sin*

Man as he existed in paradise was a creature more spiritual than material. As the image of God, he was endowed with an intellect and a free will. The purely animal side of his nature, with its animal needs and cravings, was held in restraint by a special gift of God. Man could look upon God with a pure and simple mind. Gregory considered this single-minded contemplation of God to be the end of man's existence, and interpreted God's command to Adam and Eve in the light of this end. What was forbidden under pain of death was any turning of the mind from the pure and simple good, with the consequent evil which is implied in the negation of the good.

Gregory's thought, presented in allegorical form, seems to be that Adam sinned by failing to maintain his single-minded contemplation of God, and by turning his mind from the Creator to creatures. This desertion of the supreme good and adherence to the less good is the evil suggested by the devil.

<sup>51</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 374c).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 (376a).

<sup>53</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 8 (PG XLV, 34c).

<sup>54</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 17 (PG XLIV, 188c).

<sup>55</sup> *De Mortuis*, (PG XLVI, 521d). Cf. *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 369b, 372b).

<sup>56</sup> "On trouve donc, sous les abstractions philosophiques qui caractérisent la manière de saint Grégoire de Nysse, les principaux dons que la tradition chrétienne reconnaît au premier homme . . . C'est dire que, pour inférieur qu'il fût au type idéal de l'humanité selon le plan divin, l'état réel de nos premiers parents n'en était pas moins de tous points favorisé" (A. Slomkowski, *L'État primitif de l'homme dans la tradition de l'Église avant saint Augustin* [Paris, 1928], p. 112).

Although Gregory calls the devil<sup>57</sup> the tempter and the father of sin,<sup>58</sup> he does not absolve Adam from the guilt of the Fall. Faithful to the narrative of Genesis, he speaks of the deception as practised first on Eve, and speaks of her as the first to revolt and the mother of death.<sup>59</sup> But the choice between good and evil fell to Adam.<sup>60</sup> Adam, following the counsel of Eve, sinned freely, and is himself the creator of evil.<sup>61</sup> Surrounded on all sides by the good and the beautiful, he deserted the true good for things which were contrary to his nature in its primitive state.

Thus Gregory, under the influence of a Platonic conception of good and evil, traces the sin of Adam to an error of judgment. Although he should have known the more excellent value of intelligible goods, those proper to a nature related to the divine,<sup>62</sup> Adam thought that the true good consisted in the pleasure of the senses. This, then, is the origin of sin, the choosing of that which in itself is not an evil (for the sensible creature is also from God) in preference to a greater good.

Whatever the value of Gregory's estimate of the nature of Adam's sin, it is clear that he did maintain that Adam sinned. Pleasure, fraudulently proposed, brought about his fall, but his action was a voluntary infraction of the law of God. Adam had been given a free will to enable him to merit a reward, and he used that free will to disobey the command of God.

#### *Adam's Punishment*

As a result of Adam's sin, our first parents lost immortality and were clothed with "cloaks of skin." These are the two penalties emphasized by Gregory of Nyssa, but in these two are contained also the loss of supernatural life and all the pain and suffering which became man's lot after his ejection from paradise.

<sup>57</sup> The angel who had been charged by God with the administration of the earth; the angel who through envy plotted the destruction of man. *Oratio Catechetica*, 6 (PG XLV, 28ab).

<sup>58</sup> *De Vita Moysis*, (PG XLIV, 335b).

<sup>59</sup> *In Cantica Canticatorum*, XIII (PG XLIV, 1053b). Here Gregory contrasts Eve, the mother of death, and Mary, the mother of life. Cf. *Contra Eunomium*, 12 (PG XLV, 892a); *In Christi Resurrectionem*, I (PG XLVI, 625d).

<sup>60</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 372a).

<sup>61</sup> *De Deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, (PG XLVI, 569a).

<sup>62</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 8 (PG XLV, 36ab).

Gregory pays special attention to the sentence of death which was incurred by Adam and Eve. Adam lost the gift of life,<sup>63</sup> and opened the door to death.<sup>64</sup> His sin was the occasion for the "first proclamation of death."<sup>65</sup> Eve is called "the mother of death."<sup>66</sup>

The penalty of death involved, obviously, the corruption of the body, but it also signified the loss of God's friendship, alienation from the true life. The sentence of death is twofold, since "the death of the soul is separation from the true life, the death of the body, corruption and dissolution."<sup>67</sup> In the *Contra Eunomium* we find a description of the penalty of death which emphasized the separation of the soul from God:

It was not the body that was lost, but the whole man. . . . And to speak exactly, the soul perished before the body, for disobedience is not a sin of the body. Choice, which was the beginning of the nature's calamity, belongs to the soul. This the threat of God . . . testifies, proclaiming that on the day on which they would touch the forbidden fruit, death would follow the eating without delay. Since the composition of man is twofold, it was fitting that death should bring about in each part the loss of the twofold life. . . . The death of the body consists in the extinction of the instruments of sense and their return to the elements. But 'the soul,' he said, 'which sins, it shall die.' Sin is an alienation from God, who is the only true life. Therefore, even though the first man lived many hundred years after his disobedience, God did not lie when He said, 'in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.' For, because he was alienated from the true life, on that very day the sentence of death was ratified against him. The bodily death of Adam came afterwards, at a much later time.<sup>68</sup>

This passage is important, not only for its direct testimony about the punishment of Adam, but also for its confirmation of an intimate spiritual union with God in man's primitive state. The rupture of this union is the most immediate and greatest loss which Adam incurred in consequence of his sin.

Although this twofold death is the most important consequence of Adam's sin, the first man lost more than grace and immortality. He

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, (48a).

<sup>64</sup> *In Psalmos*, 8 (PG XLIV, 521a).

<sup>65</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 12 (PG XLV, 892b).

<sup>66</sup> *In Cantica Canticorum*, XIII (PG XLIV, 1054c).

<sup>67</sup> *In Christi Resurrectionem*, I (PG XLVI, 616b). Cf. *Oratio Catechetica*, 8 (PG XLV, 36b).

<sup>68</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 2 (PG XLV, 545ab).

lost his happy life in paradise, his immunity to concupiscence, his immunity to the claims of animal life. Adam and Eve were clothed in "cloaks of skin." We have seen that to Gregory these "cloaks of skin" imply all the animal functions of man. They imply also the loss of the domination of reason over the sensible part of man, and the beginning of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. It was the sin of Adam which brought about a "change for the worse, and loss of equality with the angels."<sup>69</sup> God instituted marriage as an antidote to death.<sup>70</sup> From this animal mode of generation arise all the disturbing passions of mankind.<sup>71</sup> The powers of the soul were affected, since the souls were "made carnal through the society of the passions."<sup>72</sup>

Adam's rational nature was not destroyed, but became carnal. He was not deprived of anything which was integral to his nature, but of gifts which had been superadded to that nature.<sup>73</sup> In short Adam and Eve were punished by the loss of grace and immortality, and by the loss of their exemption from evils of body and soul. Our first parents were cast out of paradise and Adam began a life of "anxious toil upon the earth."

#### FALLEN MAN

It was as clear to Gregory as it is to us that we, who are descended from Adam, share the lot which fell to Adam after his sin of disobedience in paradise. We are mortal; we struggle with concupiscence; and we lead lives far different from the happy life of Adam and Eve in paradise. What we must determine, however, is whether or not Gregory traces the suffering and death of the human race to the first sin of Adam, whether or not there is a real causal connection between Adam's disobedience and the present state of mankind. It is for this reason that we shall emphasize those texts in which a connection is shown between the present plight of the human race and the sin of Adam.

Gregory's description of the present state of mankind as an "exile" is in itself an indication of the dependence of that state upon Adam's sin. In the *De Beatitudinibus*, he contrasts the delights of paradise

<sup>69</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 17 (PG XLIV, 188c).    <sup>70</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 376a).

<sup>71</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 17 (PG XLIV, 192a).    <sup>72</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 8 (PG XLV, 36d).

<sup>73</sup> Reasons for maintaining this opinion will be offered in connection with the effect of Adam's sin upon mankind.

with our present plight and speaks of those delights as the former possession of *us men*. We men once shared the good which passes all understanding. Once we had incorruptibility and happiness, were masters of ourselves, lived without care or trouble, were free of sickness, and could look upon the unveiled good with a pure and open mind.<sup>74</sup> Paradise is our rightful home; the special gifts of the primitive state are our rightful gifts. Except for the sin of our first parents, we would enjoy the benefits of which Adam and Eve were deprived at their fall. In the *De Virginitate* Gregory speaks of "the way by which *we were ejected* from paradise because of the first parents."<sup>75</sup> Thus he traces to the sin of Adam the loss of paradise for all who share human nature.

Gregory brings out this note of exile and loss, and traces it to the sin of our first parents when he says that envy, "having become a serpent against Eve, exiled us from paradise"<sup>76</sup> and caused the substitution of the shameful fig leaves for our holy vesture. We too have the "cloaks of skin" which God bestowed on Adam and Eve after their sin, cloaks which bring with them properties from the nature of beasts, "pleasure, wrath, the vices of taste and the belly, and other things of this kind."<sup>77</sup> However, "if we had remained such as we were created in the beginning, with the image of God shining within us, we would not have needed the cloaks of skin."<sup>78</sup> Now, indeed, "it is as though Adam lived in us, in every individual man, so long as we see these cloaks of skin about our nature . . . also so long as we behold this place of affliction which we are condemned to cultivate."<sup>79</sup> Here we are in a place and condition of exile, for "our first fatherland is in the East . . . the way of life in paradise, from which we were expelled."<sup>80</sup>

These passages show an evident connection between the sin of the first parents and the present condition of the human race. Not Adam alone, but "human nature" suffers what we call the "penal effects" of that first sin. The "cloaks of skin" brought to all the animal mode of generation and all things else implied in an animal mode of life. The release of concupiscence, the failure in the struggle

<sup>74</sup> III, (PG XLIV, 1225d-1228a).

<sup>76</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 373d).

<sup>76</sup> *De Vita Moysis*, (PG XLIV, 409b).

<sup>77</sup> *De Mortuis*, (PG XLVI, 524d).

<sup>78</sup> *De Oratione Dominica*, V (PG XLIV, 1184b).

<sup>79</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 1184c.

with evil, and the prevalence of sin in human lives, all is traced back to the sin of Adam. "The first man on earth, or rather, he who brought forth evil in man . . . introduced the use of evil. . . . The habit of sinning entered the life of men in the manner we have described."<sup>81</sup> "The non-existence in good, having come to the first men, poured out like an evil stream to posterity."<sup>82</sup>

It was this first contact with evil which was responsible for human nature's loss of immunity from suffering, for in the first life of which God was the creator "it is probable that there was neither old age nor infancy . . . nor any bodily affliction . . . but human nature was a thing divine before the human race came into contact with evil."<sup>83</sup>

Gregory's repeated reference to the sentence of death which we have inherited from Adam indicates the importance he attributed to our loss of immortality. When Adam fell, "the angel with the flaming sword was stationed at the gate of paradise to keep men from tasting the tree of life and becoming immortal."<sup>84</sup> The fact of our mortality and our loss of immortality is graphically stated in the *In Cantica Canticum*: "Because death had once mingled with our nature, mortality spread with the very succession of those born. By which it happens that a dead life is given to us . . . for certainly our life is dead, since it is despoiled of immortality."<sup>85</sup>

Thus concupiscence, suffering, and death are traced directly to the sin of Adam. The human race has been exiled, shut out from its home, and deprived of the gifts it would have had were it not for the sin of Adam. Not Adam alone, but "human nature" has been penalized for that first sin. This is nothing but the doctrine of the Fall.

Few will deny the existence of a strong tradition of the Fall in the Church, but many question the existence of a like tradition for the inheritance of a state of sin from Adam, especially in the Greek Church. All too frequently, however, the denial of a pre-Augustinian tradition of original sin is based upon a false or exaggerated notion of the nature of the sin.<sup>86</sup> It may easily be granted that the Fathers of the first

<sup>81</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 372a).      <sup>82</sup> *In Psalmos*, 8 (PG XLIV, 480b).

<sup>83</sup> *De Anima et Resurrectione*, (PG XLVI, 148a).

<sup>84</sup> *In Quadraginta Martyres*, II (PG XLVI, 772a).

<sup>85</sup> *In Cantica Canticum*, XII (PG XLIV, 1021d).

<sup>86</sup> "Ceux qui ne découvrent pas la doctrine du péché originel chez les Pères grecs ou se font de ce péché une idée spéciale, ou sacrifient à un verbalisme étroit qui ne reconnaît pas



four centuries, who were not forced to meet attacks upon the doctrine, did not anticipate later scholastic treatment of original sin, but it does not necessarily follow that they did not know and teach the substance of the doctrine. What we should look for in these Fathers, and what we seek here in Gregory of Nyssa, is substantial agreement with the essential points of the dogma. We shall not find him employing the term "original sin," but we can safely conclude that he held the doctrine if we find it expressed in substance. We will find that substance if we find him teaching what was later taught by the Church in the Council of Trent, namely, that Adam lost not only for himself, but for us also, the holiness and justice which he had received from God, and that being defiled by the sin of disobedience, he transmitted not only death and the pains of the body to the whole human race, but also sin, which is the death of the soul.<sup>87</sup>

### *Death of the Soul*

We have seen in connection with the punishment of Adam that the immediate effect of his sin was the death of his soul, its alienation from God, the true life. The human race inherited this mortality as well as the mortality of the body from Adam. Not Adam alone, but "human nature" suffered a double mortality. Speaking of the immortality which Christ gained for us, Gregory refers to the double mortality which it supplanted: "Since each part was subject to the punishment of death on account of sin (since the death of the soul was separation from the true life, that of the body corruption and dissolution), it was fitting that life from each part should expel death."<sup>88</sup> The same distinction is found in the *Contra Eunomium*, where Gregory asserts that "in an intellectual nature proximity to God is true life; aversion to God and separation from Him is given the name of death; for which reason the devil, prince of evil and author of death, is called death."<sup>89</sup>

Humanity became subject to many things because of the sin of Adam, but for Gregory "this was the principal mark of our calamity,

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la substance du dogme sous la diversité des formules qui la recouvrent" (M. Jugie, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et Sévère d'Antioche* [Paris, 1925], p. 17).

<sup>87</sup> Session V, Canon 2; *DB* 789.

<sup>88</sup> *In Christi Resurrectionem*, I (*PG* XLVI, 616b).

<sup>89</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 8 (*PG* XLV, 797d).

namely, that humanity was disinherited by the good Father."<sup>90</sup> Human nature, and all who share it, lost God's friendship when Adam sinned. Adam's descendants inherited a "sinful nature."

### *Man's Sinful Nature*

Not every reference to the "sinful nature of man" is necessarily an indication that Gregory considered the whole nature to be alienated from God. The expression may sometimes mean merely that man is prone to sin. Frequently, however, the phrase refers to an alienation from God which is common to all men, and not the result of personal sins. Human nature has sinned, and human nature has become sinful. Thus, Gregory seems to refer to a sin of the nature of man, a state of sin common to the whole nature, when he says in the *De Vita Moysis*: "We have received a tradition worthy of credence which tells us that after our nature had lapsed into sin, it was not altogether neglected by God, but an angel was assigned as an aid to each one."<sup>91</sup> Again, he seems to refer to the whole nature of man when he says: "The word of the Apostle testifies that the Lord was made sin because of us, putting on our sinful nature."<sup>92</sup>

When Adam sinned in paradise, human nature sinned. Adam's nature is our nature, and in Adam's sin that human nature became a sinful nature. So closely does Gregory identify the human nature of Adam with our human nature, that he speaks of Adam's gifts as *our* gifts, his ejection from paradise as *our* ejection. Thus we read that, if what the Apostle says is true, human nature, formed by the divine hands, "was whole and immortal in the beginning . . . natural *to us* was a will in accord with the law, both in the avoidance of evil and in the estimation of divine things."<sup>93</sup> Again, criticizing our lack of appreciation and gratitude for the gifts of God, Gregory sums up these benefits as follows:

Who submitted the earth to me? . . . Who subjected the irrational animals to me? Who gave me life and mind when I was inanimate dust? Who molded this dust in the image of the divine form? Who brought that image, distorted in me by sin, back to its original beauty? Who drew me back to the original happiness when

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 (889a).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 336b.

<sup>91</sup> *De Vita Moysis*, (PG XLIV, 337d).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 397ab.

I had been expelled from paradise, deprived of the tree of life, and immersed in material life?<sup>94</sup>

What is this but an identification of our lot with Adam's, our original gifts with his, our loss with his, our restoration to paradise with his?

Our corporate sharing in the sin of Adam is expressed in such passages as, "wandering from the right path in the beginning, we were turned away from life and handed over to death."<sup>95</sup> In some way that sin of Adam was our sin, just as the punishment of Adam is shared by all who have human nature.

Gregory did not believe that all men had merited the wrath of God because of personal sins. In the *De Beatitudinibus*, commenting on "Blessed are they who mourn," he says:

We find many of blameless life . . . for of what avarice was John guilty, or of what idolatry Elias? What small or great defect does history record in the life of these men? . . . Would it not be absurd to exclude these from the divine blessedness merely because they have not sinned. . . ? According to this way of thinking, would it not be better to sin than to live without sin, if the grace of the Consoler is to be given only to penitents?<sup>96</sup>

In spite of this possibility of avoiding personal sins, Gregory taught that all men, whether guilty of personal offenses or not, have inherited an alienation from God together with the nature which they inherited from Adam. He says, echoing the words of St. Paul, that we are "by nature the sons of wrath,"<sup>97</sup> and that the human race was "enslaved by sin and alienated from the true life."<sup>98</sup> Even, says Gregory, if one should be a Moses or a Samuel, or any other of outstanding virtue, he does right to say "forgive us our trespasses," for "inasmuch as he is a man, he believes this prayer suitable for himself, as one who, sharing the nature of Adam, shares also his banishment."<sup>99</sup>

This solidarity of all who share human nature, and this common disinheritance of all men through the sin of Adam, is brought out in a passage of the *Contra Eunomium* in which Gregory traces to the

<sup>94</sup> *De Oratione Dominica*, I (PG XLIV, 1125b). Cf. *Contra Eunomium*, 11 (PG XLV, 860b).

<sup>95</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 24 (PG XLV, 65c).      <sup>96</sup> III (PG XLIV, 1221d-1224a).

<sup>97</sup> *De Perfecta Christiani Forma*, (PG XLVI, 276a).

<sup>98</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 2 (PG XLV, 532d).

<sup>99</sup> *De Oratione Dominica*, V (PG XLIV, 1184d).

snare of the devil and the weed of disobedience sowed by him, the fact that our nature no longer preserved in itself the image of the paternal character, but was transformed into the likeness of the father of sin. It was because our nature had fallen into this calamity that Christ hastened to His erring sheep, our nature, since it was in no way possible for our life, which had been banished from God, to regain by itself its former exalted station.<sup>100</sup>

As we might well expect, Gregory's discussion of the Incarnation throws light on his conception of the state of mankind after, and as a result of, the sin of Adam. Although Gregory did not believe that all men were guilty of personal sins, he did consider the Incarnation to be a necessary means of salvation for all. It was human nature that needed salvation, a nature alienated from God, and therefore sinful.

#### PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

The general purpose of the Incarnation is stated in the *Contra Eunomium*: "Those who are wise and prudent believe that the greatest of our goods is the return to life. This is achieved by the 'economy' of the Lord as man."<sup>101</sup> Christ assumed our nature, became sin for us, destroyed the enmity which we had incurred with God by sin, and rejoined all humanity to God:

. . . and having become what we were, of Himself rejoined humanity to God. For having by purity brought into the closest relationship with the Father of our nature that new man who was created according to God, and in whom dwells the fulness of divinity, He drew with him into the same grace all the nature which shares His body and is related to Him.<sup>102</sup>

Again, the purpose of the Incarnation is the destruction of "death," and the restoration of immortality. We have seen that for Gregory the sentence of death which was passed on man involved not only physical corruption, but also the loss of a life-giving relationship to God. Christ became man to change our "deadness" into "living grace and power":

. . . one of those things which were made by Him is human nature. When this had fallen away to evil, and because of this had fallen into the corruption of death, He, of Himself, drew it back once again to immortal life through the man in whom

<sup>100</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 12 (PG XLV, 889ab).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 900c.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 889b.

He tabernacled Himself, and mingled His life-giving power with the mortal and corruptible nature. He changed our deadness into living grace and power.<sup>103</sup>

Another passage of the *Contra Eunomium* indicates Gregory's belief that all humanity was alienated from God and stood in need of redemption. Human nature is the erring sheep which strayed from the flock: "Human nature, an insignificant part of the flock if compared to the whole, alone . . . separated itself from the hundred rational beings of the flock."<sup>104</sup> So also, the reason Gregory assigns for the "new creation" wrought by Christ indicates his belief in a universal need of redemption. Christ came "for the renewing of the ruined way of man's salvation."<sup>105</sup> There would have been no need of a second creation "if we had not made the first unavailing by our disobedience."<sup>106</sup> Christ, however, came when "the original creation of man had decayed and disappeared."<sup>107</sup> Christ in the new creation leads "all humanity" to the Father from whom all men were estranged. Christ is represented as saying to Mary Magdalen on the morning of the resurrection: "I go of Myself to make the true Father from whom you have separated, your Father, and to make the true God, from whom you have departed, your God, for . . . I lead all humanity in Myself to God and Father."<sup>108</sup>

The human nature which Christ came to save is a nature alienated from God. It is one nature, belonging equally to every man, a nature which was lost in paradise. In his commentary on the Psalms, Gregory speaks of the "living and breathing Word, sent for the salvation of the lost, sent to free from corruption him who was bound to corruption,"<sup>109</sup> and he describes these "lost men" as those who rashly forsook the fixed and sheltered life of paradise. What had been lost was a fixed way of salvation for all men, and it was lost when human nature was alienated from God by Adam's sin.

Not merely individual men, but "mankind" was in need of a deliverer, one who would ransom it from the devil. According to Gregory, when our nature had been brought to the "foul likeness of the father of sin," our relationship to the devil became that of slave

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 (700cd).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 (889b).

<sup>105</sup> *De Fide*, (PG XLV, 137d).

<sup>106</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 4 (PG XLV, 636).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (501a).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 504ab.

<sup>109</sup> *In Psalmos*, 8 (PG XLIV, 473b).

to master.<sup>110</sup> Not part, but all of human nature was held in legal bondage, since "we were all under the power of death,"<sup>111</sup> and the devil is described as "he who had the *imperium mortis*."<sup>112</sup> Christ came as a ransomer.<sup>113</sup> Christ came, too, as shepherd,<sup>114</sup> physician,<sup>115</sup> mediator,<sup>116</sup> redeemer,<sup>117</sup> seeking, healing, ransoming, and reconciling to God the nature which had strayed.

We can say, then, that Gregory believed that Adam's sin made sinful the whole human race, all the men who were to share his nature. It was the nature which was deprived of the special gifts of paradise, the nature which was alienated from God. Human nature, however, lost nothing which was essential to it in the natural order. What it lost was supernatural life and gifts which had been "added" to the nature.

#### HUMAN NATURE INCORRUPT

It must be admitted that certain expressions of Gregory seem to justify the conclusion that he considered human nature in its fallen

<sup>110</sup> Gregory adopted Origen's theory of the "rights of the devil." He taught that man, who had voluntarily fallen into sin, had by this act enslaved himself to the devil. He argued that it would not be just for God to use force to wrest the human race from Satan, for Satan had the same rights over the human race as has a master over the slave for whom he has paid a just price. It would, however, be just to pay whatever price Satan demanded, even if Satan were to deceive himself in the transaction. Satan was willing to accept the death of Christ in exchange for the human race. He snatched at the bait, the human nature of Christ, and was transfixed by the hook of divinity. (*Oratio Catechetica*, 24 [PG XLV, 65a]). This theory of the devil's rights is found not only in Gregory of Nyssa, but to a greater or less extent, and together with more orthodox views of the redemption, in the Eastern and Western Church from the time of Irenaeus to that of St. Thomas. It was left for St. Thomas to indicate clearly that whatever rights the devil might be said to have over men, he has only by God's permission. For a discussion of this theory of the atonement, see J. Rivière, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, trans. L. Cappadelta (London, 1909), vol. II, 111-240. For reference to the "ransom from the devil" in Gregory of Nyssa, cf. *Oratio Catechetica*, 22 (PG XLV, 60-61); *In Christi Resurrectionem*, I (PG XLVI, 608a).

<sup>111</sup> *In Psalmos*, 8 (PG XLIV, 468d).

<sup>112</sup> *In Cantica Canticorum*, VII (PG XLIV, 940a).

<sup>113</sup> *De Anima et Resurrectione*, (PG XLV, 61a).

<sup>114</sup> *Contra Eunomium* 12 (PG XLV, 888d). Cf. 2 (541c); 4 (636a).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 (612cd).

<sup>116</sup> *De Perfecta Christiani Forma*. (PG XLVI, 277c). Cf. *Contra Eunomium*, 2 (PG XLV, 533a).

<sup>117</sup> *In Cantica Canticorum*, XV (PG XLIV, 1108a). Cf. *De Perfecta Christiani Forma* (PG XLVI, 261d).

state to be corrupt and deprived of what is natural to it. Looking only to these expressions, and interpreting them in a narrow, literal sense, as they have been interpreted by some,<sup>118</sup> we would conclude that not only the gifts of immortality and integrity belonged to the nature of man, but even the supernatural gift of similarity to God. He speaks at times as though he considered everything which makes man the "image of God" to belong of right to the nature of man. Thus, he speaks of the primitive condition of man in paradise as "natural" to him. He says that human life is now under "abnormal conditions."<sup>119</sup> He says also that man has fallen from his "natural dignity" and must put off the corrupted image "to return to the primitive and natural state."<sup>120</sup>

That man lost nothing essential to his nature through the sin of Adam, is clear from Gregory's insistence that all men, Adam as well as his progeny, have the same nature and essence, and are to be defined with the same definition. He insists that whatever truly belongs to the nature of man is found in the nature of all. There is no natural difference between Adam and Abel. In spite of the different manner of origin, "we cannot rightly say that Adam generated an essence different from himself, but rather that he generated another self."<sup>121</sup> Gregory says that "one who is rational, mortal, and capable of reason and knowledge is called a man in the case of Adam as in that of Abel, and the fact that Abel entered life through generation

<sup>118</sup> "Tous ces textes ont été pris à la lettre par des théologiens protestants qui, prêtant à l'évêque de Nysse les conceptions de la Réforme, veulent que, d'après lui, l'état du paradis ne fût pas un don spécial et, par suite, que sa perte soit une corruption de la nature humaine" (A. Slomkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 115). Ernest Moeller may be cited as an instance. Referring to Gregory's statement that the devil could not deprive man of his original blessing by force, for "the power of God's blessing was greater than his strength" (*Oratio Catechetica*, 6 [PG XLV, 29bc]), he says: "Hanc . . . aliam esse rem, quam Romanorum donum superadditum, nemo non videt. Homo ab initio erat in communione dei omniumque ejus bonorum, ad quae percipienda creatus et instructus erat. Idque proprium naturae ejus rationalis munus et officium erat, quo externa vis eum nullo modo privare potuit. Sed solus homo ipse simulac sponte ad malum se convertit, necessario se exclusit a gratia divina, quia deum amplius adspicere non voluit. Hac re autem non peculare donum amisit, sed ipsam naturam corruptit." E. Moeller, *Gregorii Nysseni de natura hominis doctrina illustrata et cum Origeniana comparata* (Halis Saxonum, 1854), p. 58, note 5. Krampf, *op. cit.*, answers Moeller on pages 39-40.

<sup>119</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 5 (PG XLV, 24b).

<sup>120</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 372c).

<sup>121</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 3 (PG XLV, 592cd).

and Adam without generation makes no difference in the naming of the nature."<sup>122</sup> Man lost neither reason nor free-will in the Fall. What man lost was what had been added to the nature, the gifts of the primitive state.

Furthermore, there are positive indications of the gratuitous nature of these prerogatives of the first man. Thus, immediately after Gregory has spoken of this primitive state as "natural," he calls it a result of the munificence of God, and urging man to return to this "natural state," admits that "this similarity to the divine is not our work, nor is it attainable by human power. This is the gift of the munificence of God, who bestowed on the nature at its very origin the similarity with Himself."<sup>123</sup> Finally, recalling that man is a creature who "counts for nothing in the universe," Gregory expresses astonishment that he is accepted as a son by the God of all: "What fitting gratitude is there for such a benefit? . . . Man exceeds his nature, the mortal becomes immortal, the perishable becomes imperishable, the ephemeral eternal; in brief, man becomes God."<sup>124</sup>

Thus, man's nature was not corrupted as a result of the Fall, but stripped of what had been superadded. The gratuity of man's elevation to a supernatural state, and the gratuity of whatever gifts man possessed, lost, and will possess again through the merits of Christ, was part of Gregory's teaching. He speaks of man's primitive state as "natural" inasmuch as it is not opposed to his nature, and of man's fallen state as "deformed," because it is opposed to his original state and to his ultimate destiny.<sup>124a</sup> His distinction between the nature of man and the gifts which were added to the nature lacks precision, but he did not think that these gifts were an integral part of the nature of man.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 (1073d).

<sup>123</sup> *De Virginitate*, 12 (PG XLVI, 372c).

<sup>124</sup> *De Beatitudinibus*, VII (PG XLIV, 1280c).

<sup>124a</sup> The same use of the designation "natural" in the sense of "primitive" or "original" is to be found in other early Fathers. For examples of the same use in Tertullian and Basil see Slomkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 64 and 86. Our conclusion that Gregory is not using "natural" of man's primitive state in the sense of "pertaining to the nature" is based on the fact that he finds one nature in all men, in Adam as well as his descendants, includes all under one definition, and characterizes man's original similarity to God as a "gift exceeding nature."



## UNITY OF HUMAN NATURE

All men have the same nature, and all men who are descended from Adam have inherited a "sinful nature." That much is fact, however the transmission of a sinful state be explained. It is probable that the problem of an inherited sinful state was simplified for Gregory by a Platonic or ultra-realistic conception of "human nature." If such was his concept of human nature, the solidarity of all men with Adam and an "original guilt" of nature is a relatively simple problem. In this hypothesis, not Adam alone, but "human nature" as embodied in Adam revolted against God; human nature was shorn of the gifts of paradise; human nature was alienated from God. Adam's sin is, in this hypothesis, truly a sin of nature, and the descendants of Adam are sinners in so far as they possess a nature which has been radically alienated from God.

Gregory's position is indicated in a passage of the *De Communibus Notionibus*, where he thus answers the objection that multiplicity of Persons in God implies a division of essence: "Peter and Paul and Barnabas, as man, are one man, and in this respect, namely, as man, cannot be many. They are called many men through an abuse, and not correctly."<sup>125</sup> Very similar, but even more expressive of his thought, is a passage in the treatise *Quod Non Sint Tres Dii*. Here he asserts that the customary way of speaking of "many men" is incorrect, for this is equivalent to saying "many human natures."<sup>126</sup> Many men share the same nature, but the "man" in all is one: "the nature is one . . . a wholly indivisible unit; it is subject neither to growth nor to diminution, but is and remains essentially one. Even when found in many it keeps its unity, its continuity, its integrity, and is not divided among those who share in it as individuals."<sup>127</sup>

These passages indicate a certain "oneness" of the universal man, an indivisibility and uniqueness in the midst of multiplicity. Do they imply more? Does this "human nature," this universal idea of "man," which is found equally in all and totally in each, so exist in the individual man that it has being in itself, after the manner of the Platonic "ideas"? If so, it forms a true bond between all who share human

<sup>125</sup> *De Communibus Notionibus*, (PG XLV, 180d).

<sup>126</sup> PG XLV, 117d.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 120ab.

nature, a bond in a very strict sense, since all who possess humanity participate in the same real universal idea and are men because the identical reality exists in each.

Gregory's treatment of the creation of man seems to support such a conclusion. We return to his hypothesis of a double creation of man, which he adopted to reconcile the scriptural designation of man as the image of God with the present condition of mankind. He insists, as we have said, on the hypothetical nature of his solution to the problem, but there is no reason to doubt that the philosophical concepts which underlie the solution are acceptable to him.

Gregory says that the general designation of the nature in the phrase "God created man" forces us to some such conclusion as this: "that all humanity is included in the first creation by the divine foreknowledge and power . . . that the whole pleroma of humanity was included in one body, as it were, in the foreknowledge of the God of all."<sup>128</sup> He justifies this interpretation by the fact that Scripture does not give the name of Adam to this first creation, or, as he later expresses it: "therefore the image of God, which is seen in all human nature, was then complete. But Adam did not yet exist."<sup>129</sup> In this creation which preceded the formation of Adam, "man was made in the image of God, that is, the universal nature, the thing like God. Not a part of the whole was made by the omnipotent wisdom, but the whole fulness of the nature."<sup>130</sup>

It is this universal nature which was created by God before the creation of Adam and before the differentiation of men as male and female. It is this universal nature which is the image of God. It does not seem to be a distortion of Gregory's thought to say that he regarded universal human nature as an ideal reality with objective existence, as a real object which was present to the divine intellect.

Gregory's idealism is Christian, since his conception of God as the supreme and unique Creator caused him to portray "human nature" as the object of a divine knowledge which is productive of its content.<sup>131</sup> Not only is it Christian, but it seems more closely allied to the ultra-

<sup>128</sup> *De Hominis Opificio*, 16 (PG XLIV, 185b).   <sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 (204c).   <sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 204d.

<sup>131</sup> For a more complete treatment of Gregory's concept of the "nature of man," confer the article of L. Malevez, "L'Église dans le Christ," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXV (1935), 257 ff. and 408 ff.

realism of the Middle Ages than to what is commonly accepted as Platonism. For Gregory, individual men are men inasmuch as they participate in the universal nature, but the humanity which is found in each man is not merely an image of the universal nature, but the universal nature itself, that unique, indivisible monad which exists undivided in each of the many men who share it.

If Gregory's conception of human nature was such as has been outlined, he must have held that Adam and all of his descendants participate in the same nature, undivided, indivisible, and objectively real. If, as a result of Adam's sin, that human nature was deprived of the special gifts with which it had been adorned in paradise, the descendants of Adam, participating in the nature, would no longer enjoy immunity from concupiscence, suffering, and death. Finally, if, as a result of Adam's sin, human nature was cut off from God and deprived of its supernatural resemblance to the divine nature, all who came to share that nature would be alienated from God and incapable of gaining the divine friendship because of the radical "sinfulness" of human nature.

The possibility of this theory of "human nature" raises a question with regard to the persistence of a state of sinfulness in the nature after the redemption. Does this inherited state of separation from God endure after the Incarnation and redemption, or did Christ so completely achieve the salvation of the human race that men are no longer born sinners? In other words, did Christ in assuming the human nature which is found in all men so divinize that nature that nothing further remains to be done on the part of men? Certainly Gregory speaks of Christ as making "this mortal and corruptible nature immortal and incorruptible,"<sup>122</sup> and says that God's presence was mingled with our nature "in order that by union with divinity our nature might become divine."<sup>123</sup>

#### MAN AFTER THE REDEMPTION

Gregory's insistence on the need of a spiritual regeneration of all men indicates his belief that it still remains necessary for men to apply the fruits of the redemption to themselves to attain their individual sanctification. Although the common nature is a bond of

<sup>122</sup> *De Vita Moysis*, (PG XLIV, 336a).

<sup>123</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 25 (PG XLV, 65d).

union between all the individuals who share human nature, the individuals retain their individuality. Christ did not assume the individuals who share human nature. What has been accomplished immediately in the Incarnation is the potential sanctification of the individual. The individuals of the human species are no longer totally alienated from God in the sense that they are incapable of ever regaining the divine friendship. Christ, coming in contact with all men at the one point which all possess in common, has infused new life into human nature at that point. From this point it must spread to all who share the nature. Gregory compares the divinizing effect of the Incarnation and redemption to the activity of a sense organ, which communicates to the whole body the sense impression which it receives. He says that it was from no other source than the mass of our nature that the flesh came which received God, and which was raised up together with the divinity in the resurrection. Therefore, he continues, just as the activity of one of our sense organs is transmitted to the whole man connected with that part, "thus also, as though all human nature were one living animal, the resurrection of the part passes to the whole, being imparted from the part to the whole because of the continuity and oneness of the nature."<sup>184</sup>

Thus, although Gregory believed that Christ had become all things for us, and had taken on death, curse, and sin to purge our nature from these evils, he did not consider individual redemption complete with the action of Christ and without the cooperation of man. Individuals are only potentially sanctified by the redemption, and the union between Christ and individual men will continue to spread with the sanctification of individuals until the final restoration of all men in God.

#### *Need of Individual Regeneration*

Christ has laid the foundation for the sanctification of all men. However, in order that potential salvation may become actual, it is necessary that a man be regenerated. Gregory reprehends the incredulity of those who refuse to believe "that when the mortal passes into life, the result is that, as the first generation leads to mortal life, another generation is to be found which neither begins nor ends in

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 32 (80b).

corruption, but leads the one generated to immortal life."<sup>135</sup> This mystery of regeneration is accomplished by "prayers to God, the asking of heavenly grace, and water and faith,"<sup>136</sup> an evident reference to the sacrament of baptism. Gregory insists that "a man cannot be in the resurrection without the washing of regeneration."<sup>137</sup>

It is through this regeneration that a man becomes a son of God, united to Christ in the "new man." In Gregory's words: "One who is a man becomes a son of God when he is joined to Christ by spiritual generation . . . a man sheds himself, exchanging the old for the new . . . a man, shedding himself, puts on the divine nature . . . a man, indeed, is made the son of God."<sup>138</sup> The Mystical Body of Christ is formed by the gradual accession of those who are saved, and supposes activity on the part of those who become members of the Body. God "made, as Paul testifies, His Body the Church, and builds it in charity by the accession of those who are saved, until the time when all together will make up the perfect man."<sup>139</sup> Unbelievers are still outside the Body, for "Wisdom and the true Word is generated in the believing. He who is in those who have received Him, is not yet in the non-believing."<sup>140</sup>

For Gregory, the sacrament of baptism was the ordinary means of regeneration. In his commentary on the Canticle of Canticles, he says: "You were buried with me in death through baptism . . . it cannot happen that anyone should have a community of life with me, unless he be changed through the myrrh of death to the incense of divinity."<sup>141</sup> He speaks of the sacrament as our means of regaining the immortality which Adam lost for mankind in paradise: "What do we acquire in holy baptism? Do we not gain a life no longer subject to death? I believe that no one who deserves the name of Christian will deny this."<sup>142</sup> Inviting the catechumens to baptism, he says: "You are outside of paradise, the companion in exile of Adam our first parent. Enter now by the open door through which you departed, and delay not, lest death should intervene and block your entrance."<sup>143</sup> The

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 33 (84ab).

<sup>136</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 35 (92a).

<sup>138</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 3 (PG XLV, 609a).

<sup>139</sup> *In Cantica Canticatorum*, VIII (PG XLIV, 949b).

<sup>140</sup> *Contra Eunomium*, 3 (PG XLV, 585b).

<sup>141</sup> *In Cantica Canticatorum*, VII (PG XLIV, 914c).

<sup>142</sup> *Adversus Macedonianos*, 19 (PG XLV, 1324d). <sup>143</sup> *De Baptismo* (PG XLVI, 417c).

open door is the sacrament, which "regenerates men, and plants them in the paradise of God,"<sup>144</sup> the sacrament in which "casting off our sins like some poor and ragged garment, we are clothed in the holy and fair garment of regeneration."<sup>145</sup>

One of the errors which Gregory condemns in Eunomius is his minimizing of the efficacy of baptism. Baptism is the means Christ uses to rescue mankind from the grasp of the devil, into whose power the human race had fallen through the sin of Adam. In the *In Baptismum Christi*, comparing Jacob to Christ, Laban to the devil, and the water of the well to baptism, Gregory says that "after the institution of baptism, Christ took away all the flock of Satan and became rich Himself."<sup>146</sup> In the same discourse he enumerates the benefits which we receive through baptism, and concludes with words of thanksgiving for this great gift, words which indicate that the sacrament is the instrument for the restoration of man to his original state of friendship with God:

For Thou, Lord, who justly turned away from us and generously had mercy, art truly the pure and eternal font of goodness. You hated and were reconciled. You cursed and You blessed. You banished from paradise and recalled again. You stripped off the leaves of the fig tree, a shameful covering, and clothed us in a precious garment. You opened the prison and released the condemned. You sprinkled with pure water and cleansed from stains . . . No longer . . . shall the fiery sword encircle paradise, making entrance impossible for those who draw near. All is turned to joy for us, the heirs of sin. Paradise and heaven itself lies open to men.<sup>147</sup>

The sacrament is important because it gives life. The life to which Gregory refers must be the life of grace, for he speaks of rational creatures who certainly, even before baptism, enjoy intellectual life. Thus, in the *Adversus Macedonianos*: "If, therefore, life comes in baptism . . . what mean these men who make little of this minister of life? . . . if every precious gift is of less value than life, and by this I mean that exalted and honorable life in which irrational nature does not share, how do they dare to minimize such a gift?"<sup>148</sup>

Although the true life is received in baptism, the sacrament is not a

<sup>144</sup> *In Baptismum Christi* (PG XLVI, 593d).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 593b.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 589c.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 597d-600b.

<sup>148</sup> *Adversus Macedonianos*, 19 (PG XLV, 1325b).

magic rite which dispenses the baptized from further effort in this life. The sins which are committed in this life must be atoned for by punishment in the next. Even one who has received the sacrament of baptism may render himself unworthy of union with God by a sinful life. For such there will be a resurrection to punishment, for "the Mediator of God and men, who through Himself joins the human race to God, joins only that which is worthy of the union."<sup>149</sup> Those who, after baptism, lead a holy life in their regenerated state, need no further cleansing in the life to come. Those who are unbaptized, or at least such of them as are stained with actual sin, must be cleansed in the purifying fire.

Baptism gives life and it cleanses. It is a royal grace which comes "to two oppressed classes, bestowing release on those who are in chains and remittance of debts to the debtors."<sup>150</sup> Gregory, distinguishing between men who do not sin and those who are in sin, urges baptism on even those who lead a good life.<sup>151</sup> Finally, he answers those who say that it is useless to receive baptism unless a sinless life is to follow, by pointing out that in the election of evils it is better to be baptized even though one will sin again, than to die without grace, for sin can be pardoned, but to those who die without grace "salvation is altogether denied, according to a definite opinion."<sup>152</sup> Baptism is a necessary means of salvation, at least for those to whom the reception of the sacrament is possible, for "without the washing of regeneration it is impossible for a man to be in the resurrection."<sup>153</sup>

It seems clear that Gregory taught that the individual must undergo a spiritual regeneration before he can participate in the divine life of which he was made potentially capable by the life and death of Christ. Individual men must become part of the Body of Christ before they can share the divine life. They are incorporated into Christ in baptism, the sacrament of initiation. The state of alienation from God endures in the individual man, even after the redemption, until the moment of reception of spiritual regeneration. This is simply the doctrine of original sin.

Does this grace of a spiritual regeneration come to all men?

<sup>149</sup> *De Perfecta Christiani Forma*, (PG XLVI, 277bc).

<sup>150</sup> *De Baptismo*, (PG XLVI, 417a).      <sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 425c.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 424a.

<sup>153</sup> *Oratio Catechetica*, 35 (PG XLV, 92a).

Gregory's teaching with regard to the eventual salvation of all men would seem to imply this.

*The Apocatastasis*

Although Gregory does, on occasion, speak of an eternal hell,<sup>154</sup> there is little doubt but that he was convinced of the ultimate annihilation of evil, and the eventual union of all men in God. For him, the punishment of hell is medicinal. Fire purges the sinful soul as gold is purged in the furnace, and once the evil is overcome the soul will return to God. That Gregory believed and taught this is too generally admitted to demand detailed proof. It is the teaching of the *De Anima et Resurrectione* and of the *Oratio Catechetica*. In the latter work, Gregory includes even the "inventor of evil" in the ultimate restoration.

Gregory's desire to reject completely the religious dualism of the Manicheans and Neo-Platonists was probably responsible for his adoption of this Origenistic doctrine of the apocatastasis. He insisted overmuch on the disappearance, not only of evil, but of all the effects of evil. The apocatastasis is the fulfillment of the divine plan. Gregory cannot believe that any consequence of sin will last forever. Evil will be finally annihilated, all creatures will be united to God, and harmony will prevail.

It is because this doctrine makes no distinction between the final state of the baptized and the unbaptized that Gregory's teaching with regard to individual salvation has been treated at some length. Gregory's insistence on the need of a spiritual regeneration indicates his belief that the inherited nature is alienated from God, and that the grace of the redemption must be applied to the individual soul before union with God can be attained. Whether this regeneration is achieved only through baptism, or, as seems more probable, either through baptism or some extraordinary means in this life or the next, is a question which affects Gregory's doctrine on the sacrament of baptism, but not necessarily that of original sin. If all stand in need of regeneration, it is because all have inherited a "sinful nature" from Adam.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. *De Pauperibus Amandis*, I (PG XLVI, 461a); II (484a).



*An Objection*

The strongest argument of those who deny that Gregory believed in the doctrine of original sin is taken from the treatise *De Infantibus Qui Praemature Abripiuntur*.<sup>155</sup> In this work Gregory deals with the fate of those children who die before they reach the age of reason, and endeavors to explain God's purpose in removing them so early from this life.

It is commonly assumed by those who find in this treatise a denial of original sin, that Gregory is speaking of unbaptized children. Williams defends this assumption by presuming that no doubt could have arisen in the mind of any primitive Christian about the salvation of baptized infants.<sup>156</sup> We question the validity of the assumption, for Gregory does not seem to be concerned with maintaining the salvation of the infants in question, but with the justice of their reward. The background of the treatise will make this clear.

*De Infantibus Qui Praemature Abripiuntur* was written in response to a question of Hierius, the prefect of Cappadocia. Gregory gives us the question: "If the good are rewarded according to the principles of justice, what will be the condition of one who has died in early childhood and has done neither good nor evil in this life, nothing for which a return according to his deserts might be given him?"<sup>157</sup> Gregory, in his reply, divides mankind into three classes: those who have led virtuous lives and have merited a reward, those who have led evil lives and deserve punishment, and children who have had the opportunity for neither good nor evil. He is primarily concerned with this question of merit, with a just reward for the avoidance of sin

<sup>155</sup> The authenticity of this treatise was once questioned. Tillemont says that "Rivet & d'autres croient que ce traité n'est point de S. Gregoire, ou qu'il a esté extrêmement corrompu par les heretiques. Le Saint estoit vieux lorsqu'il le fit." L. de Tillemont, *Mémoires ecclésiastiques* (Venice, 1732), tom. IX, a. 18, p. 612. The treatise, is, however, genuine, and is listed among the authentic works of Gregory by O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der Alikirchlichen Litteratur* (Freiburg, 1902-32), p. 204.

<sup>156</sup> "That the infants contemplated in this treatise are *unbaptized infants* is not indeed expressly stated, but follows (1) from the presupposition that no doubt could have arisen in the mind of any primitive Christian about the salvation of *baptized* infants, and (2) from the fact that Gregory seems to be almost unconscious of the existence of the custom of infant baptism." N. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (London, 1929), p. 278, note 5.

<sup>157</sup> PG XLVI, 177a.

and a just punishment for its commission. Therefore, he did not necessarily have in mind unbaptized children, nor did Hierius. A primitive Christian might well have asked how even baptized children have merited the same reward as men who have led long and virtuous lives.

In answer to the question of Hierius, Gregory says that future happiness is a heritage of mankind, and also, in a certain sense, a recompense. He illustrates this statement by the example of two men who have diseased eyes. One applies all the recommended remedies, whereas the other uses none. The first regains his sight and the other does not. Only improperly, says Gregory, is this necessary result of their actions called a recompense. Applying the example to the question of infants, he says that the enjoyment of future life belongs of right to a human being. However, the disease of ignorance has infected almost all who live in the flesh.<sup>158</sup> The man who has cured himself of this ignorance by means of the necessary treatment receives his due reward by entering upon a life which is truly natural. One who refuses to lead the more difficult virtuous life enslaves himself to ignorance and makes his cure difficult. He is in an unnatural state and is estranged from the truly natural life. He has no share of the life which is congenial to man and belongs to him of right.<sup>159</sup>

At this point in his argument we find the text which is frequently cited as a denial of original sin:

But the child inexperienced in evil, the eyes of whose soul are not prevented by disease from the sharing of the light, continues to exist in that natural life, not needing the health which comes through purification, since not even in the beginning has it admitted the plague into its soul.<sup>160</sup>

Gregory goes on to say that men who have made progress in virtue

<sup>158</sup> This "disease of ignorance" seems to be a preference for the pleasures of the senses to the superior life of virtue. If so, it would seem that Gregory is here speaking of actual sin, and is declaring that retribution in the next life will be in proportion to a man's success in resisting the lure of the temptations of this life. If this be the case, there is here no question of original sin.

<sup>159</sup> *De Infantibus Qui Praemature Abripiuntur* (PG XLVI, 177bcd).

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 177d. The importance attributed to this passage is indicated by the fact that it alone is offered by Gaudel to support his conclusion that Gregory of Nyssa does not seem to have taught that we have inherited the sin of Adam. A. Gaudel, "Péché originel," *DTC*, XII (1933), col. 349.

will enjoy the riches of the future life according to the capacity for enjoyment which they have acquired by their practice of virtue in this life, whereas the child who has never "tasted" virtue will partake of the future life (the knowledge of God) according to its very limited capacity. However, through its contemplation of God it will gradually increase this capacity and continue to grow in that life as its capacity grows. The soul of such a child will not immediately enjoy the same degree of reward as the virtuous soul, but it is equally exempt from those punishments which are reserved for the wicked.<sup>161</sup>

Evidently none of this offers difficulty if Gregory is speaking of baptized children. We might wonder that in a treatise of this nature Gregory does not make some reference to the necessity and efficacy of the sacrament of baptism, but that omission can perhaps be explained by the fact that he was sending the treatise to Hierius, a well-informed theologian, who had asked, not about the salvation of children, but about the justice of their reward.

Even granting the assumption that the children in question are unbaptized, does it necessarily follow that Gregory is here denying the doctrine of original sin? Not, we think, if we keep in mind his doctrine of the apocatastasis. This doctrine would necessarily involve some alternative to baptism, some extraordinary way to the application of the grace of Christ to those who die without the sacrament. No provision is made for either an eternal hell or an eternal limbo. All will eventually be united to God through incorporation in the Mystical Body of Christ. It is obvious that some die without the sacrament of baptism. Gregory must have envisaged some extraordinary application of the saving grace of Christ for these.

In summary, this argument is based on the assumption that Gregory is writing of unbaptized children, an assumption which is not necessarily valid. Granting the assumption, Gregory, even though he believed in the doctrine of original sin, would have been led to speak as he did by his Origenistic theory of the apocatastasis.

#### CONCLUSION

Gregory of Nyssa's explicit teaching on the sin of Adam and the fall of man shows a close agreement with what was later taught by the

<sup>161</sup> *De Infantibus Qui Praemature Abripiuntur* (PG XLVI, 180).

Council of Trent. His treatment of the problem of individual salvation and his insistence on the necessity of an application of the merits of Christ to individual men, implies substantial agreement with the teaching of the Council about an inherited state of sinfulness in every child who is descended from Adam.

The Council of Trent taught that Adam, when he transgressed the commandment of God in paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted, and was changed for the worse in body and soul.<sup>162</sup> Gregory's doctrine agrees with this. He believed that Adam was originally endowed with a complete human nature to which God had added special gifts. The first men enjoyed supernatural life, and were immune to suffering, concupiscence, and death. Gregory believed that Adam had been given a command, and that God had threatened him with death should he disobey the command. He taught that Adam, deceived by the devil, sinned; that in punishment for his sin he was deprived of the special gifts which had been given to him. Adam lost holiness and justice, since he was not only exiled from paradise and made subject to concupiscence, suffering, and death, but was also alienated from God, the true life, and lost his supernatural likeness to the divine. Thus, Gregory's teaching on the sin of Adam and its consequences for our first parents is in close agreement with the doctrine of the Council of Trent.

With regard to the fall of man, Gregory is clearly in accord with the doctrine of the Church. The Council of Trent teaches that the transgression of Adam injured not Adam alone, but also his posterity; that Adam lost, not for himself alone, but for us also, the holiness and justice which he had received from God; and that he transmitted not only death and the pains of the body to the whole human race, but sin also, which is the death of the soul.<sup>163</sup> All this is found in Gregory of Nyssa. We have seen that he speaks of our present state of life as an "exile," and of paradise as our fatherland. By Adam's sin we were deprived of the gifts which he enjoyed in paradise, and which would have been ours were it not for that sin. Human nature was not destroyed by the sin of Adam, nor did it become corrupt, but the whole human race lost immortality and immunity from concupis

<sup>162</sup> Session V, Canon 1 (*DB* 788).

<sup>163</sup> Session V, Canon 2 (*DB* 789).

cence and suffering. Gregory traces not only death and the pains of the body to Adam's sin, but also a radical alienation of human nature from God, a transformation of the "image of God" into a "sinful nature." Finally, Gregory is in complete agreement with the statement of the Council of Trent to the effect that this sin of men is not taken away either by the forces of nature or by any remedy other than the merits of the one Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>164</sup> Gregory states explicitly that humanity was unable of itself to regain the friendship of God, and that the restoration of this union with God was the purpose of the Incarnation.

Thus far, Gregory of Nyssa is explicitly and unequivocally in accord with the teaching of the Council. Had he insisted explicitly on the necessity of baptism for infants, there would have been no reason to question his belief in the complete Catholic doctrine of original sin. In the absence of positive teaching on the necessity of the sacrament for infants, can we say with any certainty that Gregory believed what the Council of Trent later taught, namely, that even infants who are unable to commit personal sins are to be baptized for the remission of sins; and that what they contracted by generation is washed away by regeneration?<sup>165</sup> In other words, can we say that Gregory believed that children who are born after the redemption inherit original sin?

To answer this question, we have turned to Gregory's positive doctrine on the means of individual salvation. We have shown that he did not believe that all men were sanctified in the Incarnation and redemption, but that he did believe that a spiritual regeneration must precede individual sanctification. He taught that men must be regenerated and incorporated in the Body of Christ before they can be united to God. This necessity of a regeneration supposes the insufficiency of natural generation for the attainment of man's supernatural end. It supposes that men still inherit from Adam a state of alienation from God, that they are born with original sin.

In conclusion, we do not maintain that Gregory would have worded his doctrine in the words of the Council of Trent. Neither do we maintain that he consciously drew the conclusions which we have drawn from his writings. It may well be that he had not thought the

<sup>164</sup> Session V, Canon 3 (*DB* 790).

<sup>165</sup> Session V, Canon 4 (*DB* 791).

problem through, and that his Origenistic doctrine of the apocatastasis obscured his realization of the true necessity of baptism. He was not forced to clarify his own idea of original sin, since no adversaries had as yet arisen to challenge the doctrine.

What we do find in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa is an explanation of the sin of Adam and the fall of man which agrees closely with what was later defined by the Church, and an insistence on the necessity of a spiritual regeneration of all men which implies a belief in the existence of a state of inherited sinfulness in every child of Adam. Far from denying the doctrine of original sin, Gregory showed his substantial agreement with it in all of his varied writings.