

0329-0390 – Gregorius Nazianzenus – De filio orat 29

Oration XXIX

On the son

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creation—I mean the entire system of things visible and invisible—shall we pass the first veil, and stepping beyond the realm of sense, shall we look into the Holy Place, the Intellectual and Celestial creation? But not even this can we see in an incorporeal way, though it is incorporeal, since it is called—or is—Fire and Spirit. For He is said to make His Angels spirits, and His Ministers a flame of fire³⁵⁰⁶...though perhaps this “making” means preserving by that Word by which they came into existence. The Angel then is called spirit and fire; Spirit, as being a creature of the intellectual sphere; Fire, as being of a purifying nature; for I know that the same names belong to the First Nature. But, relatively to us at least, we must reckon the Angelic Nature incorporeal, or at any rate as nearly so as possible. Do you see how we get dizzy over this subject, and cannot advance to any point, unless it be as far as this, that we know there are Angels and Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Princedoms, Powers, Splendours, Ascents, Intelligent Powers or Intelligencies, pure natures and unalloyed, immovable to evil, or scarcely movable; ever circling in chorus round the First Cause (or how should we sing their praises?) illuminated thence with the purest Illumination, or one in one degree and one in another, proportionally to their nature and rank...so conformed to beauty and moulded that they become secondary Lights, and can enlighten others by the overflowings and largesses of the First Light? Ministrants of God’s Will, strong with both inborn and imparted strength, traversing all space, readily present to all at any place through their zeal for ministry and the agility of their nature...different individuals of them embracing different parts of the world, or appointed over different districts of the Universe, as He knoweth who ordered and distributed it all. Combining all things in one, solely with a view to the consent of the Creator of all things; Hymners of the Majesty of the Godhead, eternally contemplating the Eternal Glory, not that God may thereby gain an increase of glory, for nothing can be added to that which is full—to Him, who supplies good to all outside Himself but that there may never be a cessation of blessings to these first natures after God. If we have told these things as they deserve, it is by the grace of the Trinity, and of the one Godhead in Three Persons; but if less perfectly than we have desired, yet even so our discourse has gained its purpose. For this is what we were labouring to shew, that even the secondary natures surpass the power of our intellect; much more then the First and (for I fear to say merely That which is above all), the only Nature.



301

Oration XXIX.

The Third Theological Oration.

On the Son.

I. THIS then is what might be said to cut short our opponents' readiness to argue and their hastiness with its consequent insecurity in all matters, but above all in those discussions which relate to God. But since to rebuke others is a matter of no difficulty whatever, but a very easy thing, which any one who likes can do; whereas to substitute one's own belief for theirs is the part of a pious and intelligent man; let us, relying on the Holy Ghost, Who among them is dishonoured, but among us is adored, bring forth to the light our own conceptions about the Godhead, whatever these may be, like some noble and timely birth. Not that I have at other times been silent; for on this subject alone I am full of youthful strength and daring; but the fact is that under present circumstances I am even more bold to declare the truth, that I may not (to use the words of Scripture) by drawing back fall into the condemnation of being displeasing to God.³⁵⁰⁷ And since every discourse is of a twofold nature, the one part establishing one's own, and the other overthrowing one's opponents' position; let us first of all state our own position, and then try to controvert that of our opponents;—and both as briefly as possible, so that our arguments may be taken in at a glance (like those of the elementary treatises which they have devised to deceive simple or foolish persons), and that our thoughts may not be scattered by reason of the length of the discourse, like water which is not contained in a channel, but flows to waste over the open land.

II. The three most ancient opinions concerning God are Anarchia, Polyarchia, and Monarchia. The first two are the sport of the children of Hellas, and may they continue to be so. For Anarchy is a thing without order; and the Rule of Many is factious, and thus anarchical, and thus disorderly. For both these tend to the same thing, namely disorder; and this to dissolution, for disorder is the first step to dissolution.

But Monarchy is that which we hold in honour. It is, however, a Monarchy that is not limited to one Person, for it is possible for Unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality;³⁵⁰⁸ but one which is made of an equality of Nature and a Union of mind, and an identity of motion, and a convergence of its elements to unity—a thing which is impossible to the created nature—so that though numerically distinct there is no severance of Essence. Therefore Unity³⁵⁰⁹ having from all eternity arrived by motion at Duality, found its rest in Trinity. This is what we mean by Father and Son and Holy Ghost. The Father is the Begetter and the Emitter;³⁵¹⁰ without

³⁵⁰⁷ Heb. ii. 4; x. 38.

³⁵⁰⁸ Billius and others here read Authority, which is not supported by the best MSS., or by the context.

³⁵⁰⁹ Elias explains this to mean that of old men knew only One Person in the Godhead: and until the Incarnation this knowledge was sufficient; but from that time forward they acknowledged a Second Person, and through Him a Third also, the Holy Ghost. But this explanation falls far short of Gregory's meaning, which certainly is that the movement of self-consciousness in God from all Eternity made the Generation of the Son, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost, a necessity. All is objective in God. cf. Petav. de Deo, II., viii., 16; also, Greg. Naz., Or. xxiii. 5.

³⁵¹⁰ προβολεὺς-προβολή was a term used by the Gnostics to describe the Emanations by which the distance between the Finite and the Infinite was according to them bridged over; and on this account it fell under suspicion, and was rejected by both Arius

passion of course, and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner. The Son is the Begotten, and the Holy Ghost the Emission; for I know not how this could be expressed in terms altogether excluding visible things. For we shall not venture to speak of “an overflow of goodness,” as one of the Greek Philosophers dared to say, as if it were a bowl overflowing, and this in plain words in his Discourse on the First and Second Causes.³⁵¹¹ Let us not ever look on this Generation as involuntary, like some natural overflow, hard to be retained, and by no means befitting our conception of Deity. Therefore let us confine ourselves within our limits, and speak of the Unbegotten and the Begotten and That which proceeds from the Father, as somewhere God the Word Himself saith.

III. When did these come into being? They are above all “When.” But, if I am to speak with something more of boldness,—when the Father did. And when did the Father come into being. There never was a time when He was not. And the same thing is true of the Son and the Holy Ghost. Ask me again, and again I will answer you, When was the Son begotten? When the Father was not begotten. And when did the Holy Ghost proceed? When the Son was, not proceeding but, begotten—beyond the sphere of time, and above the grasp of reason; although we cannot set forth that which is above time, if we avoid as we desire any expression which conveys the idea of time. For such expressions as “when” and “before” and “after” and “from the beginning” are not timeless, however much we may force them; unless indeed we were to take the Æon, that interval which is coextensive with the eternal things, and is not divided or measured by any motion, or by the revolution of the sun, as time is measured.

How then are They not alike unoriginate, if They are coeternal? Because They are from Him, though not after Him. For that which is unoriginate is eternal, but that which is eternal is not necessarily unoriginate, so long as it may be referred to the Father as its origin. Therefore in respect of Cause They are not unoriginate; but it is evident that the Cause is not necessarily prior to its effects, for the sun is not prior to its light. And yet They are in some sense unoriginate, in respect of time, even though you would scare simple minds with your quibbles, for the Sources of Time are not subject to time.

IV. But how can this generation be passionless? In that it is incorporeal. For if corporeal generation involves passion, incorporeal generation excludes it. And I will ask of you in turn, How is He God if He is created? For that which is created is not God. I refrain from reminding you that here too is passion if we take the creation in a bodily sense, as time, desire, imagination, thought, hope, pain, risk, failure, success, all of which and more than all find a place in the creature, as is

and Athanasius. Tertullian used it with an explanation which is satisfactory as regards the *προβολή* of the Son; but when he comes to apply it to the Procession of the Holy Ghost he uses an illustration which is in almost the very words rejected by Gregory (c. Prax., 7, 8. See Swete, p. 56). Origen did not admit it. Later when this danger was past, the word came into use again as the equivalent of *ἐκπόρευσις*, at first with reserve and explanations in the text, but later on as an accepted term. See Swete, “On The Doctrine Of The Holy Spirit,” p. 36.

³⁵¹¹ The expression is from Plato.

evident to every one. Nay, I marvel that you do not venture so far as to conceive of marriages and times of pregnancy, and dangers of miscarriage, as if the Father could not have begotten at all if He had not begotten thus; or again, that you did not count up the modes of generation of birds and beasts and fishes, and bring under some one of them the Divine and Ineffable Generation, or even eliminate the Son out of your new hypothesis. And you cannot even see this, that as His Generation according to the flesh differs from all others (for where among men do you know of a Virgin Mother?), so does He differ also in His spiritual Generation; or rather He, Whose Existence is not the same as ours, differs from us also in His Generation.

V. Who then is that Father Who had no beginning? One Whose very Existence had no beginning; for one whose existence had a beginning must also have begun to be a Father. He did not then become a Father after He began to be, for His being had no beginning. And He is Father in the absolute sense, for He is not also Son; just as the Son is Son in the absolute sense, because He is not also Father. These names do not belong to us in the absolute sense, because we are both, and not one more than the other; and we are of both, and not of one only; and so we are divided, and by degrees become men, and perhaps not even men, and such as we did not desire, leaving and being left, so that only the relations remain, without the underlying facts.³⁵¹²

But, the objector says, the very form of the expression “He begat” and “He was begotten,” brings in the idea of a beginning of generation. But what if you do not use this expression, but say, “He had been begotten from the beginning” so as readily to evade your far-fetched and time-loving objections? Will you bring Scripture against us, as if we were forging something contrary to Scripture and to the truth? Why, every one knows that in practice we very often find tenses interchanged when time is spoken of; and especially is this the custom of Holy Scripture, not only in respect of the past tense, and of the present; but even of the future, as for instance “Why did the heathen rage?”³⁵¹³ when they had not yet raged and “they shall cross over the river on foot,”³⁵¹⁴ where the meaning is they did cross over. It would be a long task to reckon up all the expressions of this kind which students have noticed.

VI. So much for this point. What is their next objection, how full of contentiousness and impudence? He, they say, either voluntarily begat the Son, or else involuntarily. Next, as they think, they bind us on both sides with cords; these however are not strong, but very weak. For, they say, if it was involuntarily He was under the sway of some one, and who exercised this sway? And how is He, over whom it is exercised, God? But if voluntarily, the Son is a Son of Will; how then is He of the Father?—and they thus invent a new sort of Mother for him,—the Will,—in place of the Father. There is one good point which they may allege about this argument of theirs; namely, that they desert Passion, and take refuge in Will. For Will is not Passion.

³⁵¹² Elias explains this to refer to the fact that children leave and are left by parents; or else to the death of either one or the other.

³⁵¹³ Ps. ii. 1.

³⁵¹⁴ Ps. lxvi. 6.



Secondly, let us look at the strength of their argument. And it were best to wrestle with them at first at close quarters. You yourself, who so recklessly assert whatever takes your fancy; were you begotten voluntarily or involuntarily by your father? If involuntarily, then he was under some tyrant's sway (O terrible violence!) and who was the tyrant? You will hardly say it was nature,—for nature is tolerant of chastity. If it was voluntarily, then by a few syllables your father is done away with, for you are shewn to be the son of Will, and not of your father. But I pass to the relation between God and the creature, and I put your own question to your own wisdom. Did God *create* all things voluntarily or under compulsion? If under compulsion, here also is the tyranny, and one who played the tyrant; if voluntarily, the creatures also are deprived of their God, and you before the rest, who invent such arguments and tricks of logic. For a partition is set up between the Creator and the creatures in the shape of Will. And yet I think that the Person who wills is distinct from the Act of willing; He who begets from the Act of begetting; the Speaker from the speech, or else we are all very stupid. On the one side we have the mover, and on the other that which is, so to speak, the motion. Thus the thing willed is not the child of will, for it does not always result therefrom; nor is that which is begotten the child of generation, nor that which is heard the child of speech, but of the Person who willed, or begat, or spoke. But the things of God are beyond all this, for with Him perhaps the Will to beget is generation, and there is no intermediate action (if we may accept this altogether, and not rather consider generation superior to will).

VII. Will you then let me play a little upon this word Father, for your example encourages me to be so bold? The Father is God either willingly or unwillingly; and how will you escape from your own excessive acuteness? If willingly, when did He begin to will? It could not have been before He began to be, for there was nothing prior to Him. Or is one part of Him Will and another the object of Will? If so, He is divisible. So the question arises, as the result of your argument, whether He Himself is not the Child of Will. And if unwillingly, what compelled Him to exist, and how is He God if He was compelled—and that to nothing less than to be God? How then was He begotten, says my opponent. How was He created, if as you say, He was created? For this is a part of the same difficulty. Perhaps you would say, By Will and Word. You have not yet solved the whole difficulty; for it yet remains for you to shew how Will and Word gained the power of action. For man was not created in this way.

VIII. How then was He begotten? This Generation would have been no great thing, if you could have comprehended it who have no real knowledge even of your own generation, or at least who comprehend very little of it, and of that little you are ashamed to speak; and then do you think you know the whole? You will have to undergo much labour before you discover the laws of composition, formation, manifestation, and the bond whereby soul is united to body,—mind to soul, and reason to mind; and movement, increase, assimilation of food, sense, memory, recollection, and all the rest of the parts of which you are compounded; and which of them belongs to the soul and body together, and which to each independently of the other, and which is received from each other. For those parts whose maturity comes later, yet received their laws at the time of conception. Tell me what these laws are? And do not even then venture to speculate on the Generation of God;

for that would be unsafe. For even if you knew all about your own, yet you do not by any means know about God's. And if you do not understand your own, how can you know about God's? For in proportion as God is harder to trace out than man, so is the heavenly Generation harder to comprehend than your own. But if you assert that because you cannot comprehend it, therefore He cannot have been begotten, it will be time for you to strike out many existing things which you cannot comprehend; and first of all God Himself. For you cannot say what He is, even if you are very reckless, and excessively proud of your intelligence. First, cast away your notions of flow and divisions and sections, and your conceptions of immaterial as if it were material birth, and then you may perhaps worthily conceive of the Divine Generation. How was He begotten?—I repeat the question in indignation. The Begetting of God must be honoured by silence. It is a great thing for you to learn that He was begotten. But the manner of His generation we will not admit that even Angels can conceive, much less you. Shall I tell you how it was? It was in a manner known to the Father Who begat, and to the Son Who was begotten. Anything more than this is hidden by a cloud, and escapes your dim sight.

IX. Well, but the Father begat a Son who either was or was not in existence.³⁵¹⁵ What utter nonsense! This is a question which applies to you or me, who on the one hand were in existence, as for instance Levi in the loins of Abraham;³⁵¹⁶ and on the other hand came into existence; and so in some sense we are partly of what existed, and partly of what was nonexistent; whereas the contrary is the case with the original matter, which was certainly created out of what was non-existent, notwithstanding that some pretend that it is unbegotten. But in this case "to be begotten," even from the beginning, is concurrent with "to be." On what then will you base this captious question? For what is older than that which is from the beginning, if we may place there the previous existence or non-existence of the Son? In either case we destroy its claim to be the Beginning. Or perhaps you will say, if we were to ask you whether the Father was of existent or non-existent substance, that he is twofold, partly pre-existing, partly existing; or that His case is the same with that of the Son; that is, that He was created out of non-existing matter, because of your ridiculous questions and your houses of sand, which cannot stand against the merest ripple.

I do not admit either solution, and I declare that your question contains an absurdity, and not a difficulty to answer. If however you think, in accordance with your dialectic assumptions, that one or other of these alternatives must necessarily be true in every case, let me ask you one little question: Is time in time, or is it not in time? If it is contained in time, then in what time, and what is it but that time, and how does it contain it? But if it is not contained in time, what is that surpassing wisdom which can conceive of a time which is timeless? Now, in regard to this expression, "I am now telling a lie," admit one of these alternatives, either that it is true, or that it is a falsehood, without qualification (for we cannot admit that it is both). But this cannot be. For necessarily he either is lying, and so is telling the truth, or else he is telling the truth, and so is lying. What wonder

³⁵¹⁵ This is the Arian dilemma, "Did the Son exist before he was begotten?"

³⁵¹⁶ Heb. vii. 10.

is it then that, as in this case contraries are true, so in that case they should both be untrue, and so your clever puzzle prove mere foolishness? Solve me one more riddle. Were you present at your own generation, and are you now present to yourself, or is neither the case? If you were and are present, who were you, and with whom are you present? And how did your single self become thus both subject and object? But if neither of the above is the case, how did you get separated from yourself, and what is the cause of this disjoining? But, you will say, it is stupid to make a fuss about the question whether or no a single individual is present to himself; for the expression is not used of oneself but of others. Well, you may be certain that it is even more stupid to discuss the question whether That which was begotten from the beginning existed before its generation or not. For such a question arises only as to matter divisible by time.

X. But they say, The Unbegotten and the Begotten are not the same; and if this is so, neither is the Son the same as the Father. It is clear, without saying so, that this line of argument manifestly excludes either the Son or the Father from the Godhead. For if to be Unbegotten is the Essence of God, to be begotten is not that Essence; if the opposite is the case, the Unbegotten is excluded. What argument can contradict this? Choose then whichever blasphemy you prefer, my good inventor of a new theology, if indeed you are anxious at all costs to embrace a blasphemy. In the next place, in what sense do you assert that the Unbegotten and the Begotten are not the same? If you mean that the Uncreated and the created are not the same, I agree with you; for certainly the Unoriginate and the created are not of the same nature. But if you say that He That begat and That which is begotten are not the same, the statement is inaccurate. For it is in fact a necessary truth that they are the same. For the nature of the relation of Father to Child is this, that the offspring is of the same nature with the parent. Or we may argue thus again. What do you mean by Unbegotten and Begotten, for if you mean the simple fact of being unbegotten or begotten, these are not the same; but if you mean Those to Whom these terms apply, how are They not the same? For example, Wisdom and Unwisdom are not the same in themselves, but yet both are attributes of man, who is the same; and they mark not a difference of essence, but one external to the essence.³⁵¹⁷ Are immortality and innocence and immutability also the essence of God? If so God has many essences and not one; or Deity is a compound of these. For He cannot be all these without composition, if they be essences.

XI. They do not however assert this, for these qualities are common also to other beings. But God's Essence is that which belongs to God alone, and is proper to Him. But they, who consider matter and form to be unbegotten, would not allow that to be unbegotten is the property of God alone (for we must cast away even further the darkness of the Manichæans).³⁵¹⁸ But suppose that it is the property of God alone. What of Adam? Was he not alone the direct creature of God? Yes, you will say. Was he then the only human being? By no means. And why, but because humanity

305

³⁵¹⁷ cf. Petavius De Trin., V. ii., 2.

³⁵¹⁸ The Manichæans, who believed in two eternal principles of good and evil, light and darkness, held that darkness too was unbegotten (Elias).

does not consist in direct creation? For that which is begotten is also human. Just so neither is He Who is Unbegotten alone God, though He alone is Father. But grant that He Who is Begotten is God; for He is of God, as you must allow, even though you cling to your Unbegotten. Then how do you describe the Essence of God? Not by declaring what it is, but by rejecting what it is not. For your word signifies that He is not begotten; it does not present to you what is the real nature or condition of that which has no generation. What then *is* the Essence of God? It is for your infatuation to define this, since you are so anxious about His Generation too; but to us it will be a very great thing, if ever, even in the future, we learn this, when this darkness and dulness is done away for us, as He has promised Who cannot lie. This then may be the thought and hope of those who are purifying themselves with a view to this. Thus much we for our part will be bold to say, that if it is a great thing for the Father to be Unoriginate, it is no less a thing for the Son to have been Begotten of such a Father. For not only would He share the glory of the Unoriginate, since he is of the Unoriginate, but he has the added glory of His Generation, a thing so great and august in the eyes of all those who are not altogether grovelling and material in mind.

XII. But, they say, if the Son is the Same as the Father in respect of Essence, then if the Father is unbegotten, the Son must be so likewise. Quite so—if the Essence of God consists in being unbegotten; and so He would be a strange mixture, begottenly unbegotten. If, however, the difference is outside the Essence, how can you be so certain in speaking of this? Are you also your father's father, so as in no respect to fall short of your father, since you are the same with him in essence? Is it not evident that our enquiry into the Nature of the Essence of God, if we make it, will leave Personality absolutely unaffected? But that Unbegotten is not a synonym of God is proved thus. If it were so, it would be necessary that since God is a relative term, Unbegotten should be so likewise; or that since Unbegotten is an absolute term, so must God be...God of no one. For words which are absolutely identical are similarly applied. But the word Unbegotten is not used relatively. For to what is it relative? And of what things is God the God? Why, of all things. How then can God and Unbegotten be identical terms? And again, since Begotten and Unbegotten are contradictories, like possession and deprivation, it would follow that contradictory essences would co-exist, which is impossible.³⁵¹⁹ Or again, since possessions are prior to deprivations, and the latter are destructive of the former, not only must the Essence of the Son be prior to that of the Father, but it must be destroyed by the Father, on your hypothesis.

XIII. What now remains of their invincible arguments? Perhaps the last they will take refuge in is this. If God has never ceased to beget, the Generation is imperfect; and when will He cease? But if He has ceased, then He must have begun. Thus again these carnal minds bring forward carnal arguments. Whether He is eternally begotten or not, I do not yet say, until I have looked into the statement, "Before all the hills He begetteth Me,"³⁵²⁰ more accurately. But I cannot see the necessity of their conclusion. For if, as they say, everything that is to come to an end had also a beginning,

³⁵¹⁹ Because "Son" implies "begotten." But (ex hyp.) "Unbegotten" is synonymous with "God."

³⁵²⁰ Prov. viii. 25.

then surely that which has no end had no beginning. What then will they decide concerning the soul, or the Angelic nature? If it had a beginning, it will also have an end; and if it has no end, it is evident that according to them it had no beginning. But the truth is that it had a beginning, and will never have an end. Their assertion, then, that which will have an end had also a beginning, is untrue. Our position, however, is, that as in the case of a horse, or an ox, or a man, the same definition applies to all the individuals of the same species, and whatever shares the definition has also a right to the Name; so in the very same way there is One Essence of God, and One Nature, and One Name; although in accordance with a distinction in our thoughts we use distinct Names and that whatever is properly called by this Name really is God; and what He is in Nature, That He is truly called—if at least we are to hold that Truth is a matter not of names but of realities. But our opponents, as if they were afraid of leaving any stone unturned to subvert the Truth, acknowledge indeed that the Son is God when they are compelled to do so by arguments³⁵²¹ and evidences; but they only mean that He is God in an ambiguous sense, and that He only shares the Name.

306

XIV. And when we advance this objection against them, “What do you mean to say then? That the Son is not properly God, just as a picture of an animal is not properly an animal? And if not properly God, in what sense is He God at all?” They reply, Why should not these terms be ambiguous, and in both cases be used in a proper sense? And they will give us such instances as the land-dog and the dogfish; where the word Dog is ambiguous, and yet in both cases is properly used, for there is such a species among the ambiguously named, or any other case in which the same appellative is used for two things of different nature. But, my good friend, in this case, when you include two natures under the same name, you do not assert that either is better than the other, or that the one is prior and the other posterior, or that one is in a greater degree and the other in a lesser that which is predicated of them both, for there is no connecting link which forces this necessity upon them. One is not a dog more than the other, and one less so; either the dogfish more than the land-dog, or the land-dog than the dogfish. Why should they be, or on what principle? But the community of name is here between things of equal value, though of different nature. But in the case of which we are speaking, you couple the Name of God with adorable Majesty, and make It surpass every essence and nature (an attribute of God alone), and then you ascribe this Name to the Father, while you deprive the Son of it, and make Him subject to the Father, and give Him only a secondary honour and worship; and even if in words you bestow on Him one which is Equal, yet in practice you cut off His Deity, and pass malignantly from a use of the same Name implying an exact equality, to one which connects things which are not equal. And so the pictured and the living man are in your mouth an apter illustration of the relations of Deity than the dogs which I instanced. Or else you must concede to both an equal dignity of nature as well as a common name—even though you introduced these natures into your argument as different; and thus you destroy the analogy of your dogs, which you invented as an instance of inequality. For what is the

³⁵²¹ The Benedictines here translate λόγῳ by “Scripture,” on the ground that Reason is not competent to assert the Divinity of the Word.

force of your instance of ambiguity, if those whom you distinguish are not equal in honour? For it was not to prove an equality but an inequality that you took refuge in your dogs. How could anybody be more clearly convicted of fighting both against his own arguments, and against the Deity?

XV. And if, when we admit that in respect of being the Cause the Father is greater than the Son, they should assume the premiss that He is the Cause by Nature, and then deduce the conclusion that He is greater by Nature also, it is difficult to say whether they mislead most themselves or those with whom they are arguing. For it does not absolutely follow that all that is predicated of a class can also be predicated of all the individuals composing it; for the different particulars may belong to different individuals. For what hinders me, if I assume the same premiss, namely, that the Father is greater by Nature, and then add this other, Yet not by nature in every respect greater nor yet Father—from concluding, Therefore the Greater is not in every respect greater, nor the Father in every respect Father? Or, if you prefer it, let us put it in this way: God is an Essence: But an Essence is not in every case God; and draw the conclusion for yourself—Therefore God is not in every case God. I think the fallacy here is the arguing from a conditioned to an unconditioned use of a term,³⁵²² to use the technical expression of the logicians. For while we assign this word Greater to His Nature viewed as a Cause, they infer it of His Nature viewed in itself. It is just as if when we said that such a one was a dead man they were to infer simply that he was a Man.

XVI. How shall we pass over the following point, which is no less amazing than the rest? Father, they say, is a name either of an essence or of an Action, thinking to bind us down on both sides. If we say that it is a name of an essence, they will say that we agree with them that the Son is of another Essence, since there is but one Essence of God, and this, according to them, is preoccupied by the Father. On the other hand, if we say that it is the name of an Action, we shall be supposed to acknowledge plainly that the Son is created and not begotten. For where there is an Agent there must also be an Effect. And they will say they wonder how that which is made can be identical with That which made it. I should myself have been frightened with your distinction, if it had been necessary to accept one or other of the alternatives, and not rather put both aside, and state a third and truer one, namely, that Father is not a name either of an essence or of an action, most clever sirs. But it is the name of the Relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father. For as with us these names make known a genuine and intimate relation, so, in the case before us too, they denote an identity of nature between Him That is begotten and Him That begets. But let us concede to you that Father is a name of essence, it will still bring in the idea of Son, and will not make it of a different nature, according to common ideas and the force of these names. Let it be, if it so please you, the name of an action; you will not defeat us in this way either. The Homoousion would be indeed the result of this action, or otherwise the conception of an action in this matter would be absurd. You see then how, even though you try to fight unfairly,

307

³⁵²² Or as the schoolmen say the fallacy is, *A dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter*, one of the many forms of Undistributed Middle Term. Petavius, however (*De Trin.* II., v., 12), pronounces the argument of this section unsatisfactory.

we avoid your sophistries. But now, since we have ascertained how invincible you are in your arguments and sophistries, let us look at your strength in the Oracles of God, if perchance you may choose to persuade us out of them.

XVII. For we have learnt to believe in and to teach the Deity of the Son from their great and lofty utterances. And what utterances are these? These: God—The Word—He That Was In The Beginning and With The Beginning, and The Beginning. “In the Beginning was The Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,”³⁵²³ and “With Thee is the Beginning,”³⁵²⁴ and “He who calleth her The Beginning from generations.”³⁵²⁵ Then the Son is Only-begotten: The only “begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, it says, He hath declared Him.”³⁵²⁶ The Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” and “I am the Light of the World.”³⁵²⁷ Wisdom and Power, “Christ, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.”³⁵²⁸ The Effulgence, the Impress, the Image, the Seal; “Who being the Effulgence of His glory and the Impress of His Essence,”³⁵²⁹ and “the Image of His Goodness,”³⁵³⁰ and “Him hath God the Father sealed.”³⁵³¹ Lord, King, He That Is, The Almighty. “The Lord rained down fire from the Lord;”³⁵³² and “A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom;”³⁵³³ and “Which is and was and is to come, the Almighty”³⁵³⁴—all which are clearly spoken of the Son, with all the other passages of the same force, none of which is an afterthought, or added later to the Son or the Spirit, any more than to the Father Himself. For Their Perfection is not affected by additions. There never was a time when He was without the Word, or when He was not the Father, or when He was not true, or not wise, or not powerful, or devoid of life, or of splendour, or of goodness.

But in opposition to all these, do you reckon up for me the expressions which make for your ignorant arrogance, such as “My God and your God,”³⁵³⁵ or greater, or created, or made, or

³⁵²³ John i. 1.

³⁵²⁴ Ps. cx. 3.

³⁵²⁵ Isa. xli. 4.

³⁵²⁶ John i. 18.

³⁵²⁷ John vii. 12; ix. 5; xiv. 6.

³⁵²⁸ 1 Cor. i. 24.

³⁵²⁹ Heb. i. 3 R.V.

³⁵³⁰ Wisd. vii. 26.

³⁵³¹ John vi. 27.

³⁵³² Gen. xix. 24.

³⁵³³ Ps. xlv. 6.

³⁵³⁴ Rev. i. 8.

³⁵³⁵ John xx. 17, 28.

sanctified,³⁵³⁶ Add, if you like, Servant³⁵³⁷ and Obedient³⁵³⁸ and Gave³⁵³⁹ and Learnt,³⁵⁴⁰ and was commanded,³⁵⁴¹ was sent,³⁵⁴² can do nothing of Himself, either say, or judge, or give, or will.³⁵⁴³ And further these,—His ignorance,³⁵⁴⁴ subjection,³⁵⁴⁵ prayer,³⁵⁴⁶ asking,³⁵⁴⁷ increase,³⁵⁴⁸ being made perfect.³⁵⁴⁹ And if you like even more humble than these; such as speak of His sleeping,³⁵⁵⁰ hungering,³⁵⁵¹ being in an agony,³⁵⁵² and fearing;³⁵⁵³ or perhaps you would make even His Cross and Death a matter of reproach to Him. His Resurrection and Ascension I fancy you will leave to me, for in these is found something to support *our* position. A good many other things too you might pick up, if you desire to put together that equivocal and intruded god of yours, Who to us is True God, and equal to the Father. For every one of these points, taken separately, may very easily, if we go through them one by one, be explained to you in the most reverent sense, and the stumbling-block of the letter be cleaned away—that is, if your stumbling at it be honest, and not wilfully malicious. To give you the explanation in one sentence. What is lofty you are to apply to the Godhead, and to that Nature in Him which is superior to sufferings and incorporeal; but all that is lowly to the composite condition³⁵⁵⁴ of Him who for your sakes made Himself of no reputation and was Incarnate—yes, for it is no worse thing to say, was made Man, and afterwards was also exalted. The result will be that you will abandon these carnal and grovelling doctrines, and learn to be more sublime, and to ascend with His Godhead, and you will not remain permanently among

308

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- 3536 Prov. viii. 22; John x. 36; Acts ii. 36.
 3537 Phil. ii. 7.
 3538 Phil. ii. 8.
 3539 John i. 12.
 3540 Heb. v. 8.
 3541 John x. 18; xiv. 31.
 3542 Ib. iv. 34; v. 23, sq.
 3543 Ib. v. 19, 30.
 3544 Mark xiii. 32.
 3545 1 Cor. xv. 28.
 3546 Luke vi. 12.
 3547 John xiv. 16.
 3548 Luke ii. 52.
 3549 Heb. v. 9, etc.
 3550 Matt. viii. 24; Mark iv. 38.
 3551 Matt. iv. 2; Luke iv. 2.
 3552 Luke xxii. 44.
 3553 Heb. v. 7.
 3554 S. Gregory often speaks of Human Nature as *our composite being*; and here he means the Sacred Humanity exclusively; there is no shadow of suspicion of Nestorianism or Eutychianism attaching to his name.

the things of sight, but will rise up with Him into the world of thought, and come to know which passages refer to His Nature, and which to His assumption of Human Nature.³⁵⁵⁵

XIX. For He Whom you now treat with contempt was once above you. He Who is now Man was once the Uncompounded. What He was He continued to be; what He was not He took to Himself.³⁵⁵⁶ In the beginning He was, uncaused; for what is the Cause of God? But afterwards for a cause He was born. And that cause was that you might be saved, who insult Him and despise His Godhead, because of this, that He took upon Him your denser nature, having converse with Flesh by means of Mind.³⁵⁵⁷ While His inferior Nature, the Humanity, became God, because it was united to God, and became One Person³⁵⁵⁸ because the Higher Nature prevailed in order that I too might be made God so far as He is made Man.³⁵⁵⁹ He was born—but He had been begotten: He was born of a woman—but she was a Virgin. The first is human, the second Divine. In His Human

³⁵⁵⁵ The word οἰκονομία is used in four principal senses: (a) The ministry of the Gospel, cf. Ephes. iii. 2; Col. i. 25; etc., and S. Cyril Hieros., has the expression “Economy of the Mystery” (Cat. xxv.). It is also used absolutely by S. Chrysostom and others. (b) The Providence of God, as by Epiphanius, Greg. Nyss., and others. (c) The Incarnation, as in the text, without any epithet—in which use it is opposed to ἡ θεότης. Sometimes however epithets are added. (d) The whole Mystery of Redemption, including the Passion.

³⁵⁵⁶ cf. S. Leo, Serm. xxi., De Nativ. Dei, c. ii. “Remaining what He was, and putting on what He was not, He united the true form of a servant to that form in which He was equal to God the Father, and combined both natures in a union so close that the lower was not consumed by receiving glory, nor the higher lessened by assuming lowliness.

³⁵⁵⁷ “Mediante anima,” cf. Orat. xxxviii., 13. S. T. Aq., Summa, III., vi. Jungmann, de Verbo Incarn., c. 68. Forbes, On Nicene Creed, p. 188. Petav. de Incarn, IV., xiii., 2.

³⁵⁵⁸ γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ὁ κάτω θεός. The passage is one of great difficulty. Elias Cretensis renders the words as follows:—“Becoming Man, the inferior God, because humanity was” etc.; but his rendering is rejected as impossible by Petavius (de Incarn., IV., ix., 2, 3). (i.) It is grammatically possible (Madvig, Gk. Syntax, 9 a. rem. 3) for ὁ κάτω, standing as it does, to qualify ἄνθρωπος. (ii.) But the καὶ γενόμενος ...θεός may be taken as a nom. absolute, which would have been expressed by a gen. if ἄνθρωπος had not been the same Person as ὁμιλήσας.

³⁵⁵⁹ As by the Incarnation He who was God was made perfect Man, so Man was made perfect God, and each nature retained its own qualities. Or it may mean that God Incarnate was made Man in respect of body, soul, and mind; that is, in all points: and the Humanity which He assumed was in all these points Deified; and therefore they who are His kindred and imitators share to that extent the Deification (Elias). In the First Epistle to Cledonius (v. infra) the Priest, against Apollinarius, which is sometimes reckoned as the 51st Oration, S. Gregory says, “The Godhead and the Manhood are two natures, just as soul and body are. But there are not two Sons or two Gods; although Paul did thus entangle the outward man and the inward. And, to speak succinctly, the Natures which make our Saviour are distinct, for the Invisible is not the same as the visible, nor the Timeless as that which is subject to time; but He is not two Persons, God forbid, for both these are one in the union, God being made Man, and Man being made God, or however else you may express it.” And upon this S. Thomas Aquinas remarks that it is true, if by Man you understand simply Human Nature, and not a Human Person; in this sense it was brought to pass that Man was God; or in other words Human Nature was made that of the Son of God. (Summa, III., xvi., 7.)

nature He had no Father, but also in His Divine Nature no Mother.³⁵⁶⁰ Both these³⁵⁶¹ belong to Godhead. He dwelt in the womb—but He was recognized by the Prophet,³⁵⁶² himself still in the womb, leaping before the Word, for Whose sake He came into being. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes³⁵⁶³—but He took off the swathing bands of the grave by His rising again. He was laid in a manger—but He was glorified by Angels, and proclaimed by a star, and worshipped by the Magi. Why are you offended by that which is presented to your sight, because you will not look at that which is presented to your mind? He was driven into exile into Egypt—but He drove away the Egyptian idols.³⁵⁶⁴ He had no form nor comeliness in the eyes of the Jews³⁵⁶⁵—but to David He is fairer than the children of men.³⁵⁶⁶ And on the Mountain He was bright as the lightning, and became more luminous than the sun,³⁵⁶⁷ initiating us into the mystery of the future.

XX. He was baptized as Man—but He remitted sins as God³⁵⁶⁸—not because He needed purificatory rites Himself, but that He might sanctify the element of water. He was tempted as Man, but He conquered as God; yea, He bids us be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world.³⁵⁶⁹ He hungered—but He fed thousands;³⁵⁷⁰ yea, He is the Bread that giveth life, and That is of heaven.

³⁵⁶⁰ “If any does not admit Mary to be the Mother of God (θεοτόκον), he is separated from God. If any say that He passed through the Virgin as through a conduit, and that He was not formed in her both divinely and humanly (divinely, because without a human father; humanly, because in accordance with the laws of gestation), he is in like manner atheistic. If any assert that the Humanity was thus formed, and the Deity subsequently added, he is condemned; for this is not a generation of God, but an evasion of generation” (S. G. N. ad Cled., Ep. i.) S. Thomas Aquinas explains the fitness of the title thus: The Blessed Virgin could be denied to be the Mother of God only if either His Humanity had been conceived and born before That Man was the Son of God:—which was the position taken up by Photinus; or else if the Humanity had not been assumed into the unity of the Person (or Hypostasis) of the Son of God;—which was the position of Nestorius. Both these positions are erroneous. Therefore to deny that the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God is heretical (Summa, III., xxxv. 4). In the text S. Gregory merely means that the Godhead of our Lord was not derived from His Blessed Mother, just as his Manhood was not derived from any man; but, as the extract at the beginning of this Note shews, he would be the last to take up the Nestorian notion, which was afterwards condemned at the Council of Ephesus.

³⁵⁶¹ Both These, i.e., the being without Father, and without Mother is a condition which belongs only to the Godhead.

³⁵⁶² S. John the Baptist (S. Luke i.).

³⁵⁶³ Luke ii. 41.

³⁵⁶⁴ Referring, perhaps, to the tradition that at the coming of Christ into Egypt all the Idols in the land fell down and were broken.

³⁵⁶⁵ Isa. liiii. 2.

³⁵⁶⁶ Ps. xlv. 2.

³⁵⁶⁷ Matt. xvii. 2.

³⁵⁶⁸ Matt. iii. 13; ix. 6.

³⁵⁶⁹ John xvi. 33.

³⁵⁷⁰ Ib. vi. 10.

309

He thirsted—but He cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.³⁵⁷¹ Yea, He promised that fountains should flow from them that believe. He was wearied, but He is the Rest of them that are weary and heavy laden.³⁵⁷² He was heavy with sleep, but He walked lightly over the sea.³⁵⁷³ He rebuked the winds, He made Peter light as he began to sink.³⁵⁷⁴ He pays tribute, but it is out of a fish;³⁵⁷⁵ yea, He is the King of those who demanded it.³⁵⁷⁶ He is called a Samaritan and a demoniac;³⁵⁷⁷—but He saves him that came down from Jerusalem and fell among thieves;³⁵⁷⁸ the demons acknowledge Him, and He drives out demons and sinks in the sea legions of foul spirits,³⁵⁷⁹ and sees the Prince of the demons falling like lightning.³⁵⁸⁰ He is stoned, but is not taken. He prays, but He hears prayer. He weeps, but He causes tears to cease. He asks where Lazarus was laid, for He was Man; but He raises Lazarus, for He was God.³⁵⁸¹ He is sold, and very cheap, for it is only for thirty pieces of silver;³⁵⁸² but He redeems the world, and that at a great price, for the Price was His own blood.³⁵⁸³ As a sheep He is led to the slaughter,³⁵⁸⁴ but He is the Shepherd of Israel, and now of the whole world also. As a Lamb He is silent, yet He is the Word, and is proclaimed by the Voice of one crying in the wilderness.³⁵⁸⁵ He is bruised and wounded, but He healeth every disease and every infirmity.³⁵⁸⁶ He is lifted up and nailed to the Tree, but by the Tree of Life He restoreth us; yea, He saveth even the Robber crucified with Him;³⁵⁸⁷ yea, He wrapped the visible world in darkness. He is given vinegar to drink mingled with gall. Who? He who turned the water into wine³⁵⁸⁸, who is the destroyer of the bitter taste, who is Sweetness and altogether desire.³⁵⁸⁹

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- 3571 Ib. vii. 37.
 3572 Matt. xi. 28.
 3573 Ib. viii. 24.
 3574 Ib. xiv. 25, 30.
 3575 Ib. xvii. 24.
 3576 John xix. 19.
 3577 Ib. viii. 48.
 3578 Luke x. 30, etc.
 3579 Luke viii. 28–33.
 3580 Ib. x. 18.
 3581 John xi. 43.
 3582 Matt. xxvi. 15.
 3583 1 Pet. i. 19.
 3584 Isa. liii. 7.
 3585 John i. 23.
 3586 Isa. liii. 23.
 3587 Luke xxiii. 43.
 3588 John ii. 1–11.
 3589 Cant. v. 16.

He lays down His life, but He has power to take it again;³⁵⁹⁰ and the veil is rent, for the mysterious doors of Heaven are opened; the rocks are cleft, the dead arise.³⁵⁹¹ He dies, but He gives life, and by His death destroys death. He is buried, but He rises again; He goes down into Hell, but He brings up the souls; He ascends to Heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead, and to put to the test such words as yours. If the one give you a starting point for your error, let the others put an end to it.

XXI. This, then, is our reply to those who would puzzle us; not given willingly indeed (for light talk and contradictions of words are not agreeable to the faithful, and one Adversary is enough for us), but of necessity, for the sake of our assailants (for medicines exist because of diseases), that they may be led to see that they are not all-wise nor invincible in those superfluous arguments which make void the Gospel. For when we leave off believing, and protect ourselves by mere strength of argument, and destroy the claim which the Spirit has upon our faith by questionings, and then our argument is not strong enough for the importance of the subject (and this must necessarily be the case, since it is put in motion by an organ of so little power as is our mind), what is the result? The weakness of the argument appears to belong to the mystery, and thus elegance of language makes void the Cross, as Paul also thought.³⁵⁹² For faith is that which completes our argument. But may He who proclaimeth unions and looseth those that are bound, and who putteth into our minds to solve the knots of their unnatural dogmas, if it may be, change these men and make them faithful instead of rhetoricians, Christians instead of that which they now are called. This indeed we entreat and beg for Christ's sake. Be ye reconciled to God,³⁵⁹³ and quench not the Spirit;³⁵⁹⁴ or rather, may Christ be reconciled to you, and may the Spirit enlighten you, though so late. But if you are too fond of your quarrel, we at any rate will hold fast to the Trinity, and by the Trinity may we be saved, remaining pure and without offence, until the more perfect shewing forth of that which we desire, in Him, Christ our Lord, to Whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

Oration XXX.

The Fourth Theological Oration, Which is the Second Concerning the Son.

³⁵⁹⁰ John x. 18.
³⁵⁹¹ Matt. xxvii. 51.
³⁵⁹² 1 Cor. i. 17.
³⁵⁹³ 2 Cor. v. 20.
³⁵⁹⁴ 1 Thess. v. 19.