

Gregory of Nyssa's Infinite Progress:
A challenge for an integrated theology

by

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Greek Fathers

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One of the greatest challenges to a theologian is to take all of the education in philosophy and exegesis and the finer details of theology and convert them into a digestible and useful form for the church. It is one thing to make arguments to defend the full deity of Christ or the coeternality of the three persons of the godhead, but it is quite another to offer those insights back to a congregation of hungry souls ready to worship God. As we study the history of the church we are met with many great thinkers and leaders. And yet, despite their greatness they found ways to formulate their arguments to speak to their own age, to the people of their time. Those great men and women who we still read today were so inspired and so successful in their pursuit that their arguments and ideas have transcended time and still have the power to speak to the heart and mind of the diligent student today. They saw their fight as one that was not only against false ideas and poor thinking but as a fight for the very heart and soul of the church. As such, we find even their most rigorous works littered with praise for the greatness of God as well as encouragement for those who continue to fight the good fight, those whose lives are devoted to that straight and narrow way laid out for us by Christ and his apostles. In this they are shining examples to us today of what an integrated theology can look like; a theology that is not cut off from the spirituality of the writer or the listeners but one that speaks to every part of our being; a theology inspired by Christ himself who took on the fullness of our humility in order that he might redeem every part of us. In these paragons of theological purity we find more than the truth. We find eloquence, rationality, anger, partiality, rigor, and sincerity; in short, we see the fullness of our humanity expressed in their ruminations on the divine nature, the divine life, and the union with that profound and immeasurable goodness that every godly soul seeks. Each of us as theologians should strive to match the fullness of humanity they express while ever reaching along with them to surpass the merely mortal to that incorruptible and ineffable divine nature that is held out to all who would be called Christian, sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Christ.

As a prime example I hold out to you Gregory of Nyssa. He is the paradigm of an integrated

theology, a theology that has as much to say to the heretic as it does to the devoted believer. While he does have polemical writings his ideas are never solely polemic, for he always has his mystical and spiritual theology percolating in the background. In this paper I will be looking at his doctrine of God's infinite nature in order to show that Gregory had a knack for taking even the most weighty theological and philosophical concepts and applying them significantly to the spiritual life of the believer.

The Infinite God

One of Gregory's most innovative and philosophically challenging concepts was the idea that God is infinite. This was a challenge to the philosophy of his day for the works of Plato taught that infinity was a flaw and consequently could not be attributed to the perfect divine nature. Gregory, in challenge to this, declared that it was in fact God's status as the creator and his goodness that demand that we see his essential nature as infinite. While scholars are divided over whether this idea was truly original to Gregory or was an extrapolation from the works of Philo (of whom Gregory was quite familiar), all agree that no one contributed as much to idea that God in his essence is infinite as Gregory.¹

In *Against Eunomius* Gregory fully develops his ideas about God's infinite nature. In this work Gregory defends the Nicean faith against the neo-Arian idea that the Father and Son were different in their essence. Eunomius develops this idea in a variety of ways that are each handled in turn by Gregory. It is when Eunomius claims that the being of God the Father alone is proper and supreme that Gregory begins to describe the infinite nature of God. When pressed about what this superiority of being is, Eunomius admits that it is not a superiority of “power, or of goodness, or of anything of that kind.”² Gregory uses this open door provided by Eunomius to explore the infinite nature of the Son's goodness. He argues that if the Son is perfect in goodness then his goodness is found to be without limit. “Good, as long as it is incapable of its opposite, has no bounds to its goodness: its opposite alone

1 Albert-Kees Geljon “Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria.” See especially p 177.

2 Gregory of Nyssa *Against Eunomius* 1.15. Originally translated for the Nicean and Post-Nicean Fathers Series II Volume 5, Edited by Philip Schaff. Accessed at <http://ccel.org>.

can circumscribe it.”³ In this Gregory finds a principle for defining what is limitless; that is, anything can only be limited by its opposite. Strength is without limit unless it is hemmed in by weakness. Life is without limit unless it is stopped by death. As Gregory concludes, “every good is checked by its opposite, and by that alone.”⁴ If a quality is found without its opposite, as goodness is found in Christ and the Holy Spirit without evil, that quality is found to be without limit. So Gregory summarizes his argument plainly. “But if the Divine and unalterable nature is incapable of degeneracy, as even our foes allow, we must regard it as absolutely unlimited in its goodness: and the unlimited is the same as the infinite.”⁵ That which is not constrained on any side by its opposite is without limit, and that which is without limit is infinite – by definition. Consequently, the goodness of the Son and the Spirit is infinite.

Gregory's aim here is to show that the being of all the members of the godhead are infinite in goodness (and power and life) without distinction. God in his nature is singular, simple, without opposite.⁶ It cannot degrade overtime and cannot change or lose its perfection, as even Eunomius admits. In light of this, how can someone compare one infinite goodness in the Son to another infinite goodness in the Father and say that one is lesser and the other greater? Can one infinite good be lesser than another infinite good? Of course not. In this way Gregory challenges the teaching of Eunomius that the Father and the Son are both perfect in goodness and yet the Father is superior to the Son.

In another section in the same work Gregory reflects on God's infinite nature as it is related to time. As a good Arian, Eunomius argues that the Son arrived on the scene at a time later than the Father. In response Gregory relies on the absolute distinction of creator and created passed onto him church fathers like Athanasius. In this case, the distinction between the creator and the created is that time is a construct that is useful when speaking of created things, but cannot be applied to the creator. In his own words,

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 This argument is taken up in *Against Eunomius 1.19*. Accessed at <http://ccel.org>.

The creation, as we have said, comes into existence according to a sequence of order, and is commensurate with the duration of the ages... But the world above creation, being removed from all conception of distance, eludes all sequence of time... there is nothing by which we can measure the divine and blessed Life. It is not in time, but time flows from it; whereas the creation, starting from a manifest beginning, journeys onward to its proper end through spaces of time.⁷

His point for Eunomius is this: Before creation there was no time for time has not bounds for those who are above creation. So how is it that Eunomius could say that there was a *time* when the Author of life did not exist. Time itself was not a construct until after creation. The principles of time and order simple cannot apply in a pre-creation phase of existence. If Christ is before creation, as the Arians admit, then he must be co-eternal with the Father. To be eternal is to be infinite, above time, its source and master, the one who hems time in, not the one constrained by it.

In these passages Gregory developed his concept of the infinite nature of God's essence. He is infinite in goodness, power, and beyond all descriptions of time. These passages are certainly polemical, and he makes good use of this innovative doctrine in his battle with the neo-Arians. Not allowing his success in this realm to allow him to cast this doctrine aside, Gregory takes it one step further and uses it as the foundation for his teaching on spirituality, as we will see.

The Creator - Created Distinction

Before we move on to a discussion of Gregory's mystical teachings we must delve into a few interrelated doctrines. In the first section I already made note of Gregory's adherence to the creator - created distinction which was a prevalent framework in his day. In this framework it is understood that certain things are inherently true about God because he is not a created being that are inherently true of us as created beings. The effects of this doctrine are far reaching, but the salient point here is that as created beings humans are inherently mutable, subject to change. This is in contrast to God, the uncreated, who in his very nature is unchanging. This is a direct consequence of our coming into being from nothing.

⁷ *Against Eunomius 1.26.*

Uncreated nature is incapable of movement in the sense of mutability, change or variation. But everything that depends on creation for its existence has a natural tendency to change, since the very existence of the creation began with change, when non-being was changed by divine power into being.”⁸

It took a change for us to move from non-existence to existence; consequently this changeability is fundamental to our being.

A corollary to our mutability is that we are in a constant state of flux. As human creatures we never remain the same but are always moving from our current state to becoming better or worse. “For it is impossible for our human nature ever to stop moving; it has been made by our Creator ever to keep changing.”⁹ The contrast to the nature of God couldn't be more striking here. God, in his nature is simple, unmixed, and static. Man as a creature is in a constant state of flux between good and evil. Whether we change to become good or evil is a function of our free will. “We are in some manner our own parents, giving birth to ourselves by our own free choice in accordance with whatever we wish to be...”¹⁰ So it is our mutability and our freedom that has allows us to slip into evil but also to aspire to good.

In light of this Gregory, in contrast to his platonic surroundings, sees our mutability as an asset and not merely a liability.

Now the most beautiful effect of change is growth in the good since a change to things more divine is always remaking the man being changed for the better. Therefore, what seems fearful (I mean our mutable nature) can serve as a wing for flight to better things...¹¹

For the Greek mind mutability is seen as a deficiency while perfection is seen as unchanging, a constant, a state of being. In contrast Gregory sees mutability as a natural consequence of our creation, and is therefore inescapable. In our being we are never constant but rather we are always in a constant state of flux. In this frightening reality Gregory finds hope. Change is not only deterioration and

⁸ Catechetical Orations 6 as found in *Documents in Early Christian Thought*. Ed. Maurice Wiles & Mark Santer. p 106.

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa *On Virginity*. Originally translated for the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II Volume 5, Edited by Philip Schaff. Accessed at <http://ccel.org>.

¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa *The Life of Moses*. Ed. Abraham J. Malherbe, Everett Ferguson, John Meyendorff. pp 55-56.

¹¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Perfection*. McCambley p 379.

instability, it can also be growth. It is here that Gregory makes the connection between God's infinite goodness and our spiritual progress, which we are now prepared to treat.

The Ineffable, Incomprehensible God

Ascribing infinity to God's being had certain cultural dilemmas associated with it that Gregory deals with in due course. Farmer describes the situation created by Gregory's insistence on the infinite nature of God.

His manner [of ascribing infinity to God] marks a stunning departure from previous Greek tradition, both philosophical and theological, in which infinity is understood as formless – hence, irrational, - and incomprehensibility always marks a lack or defect, something to be overcome.¹²

Instead of shying away from these Greek assumptions that would define an infinite God as incomprehensible Gregory takes them in full stride and co-opts them for his own purpose. In *Against Eunomius* he is straightforward: “the Divine Essence is ineffable and incomprehensible.”¹³ God, in his essence cannot be described, cannot be comprehended.

This too is related not only to God's infinite nature but to the creator – created distinction as well. For Gregory, every created thing that can be known and comprehended is called by a name. The name of an object helps us to define and categorize the world around us. However, unlike every created thing the divine essence is not known by any name. “For this cause the Word, when He spoke of 'the name' in delivering the Faith, did not add what it is,—for how could a name be found for that which is above every name?”¹⁴ It is this unknowable name, the name that represents God in his essence, that is the unifying name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is into this unknowable, unspeakable “name” that we are baptized, for we are not baptized into the “names” of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but the singular “name.” Yes, we do have names for the persons of the godhead, Father, Son and Spirit, but these do not speak to God's essential nature. “...the title of Father does not present to us the Essence,

¹² Tamsin Jones Farmer. "Revealing the invisible: Gregory of Nyssa on the gift of revelation." *Modern Theology* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2005). p 73.

¹³ *Against Eunomius* 2.3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

but only indicates the relation to the Son.”¹⁵ So we see at one time we are given things that we can know about God, the relation of the members of the godhead, for example, while at the same time our creaturyness and his creatoriness keep us at a distance where we cannot know him in his essence.

At this point it would seem that this doctrine of God's infinite nature is not conducive to a healthy mystical theology which primarily concerns itself with intimacy with the divine. Surprisingly, it is precisely here that Gregory makes his move towards the development of a robust and creative mysticism; here, at the very place where many theologians would balk at the challenge to relate this truth to the lives of the faithful, that Gregory turns towards the congregation and begins to talk about life with God.

The Pursuit of Perfection

On more than one occasion Gregory's friends asked him to describe the life of perfection, what it is and how it is achieved. While Gregory certainly sees the perfect life to which Christ has called us (Matthew 5:48) as a life of virtue, he roots the pursuit of this life in the infinite nature of God and the mutability of the human person. In fact, Norris sees the infinity and the incomprehensibility of God as “the first principles of the spiritual life.”¹⁶ So how does one draw a direct line from something as esoteric as the infinite nature of God's essence to something as tangible as the spiritual life? Gregory has our answer.

In his work *On Perfection* Gregory addresses the monk Olympios who has inquired about the perfect life. Just as Gregory found insight into the ineffability of God's nature due to the fact that there is no name described in the Scriptures by which we can define it, here too Gregory looks upon our name, the name “Christian”, as that which can give us direction in our pursuit of perfection.

Since we have received by the good Lord fellowship in the greatest, most divine and first of names to make us worthy of being called Christians by Christ's name, every term explaining this name must be perceived in us so that the name given us is not false but is

15 Ibid.

16 R.A. Norris. *The Soul Takes Flight: Gregory of Nyssa and the Song of Songs*. p 529

borne out by our lives.¹⁷

The name Christian is not an arbitrary designation for Gregory, but the very key to who we are and what we are to become. In *On Perfection* Gregory continues with the theme of names by describing the many names of Christ. These names teach us about the nature of Christ, certainly, but also illuminate for any who would be called by that same name (Christian) what it is they have taken upon themselves to pursue. A true Christian is the one who mirrors the characteristics of Christ which are suitable to our human nature.

“Thus we recognize both the true and apparent Christian by the properties of their respective manifestations. The characteristics of the true Christian are the same we apply to Christ. We imitate those characteristics we are able to assume, while we venerate and worship what our nature cannot imitate.”¹⁸

Here Gregory admits that there are divine characteristics which the human nature cannot express.

Those things that cannot be accomplished by human nature should be worshiped. Everything else we are to imitate as those who bear his name. Gregory holds the tension between that which we can become in our imitation of Christ and that which is beyond imitation, but not beyond comprehension. Beyond this is another level consisting of those ineffable qualities which remain locked in the mystery of the divine nature.

Still, these levels are not as rigid as we might first expect. The imitation of Christ does in fact give us access to some of the indescribable mysteries of God. Christ came to reveal the invisible nature of God. That which cannot be seen or described is somehow imaged in the incarnation, making the indescribable tangible. It is this image that we are to reflect in our pursuit of perfection.

Therefore, the One who is unutterable, ineffable, and indescribable, transcends all knowledge and comprehension for the purpose of again making you God's image. He became the image of the invisible God out of love so that in his own form which he assumed, he might be formed in you and that you again might be conformed through him to the stamp of the archetypal beauty for becoming what he was from the beginning. Thus if we are to become the invisible God's image it is fitting that the form of our life

17 Gregory of Nyssa. *On Perfection*. As found in Saint Gregory of Nyssa : Peri teleiōtētos - On perfection. Brother Casimir McCambley. p 361

18 Ibid. p 362.

be modelled upon the pattern given us (John 13.15). What is this model?... That prototype is the image of the invisible God; having become man through the Virgin...”¹⁹

So we begin to see the tension that exists in Gregory's theology. God in his nature cannot be named by any name describable to man. Due to his infinite nature the essence of God exists beyond description, beyond any knowledge. And yet, by imitating Christ - the image of God - we begin to approach and even comprehend, through our becoming, those very divine qualities that were once far off. That is not to say that the nature of God will ever be fully understood by the human mind. Far from it... infinitely far. Nevertheless, that which at first appeared impossible, true knowledge of God, is now shown to be accessible through the incarnation, and not merely accessible, attainable. The human soul becomes the mirror of the divine; we are the stamp of the image of God. So we see on the one hand God, in his essence, is indescribable, unfathomable, infinite; yet through the condescension of Christ we come to know and are transformed into that ineffable beauty which cannot be contained.

The Three-fold Path to Perfection

In Danielou's classic work on Gregory's mystical theology he discerns a three-fold progression along the mystical path. He identifies this progression in Gregory's two key mystical works: the *Life of Moses* and the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Thus far we have seen the first two of the three movements as they have been described in *On Perfection*. Danielou's comments on Gregory's work will help us set these in perspective and show us the path forward.

According to Danielou the spiritual life as described by Gregory at first appears inverted. “... the spiritual life is represented as moving from light to darkness.”²⁰ While most would see progress in the spiritual realm described as a move from darkness to light Gregory depicts light as the first stage: we are illuminated through a progress of purification. We see this best reflected in *On Perfection* in Gregory's call to emulate the virtues of Christ. In so doing we begin to renew the image of Christ in us.

The second stage is ready do begin once our souls have been purified. In this stage we come to

¹⁹ Ibid. p 370.

²⁰ Jean Danielou, S.J. *From Glory to Glory: texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*. p 23.

a knowledge of God through the mirror of our souls. Gregory teaches that the soul naturally adapts to and reflects whatever our free will chooses to offer it. When we choose to live in anger our souls mirror that anger. When we are overwhelmed by concupiscence our human nature reflects this life guided by pleasure. Consequently, when we have purged ourselves of sin and emulate the virtues of Christ our soul, like a mirror, takes on his very beauty. Here God speaks to the soul of his beloved:

You have drawn nearer to me by your rejection of any contact with sin. By coming closer to the inaccessible Beauty you have yourself become beautiful, and like a mirror, as it were, you have taken on my appearance.²¹

Here again we see the parallel to *On Perfection*. As the soul becomes more and more like Christ it is transformed into the stamp, into the mirror of his image. In doing so the soul begins to come to a true knowledge of God by looking within itself. Though no man can look directly upon God, know God in his essence, the purified soul turns its gaze within and sees the image of God as in a reflection upon itself. If the first stage is categorized by purification, the second is the stage of knowledge. It is here, as the soul begins to look upon God for the first time, not by looking upon him directly but in the mirror of the soul, that the soul begins to perceive that this true knowledge of God will never lead to a full rational knowledge of his essence. It is here that the soul starts to see that its journey has no final destination. It is here that the soul is confronted with the darkness, with the infinite nature of God's essence.

Limitless Perfectibility

The darkness is the final destination, the goal of the trajectory set by Gregory's conception of God's infinite nature. However, instead of a place of rest, we come to see that our destination is really no destination at all; it is but the beginning of the soul's infinite pursuit of the divine good. It is in the darkness that the soul comes to the certain knowledge that God can never be comprehended by the human mind in his essence. While this might initially cause despair it is soon followed by the desire to

²¹ Gregory of Nyssa. *Commentary on the Song of Songs: Sermon 3* as found in Jean Danielou, S.J. *From Glory to Glory: texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*. p 171.

pursue the infinite God without end *as he is in himself, in his essence*. But this pursuit cannot be made with the eyes of the mind, for God's infinite nature cannot be comprehended. It is with the eyes of faith that God is made known in the darkness of his being. A direct vision of God's beauty is impossible, for he has told us that no man can see God and live. So the soul that has tasted of his wonders in a mirror reaches out blindly with the eyes of faith to pursue the real thing. "The bold demands of the soul that climbs the hills of desire tends towards the direct enjoyment of Beauty, and not merely through mirrors or reflections."²² The darkness acknowledges that its goal is unattainable and yet persists in its demand to ever see more, to ever draw nearer to God.

Gregory likens this third stage to Moses' experience of seeing the back of God while he was hidden in the cleft of the rock. Prior to this point Moses had his virtues honed and tested before Pharaoh in Egypt. He had witnessed many great miracles and even is described as speaking to God as one speaks to a friend. In this sense Moses was given more knowledge of God than anyone before him. Far from quenching his desire to see God, each experience only enflamed his passion more to pursue the true delight of his soul until finally he asks for that which he knows God will refuse, to see him as he is. For Gregory, to look upon the face of God is to know him in his essence. This is outside the capacity of human nature. And yet, God, in his refusal, still grants his request – in a way. Moses cannot see God as he is, but he is given a vision of God passing by. He is given just enough to cause Moses to desire him even more. As the infinite nature of God cannot be fully comprehended by the human soul, so God does not seek to reveal himself completely to those who seek him. Rather, he reveals just enough to enlarge the desire of the soul for more so that the soul might ever press in closer and closer on its infinite path upwards. In Gregory's own words:

We can conceive then of no limitation in an infinite nature; and that which is limitless cannot by its nature be understood. And so every desire for the Beautiful which draws us on in this ascent is intensified by the soul's very progress towards it. And this is the real

²² Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* as found in Jean Danielou, S.J. *From Glory to Glory: texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*. p 147.

meaning of seeing God: never to have this desire satisfied.²³

The goal is infinite; consequently, satisfaction is not what we seek but rather an intensification of desire as we move from glory to glory ever advancing, never stopping.

In this we can see more fully why Gregory saw our mutability as such a great blessing, for our changeability is the key to our infinite pursuit. As we grow in virtue, see his image reflected in our souls, and finally reach out to contemplate the divine essence by faith, our souls persist in this upward climb though constant change and growth. The goodness of God we seek to emulate is infinite, and his essence is far beyond our comprehension. Wonderfully our mutable natures are up to the challenge, but not without the inpouring of grace. From the beginning God, knowing our souls would be prone to change, designed them in such a way that infinite change and growth could take place under his guidance.

“The All-creating Wisdom fashioned these souls, these receptacles with free wills, as vessels as it were, for this very purpose, that there should be some capacities able to receive his blessings and become continually larger with the inpouring of the stream. Such are the wonders that the participation in the Divine blessings works: it makes him into whom they come larger and more capacious.”²⁴

And so God's infinite nature is matched by the infinite capacities of our souls to enlarge and take in all that he offer of himself to us. At every stage we experience both a joy in what we have achieved and a renewed longing for more. Though the journey is without end we do not grow weary for our goal is wonderful and our helper is faithful.

Conclusion

The challenge to create an integrated theology is great; a theology that plumbs the depths of theological and philosophical insight while still offering its bounty to the hungry souls who long for the ineffable beauty. Gregory of Nyssa, while at times a challenge theologically, is nonetheless an inspiration for any theologian seeking to relate theology to their spiritual walk and then teach it to

²³ Ibid. pp 147-148.

²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. Originally translated for the Nicean and Post-Nicean Fathers Series II Volume 5, Edited by Philip Schaff. Accessed at <http://ccel.org>.

others. Far from leaving his esoteric reflections on the infinite nature of God's essence in the deep, dark places of his mind, he worked diligently and found the place where such a truth was useful for those young in the faith who need to purify their souls, for those advancing in their pursuit to become the image of Christ on earth, and especially for those who have found that the contemplation of the divine beauty is an inexhaustible joy and an eternal pursuit. For him the infinite nature of God was not merely an idea, not simply a weapon to combat heresy, but the very key to how we draw near to God. Had he limited his reflections to the realm of philosophy or apologetics the church would be robbed of one of the greatest and most creative mystical writers in her history. In every arena Gregory devoted the full force of his heart, mind, and passion to his work. Even through translation we cannot escape the rigor of his thought and the beauty of his expression. While it is certainly debatable whether he was the greatest of the Cappadocian fathers, it is undeniable that his work offers a beautiful challenge to all of us who have sought a deeper knowledge of Christ and his word in order to serve the church and change the world. May his example inspire us all to pursue that integrated theology that speaks to the whole person: heart, mind, flesh, and soul.

Annotated Bibliography

Ayres, Lewis. "Deification and the dynamics of Nicene theology: the contribution of Gregory of Nyssa." *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (January 1, 2005): 375-394.

Ayres argues that the root of Gregory's conception of deification is the idea that the soul's life or activity may come to mirror the divine life or activity. He sees the polemic context of Nicea and the Eunomian controversies lead Gregory to emphasize the infinite mystery of God in his explication of the doctrine of deification. God as creator is separate and distinct from his creation and yet through imitate we come to partake in union with the divine.

Coakley, Sarah. "Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa: introduction--gender, trinitarian analogies, and the pedagogy of The song." *Modern Theology* 18, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 431-443.

This article forms the introduction to a series of articles aimed at reorienting the field of Gregory studies. In particular this series of articles hopes to tear down the disjunctions that exist in current studies between theology/spirituality, doctrine/ascetical theology, philosophy/exegesis, and sex/gender. In this article Coakley specifically tackles the notion that *Why there are Not Three Gods* is Gregory's most significant work for understanding the trinity (specifically his use of the three men analogy) and shows that even Gregory found this supposedly crucial metaphor as inadequate. By allowing the rest of the Gregory corpus to explain his theology we will find a wider and better use for Gregory's writings.

Denning-Bolle, Sara J. "Gregory of Nyssa : The Soul in Mystical Flight." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34, no. 2 (June 1, 1989): 97-116.

Denning-Bolle uses Gregory's *The Soul and the Resurrection* and *The Life of Moses* to compare his ideas of the Soul to Plato's. She concludes that Gregory does use many elements of Plato's ideas of the soul without compromising his essential Christian theology.

Danielou, Jean, S.J. *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*. Trans. Herbert Musurillo, S.J. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979.

This work provides the most accessible (only?) translations of Gregory's two greatest mystical works into English: the *Life of Moses* and the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. In addition his introduction has become the de facto starting place for any current discussion of Gregory's mysticism.

Geljon, Albert-Kees. "Divine infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria." *Vigiliae christianae* 59, no. 2 (January 1, 2005): 152-177.

Geljon looks at Gregory's doctrine of divine infinity and explores similar ideas already present in Philo to get a feel for how original Gregory's concept of divine infinity was. In this he offer's a more nuanced opinion to temper Muhlenberg's claim that Gregory invented the concept of divine infinity. Geljon concludes that Gregory was inspired by Philo's writings to take up divine infinity. Nevertheless Gregory is the first to deal with this idea in a thorough way.

Farmer, Tamsin Jones. "Revealing the invisible: Gregory of Nyssa on the gift of revelation." *Modern Theology* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 67-85.

Farmer uses the framework of revelation as gift found in Gregory of Nyssa to illuminate and point towards a more useful understanding of gift giving in the hopes of aiding the current discussion by Milbank and Marion on the subject.

Ferguson, Everett. "God's infinity and man's mutability : perpetual progress according to Gregory of Nyssa." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18, no. 1-2 (March 1, 1973): 59-78.

Ferguson looks at the background and imagery of Gregory's idea of perpetual progress, and goes into detail concerning its theological grounding in divine infinity and human mutability and how it relates to the spiritual life.

McCambley, Casimir. "Saint Gregory of Nyssa : Peri teleiōtētos - On perfection." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29, no. 4 (December 1, 1984): 349-379.

Brother Casimir offers a new translation of *On Perfection* with a brief introduction highlight its major contributions, not least of which is Gregory's departure from Plato's view that perfection is a state of rest. Instead Gregory says that in mutable (i.e. created) beings perfection is found in constant movement towards the Good.

Norris, Richard A. "The Soul Takes Flight : Gregory of Nyssa and the Song of Songs." *Anglican Theological Review* 80, no. 4 (September 1, 1998): 517-532.

Norris argues that Gregory's interpretation of the Song of Songs is hermeneutically similar to that of Origin's and yet thematically it is truly a revision of Origin's seminal work. Where Origin finds the soul stationary in the Song Gregory finds a place for infinite movement towards the divine. In this way Gregory builds on the foundation of Origin while expanding it into one of the great works of mystical theology. Unfortunately these are not the complete works translated, but they are excerpts highlighting the various themes in Gregory's theology.

O'Connell, Patrick F. "The double journey in Saint Gregory of Nyssa : The Life of Moses." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 28, no. 4 (December 1, 1983): 301-324.

The Life of Moses is commonly seen as having a haphazard coherence as Gregory traces the journey of Moses through his life to illuminate the mystical ascent of the believer. O'Connell shows that greater inner coherence can be found in the Life of Moses if one sees a second journey, that of the people of Israel going to the promised land, being traced alongside the journey of Moses. He argues that it was Gregory's intent for the reader to see the interplay of both journeys as they seek to understand the path to perfection and the road to the promised land.

Robb-Dover, Kristina. "Gregory of Nyssa's "perpetual progress." *Theology Today* 65, no. 2 (July 1, 2008): 213-225.

Robb-Dover argues that Gregory taught that perfection is not a destination but a journey of incessant becoming through participation in the life of God. In this she explores God's infinite nature, man's mutability and the centrality of the incarnation.

Wiles, Maurice & Mark Santer, ed. *Documents in Early Christian Thought*. "Catechetical Orations."
Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press 1975.

This book is a collection of translation of early Church Fathers. I used this work specifically for its translation of Gregory's Catechetical Orations which I could not find elsewhere.