

JUSTICE IN GREGORY OF NYSSA:
THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE

Anthony Vella
Independent Scholar, Malta

1. *Introduction*

This study examines Gregory of Nyssa's insight into the spiritual value of justice as expressed in his various works, with special attention to the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*. Central to his Christocentric theology is the conviction that divine justice, interpreted as "true goodness," is fulfilled through imitation of Christ. For Gregory, the pursuit of this justice culminates in the attainment of divine beatitude.

Gregory teaches that God reveals the supreme goodness of justice through Christ, who brings salvation to fallen humanity. In this context, he presents justice as a virtue inseparable from other virtues, each grounded in the divine nature. Such goodness is made manifest through Christ, "the Sun of Justice."¹ Gregory further argues that the highest desire for divine justice may even culminate in martyrdom, through which the believer shares in Christ's light and acquires heavenly wealth.

Gregory also emphasizes the believer's unconditional hunger and thirst for divine justice. Those who pursue it, he explains, receive the life-giving bread of God,² which in turn can be offered back to God as the fruit of divine justice.³ Nevertheless, Gregory insists that the ultimate goal of this longing for a virtuous life is Jesus Christ—the true treasure of justice. By imitating Christ,

1. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, 257.4.
2. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 56.7–9; "Homilies," 144.
3. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 56.21–24; "Homilies," 144.

whose food is to do the will of God, the believer enters the progressive ascent (*epektasis*) towards the Lord's promised beatitude. This notion of continual progress underscores that, for Gregory, justice is not a static possession but an ever-deepening participation in Christ.

According to Gregory, choosing divine justice necessarily entails the rejection of evil. Employing rhetorical strategies, he urges his listeners to conform their lives to divine justice, reminding them that the fruit of this choice will be revealed at the final judgment before Christ, the Judge of all. He insists that there can be no compromise between light and darkness (see 2 Cor 6:14). Gregory's sharp contrast between good and evil reflects both his biblical sources and the spiritual commitment to maintaining a clear demarcation within the life of faith.

While not addressing Gregory's wider sociological reflections on justice and poverty, this study highlights his Christocentric vision of justice in relation to mercy, love, and sharing, particularly in the context of the Day of Judgment. For Gregory, the pilgrimage of faith is fulfilled by living in the intimacy of the triune God, where justice is received and practiced as a divine gift. Prayer, he teaches, is the means by which the believer dwells in God's "innermost sanctuary" and is progressively transformed, reflecting the virtues of God, including justice itself. This integration of prayer and virtue illustrates Gregory's broader theological perception, in which the spiritual life is conceived as a continual ascent into the mystery of the divine.

2. *Perfect Justice in the Triune God*

Gregory highlights the concept of justice from a Christological perspective, grounding it in the divine attributes. Through rhetorical strategies, he teaches that God's justice, manifested in the Incarnation, delivers humanity from slavery of sin and from the power of Satan.

In *De opificio hominis*, Gregory describes human nature as created in the image and likeness of God, the King of all, adorned

with the crown of righteousness and revealing divine beauty.⁴ In contrast, in the *Oratio catechetica magna*, he shows that through divine power, goodness, wisdom, and justice, God extends mercy to fallen humanity.⁵ Justice, therefore, is defined not in abstract terms⁶ but in relation to redemption accomplished through the Incarnation.⁷ In Christ, Gregory insists, divine justice is fully revealed and made accessible to humanity.

Giulio Maspero notes that, in the “history of Christ,” the indivisible divine attributes of goodness, justice, and wisdom are manifested to human nature.⁸ As set out in *Contra Eunomium III*, Jesus’ divine virtues express a relational unity with the Father.⁹ Ilaria Vigorelli further observes that, in his *Contra Eunomium I* and *II*, Gregory explains how this reciprocal relation, manifested in various divine names, can only be apprehended through union with Christ.¹⁰ In this way, Christ, true God and true man, makes possible a human grasp of divine immanence.¹¹

Alongside these views, in *De perfectione*, Gregory presents Christ, the image of the Father, as the one who reflects the attributes of the ineffable divine substance (see Heb 1:3).¹² Likewise, in the *Oratio catechetica magna*, he affirms that through divine wisdom, God’s justice, among other attributes, is made evi-

4. Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* (PG 46:136.46); “On the Making of Man,” 391.

5. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 57.6–9; *Catechetical Oration*, 81. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 62.13; “Homilies,” 148; Drobner, “Analogy,” 31.

6. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 55.4 and 57.10; *Discorso catechetico*, 259 and 263.

7. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 55.4–57; *Discorso catechetico*, 275. See Ramelli, “Good/Beauty,” 695.

8. Maspero, “Economy,” 542.

9. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium Liber III*, 177.18–21. See Maspero, *Cappadocian Reshaping*, 85–88.

10. Vigorelli, “Ontology and Existence.” See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium Liber I et II*, 191.21, 335.11, 360.22, and 389.29.

11. Vigorelli, “Ontology and Existence,” 527.

12. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera ascetica*, 188.2–189.16. See Maspero, *Trinity and Man*, 129–32.

dent in the economy of salvation through the Incarnation.¹³ He describes how, out of love for humanity, God reveals his justice for salvation by assuming human nature and thereby deluding Satan, the deceiver.¹⁴ The Incarnation is, for Gregory, the supreme manifestation of divine omnipotence and goodness, surpassing the limits of nature.¹⁵ Through divine justice and wisdom, God became flesh, overshadowing darkness and annihilating death.¹⁶

In *De mortuis oratio*, *In inscriptiones Psalmorum*, and *De beatitudinibus*, Gregory presents the Word, Jesus Christ, as the one who rescues human nature from the “cave” and eradicates the shadows of the Fall.¹⁷ A similar theme is found in the Pseudo-Gregory *De occursu domini*,¹⁸ which affirms that the dawn of salvation arrived with Christ, bringing divine justice to humanity.¹⁹ The author describes how, in the birth of Christ, divine glory is revealed: mercy and truth meet, righteousness and peace embrace, and the salvation of God appears.²⁰

Focusing on this Christocentric concept of divine justice, Gregory argues that through Christ the believer is not only enabled to receive but also to live this blessed attribute as a virtue.

13. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 64.22–65.13; *Catechetical Oration*, 96; Mateo-Seco, “Devil,” 224.

14. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 64.13–22; Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, 96.

15. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 62.23–63.9; Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, 90.

16. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora*, 62.23–63.9; Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, 90.

17. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermones, pars I*, 37–38; *In Inscriptiones Psalmorum*, 151–54; *Opera exegetica*, 102–5; “On the Beatitudes,” 41–42. See Maspero, “Cavern,” 131.

18. *De occursu domini* is considered as dubious work of Gregory of Nyssa (see Mateo-Seco and Maspero, eds., *Brill Dictionary*, xxii; Moutsoulas, *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης*, 330–40; Balás, *Metousia Theou*, xii).

19. Gregory of Nyssa, *De occursu domini* (PG 46:1168.40).

20. Gregory of Nyssa, *De occursu domini* (PG 46:1177.30).

3. Justice as Virtue

Gregory understands divine justice as a virtue whose goodness is inseparable from the other virtues. By living out this virtue, he argues, one is able to embrace all the others. Unlike approaches that treat justice as an isolated quality, Gregory situates it within an integrated vision of the life of holiness.

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory defines the goodness of justice in relation to other virtues such as temperance, wisdom, courage, and prudence. He compares this understanding with the scriptural names of the divine nature, explaining, “The whole list of names is implicitly included when the one is used. It is not possible that when he is called ‘Lord,’ he is not also the other things, but all the attributes are uttered through one name.”²¹ In this passage, Gregory argues that the desire to live the virtue of justice necessarily entails a yearning for all the other virtues. Radde-Gallwitz supports this interpretation in his analysis of Gregory’s account of reciprocity,²² noting that the “motivational disposition in the soul” is identical for all virtues.²³ Building on this understanding of the unity of virtue, Gregory explains that divine justice is incompatible with evil, for it is by nature intrinsically good indeed, “everything virtuous is good.”²⁴ This argument is echoed in *De virginitate* and *De instituto Christiano*, where he emphasizes that the virtues are inseparable, each accompanying and sustaining the others.²⁵ Thus, for Gregory, living out divine justice is to enter a holistic moral and spiritual life in which all virtues are cultivated together.

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory reflects on the spiritual significance of the true goodness of virtue, including justice: “The desire for virtue is followed closely by the posses-

21. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 118.12–16; “On the Beatitudes,” 53.

22. Radde-Gallwitz, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 541.

23. Radde-Gallwitz, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 538.

24. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 119.10; “On the Beatitudes,” 53. See Cherniss, *Platonism*, 55.

25. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera ascetica*, 311.3–18; 77.18–78.8. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Traité de la virginité*, 449n4.

sion of what is desired, and the good arising in the soul brings in with it unceasing joy. Such is the nature of this good that it not only gives sweetness to the one who enjoys it in the present, but in every period of time provides actual joy.”²⁶ Such longing sustains the ceaseless movement of spiritual transformation towards perfection (*epektasis*), one of Gregory’s central themes.²⁷ At the same time, in a cyclical process, the fulfilment of joy intensifies the desire for virtue, including justice.²⁸ Gregory therefore urges his listeners to exert all their strength to live justly and virtuously. The reward of this life, he explains, is nothing other than virtue itself: “Virtue is the work of those who are achieving it and also becomes the reward for what they have achieved.”²⁹

Through rhetorical questions in the same homily, Gregory distinguishes true, universal, divine justice from worldly justice. The latter, he notes, is a civic disposition that distributes fairly according to social order³⁰ and can be administered by those with political or economic power. By contrast, divine justice is the blessedness promised by Christ and accessible to all. Even Lazarus (Luke 16:20), though lacking authority or means to enact worldly justice, longs for the true justice of God.³¹ Gregory observes that such justice is “enjoyed by the one who desires it in anticipation of what is promised.”³²

26. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.19–24; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

27. See Mateo-Seco, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 159; Daniélou, *Platonisme*, 291–307n1; Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa*, 167–75; Ferguson, “Progress in Perfection”; Spira, “Le temps,” 289; Blowers, “Maximus the Confessor,” 151–71.

28. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.16–19; Nyssa, “Beatitudes,” 55.

29. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.26–29; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

30. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 112.2–3; “On the Beatitudes,” 48.

31. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 113.7–13; “On the Beatitudes,” 49.

32. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 113.17–19; “On the Beatitudes,” 49.

This shows how Gregory links goodness, virtue, and justice. He insists that “the one who desires virtue makes the good his own possession, since he sees in himself what he has desired.”³³ For Gregory, goodness and ‘true justice’ are inseparable, both defined as realities that must be desired for their own sake. As he explains,

This is what is good by its very nature always and for all men: that which is not to be chosen as a cause of something else but rather has to be desired by its own self, that which is always identical and never wears out through satiation. For this reason, the Word calls blessed, not those who simply hunger, but rather those whose desire is inclined towards true justice.³⁴

Gregory articulates here the notion that the distinctive mark of goodness is an endless desire that never reaches satiety and leads to true justice. As Lucas F. Mateo-Seco notes, Gregory insists that true goodness “always remains identical to its own self, without deterioration and without change.”³⁵ From this perspective, Gregory underlines that the unchanging, endless reward of Christ’s beatitude is granted to those whose desire for justice is genuine and unconditional.

In his interpretation of the *Fourth Beatitude*, Gregory reads Jesus’ words as pointing to all that is virtuous.³⁶ This vision portrays a life marked by zeal for the divine, bringing ever-fresh, youthful, everlasting joy.³⁷ Through the Christocentric focus, Gregory links the unquenchable desire for the “true good” with “true justice.” Genuine justice, he explains, is the infinite good attained through Christ, who blesses without limit those who long for it.

33. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.13–15, 19–21; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

34. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 111.17–22; “On the Beatitudes,” 48.

35. Mateo-Seco, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 151.

36. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 120.3–121.3; “On the Beatitudes,” 54.

37. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 120.3–121.3; “On the Beatitudes,” 54.

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory defines justice as virtue and exhorts his audience to turn to Christ, the Word, who awakens desire by revealing its “attendant beauty.”³⁸ Jesus’ justice enlightens the heart with enduring hope, in turn, enables believers to radiate the light of his righteousness to others.

4. *Justice as Divine Light*

In his Christocentric vision, Gregory emphasizes that the virtue of justice illuminates the spiritual journey. Yet such a perspective also invites reflection on how justice is lived in concrete, everyday contexts. Gregory addresses this by presenting justice as divine light, shining in Christ and shaping the believer’s daily life. Justice is not a theoretical or static concept but a dynamic reality through which Jesus manifests the fullness of justice and guides the way of salvation, calling each person to become a channel of his justice. Gregory’s close identification of justice with Christ links moral life directly with faith.

Gregory argues that those who ardently yearn for God’s goodness and righteousness are illuminated by the light of justice. In *De perfectione*, he explains that God’s virtues grant a glimmer of justice that illuminates the soul.³⁹ Believers are therefore called to live this goodness and virtue through Christ.⁴⁰ This idea reappears in his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, where Gregory portrays the Church contemplating Jesus Christ, “the Sun of Justice” (see Mal 4:2), and reflecting him like a pure mirror.⁴¹

The above theme is also present in pseudo-Gregorian works. In the *Testimonia adversus Judaeos*,⁴² the author recalls David’s vi-

38. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 111.23–26; “On the Beatitudes,” 48.

39. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera ascetica*, 184.

40. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera ascetica*, 175.14–177.14.

41. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, 256.9–257.5. See Maspero, “Eschatological Ontology,” 19–20.

42. *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* is considered as pseudo-Gregory since there is no strong evidence that it belongs to Gregory of Nyssa. In fact, the editor Jacques-Paul Migne includes this work under *Dogmatica*

sion of God's call to righteousness: to be light for the nations, sight for the blind, freedom from darkness, and a covenant for the people.⁴³ Christ is described as the one who calls his people by a new name so that all nations may see his glory and righteousness.⁴⁴ Similarly, in Pseudo-Gregory's *Liber de cognitione Dei*,⁴⁵ the text affirms that all nations will behold the glory and righteousness of the Lord and receive the new name given to those who serve him.⁴⁶ Both treatises stress confessing the goodness of the Lord as ultimate justice. In this light, the believer fulfills Christ's words to John the Baptist: "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt 3:15).⁴⁷

Gregory's Christocentric understanding of divine justice is presented as a transformative means of entering into an enduring relationship with God. In *sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem*, he describes Christ as the Sun of righteousness (see Mal 4:2), John the Baptist as the burning lamp (see John 5:35), and the apostles as the messengers of the light.⁴⁸ The disciples, portrayed as *Christophoroi* ("bearers of Christ"),⁴⁹ followed in his footsteps by illuminating the world with truth, as manifested in Stephen, the first martyr.⁵⁰ The martyrs bore witness to the gospel of Christ, whose rays of salvation bring justice and drive out impiety.⁵¹

dubia. See Daniélou, "Bulletin," 621; Williams, *Adversus Judaeos* 124–31; Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, xvii.

43. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:229.11); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 55.

44. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:229.30); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 55.

45. *Liber de cognitione Dei* is considered as dubious work of Gregory of Nyssa (Balás, *Metousia Theou*, xii).

46. Gregory of Nyssa, *Liber de cognitione Dei* (PG 46:276.9).

47. Gregory of Nyssa, *Liber de cognitione Dei* (PG 46:317.26).

48. Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem* (PG 46:729.18).

49. Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem* (PG 46:721.18).

50. Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem* (PG 46:721.18).

51. Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem* (PG 46:728.11).

Martyrdom, for Gregory, is the path of eternal union with Christ, the light of justice to all creation. In his *In sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem* and the *Eighth Homily on the Beatitudes*, he affirms that the ultimate spiritual wealth of divine justice is attained through martyrdom in Christ's name,⁵² presenting it as the supreme testimony of faithfulness to God's will. Robert L. Wilken notes that Gregory alters the Beatitude from "Blessed are those who are persecuted *for the sake of justice*" (see Matt 5:10) to "Blessed are those who are persecuted *for my sake*";⁵³ here Gregory equates justice directly with Christ.⁵⁴

This Christocentric identification is reinforced in *Adversus eos qui castigationes aegre ferunt*, where Gregory recalls Zechariah, Peter and Paul, and Christ himself, all slain for living righteously and reproaching sin.⁵⁵ Martyrdom, then, is the highest expression of justice as virtue. Through paradoxical rhetoric, Gregory stresses that persecution is compensated by eternal blessedness in Christ, the supreme justice.

Accordingly, Gregory exhorts his audience to follow the way of God through Christ by embracing a virtuous life of divine justice. For him, this justice is not the worldly kind tied to law or social order but inseparable from Christ himself, reaching its highest expression in martyrdom. He urges believers to nurture a deep longing for this virtue, promising its reward in the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*: "Blessed it says, 'are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied' (see Matt 5:6)."⁵⁶

52. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 163.23–164.23; "On the Beatitudes," 85–86.

53. Wilken, "Gregory of Nyssa," 250–51; Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 168.15; "On the Beatitudes," 89.

54. Wilken, "Gregory of Nyssa," 250–51; Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 168.15; "On the Beatitudes," 89.

55. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermones, pars III*, 332.38–47; "Homélie" 164.

56. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 113.19–20; "On the Beatitudes," 49.

5. Hunger and Thirst for True Justice

To illustrate the Christocentric virtue of justice as divine goodness, Gregory, in the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, employs the allegory of hunger and thirst. Yearning for this justice with the same intensity as physical appetite leads to an unconditional communion with divine goodness, resulting in eternal beatitude.

Gregory explains that the central motivation of the Christian life is the “extreme passion of the desire for the good,”⁵⁷ namely, divine justice. To hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness is to overflow with the divine presence and to be continually satiated with the promised beatitude. Drawing a parallel between material and spiritual nourishment, he depicts justice as food that is absorbed and incorporated into the body, producing physical growth.⁵⁸ He writes,

In the same way, this justice and all the virtue that goes with it, since where spiritual food is concerned it is not excreted when it is eaten, of itself enlarges the stature of those who participate, as it constantly increases their size by the addition of itself.⁵⁹

Unlike material food, Gregory argues, spiritual nourishment is never expelled but continually enlarges the soul.⁶⁰ In the *Fourth Homily on the De oratione dominica*, he specifies that asking for the bread of the soul—“the goods of the soul”—brings unending fulfilment.⁶¹ Walther Völker calls this the “bread of justice,” affirming that its possession depends upon the person’s disposition of desire.⁶²

57. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 117.20–24; “On the Beatitudes,” 52.

58. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 123.3–13; “On the Beatitudes,” 56.

59. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 123.9–13; “On the Beatitudes,” 56.

60. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 123.9–13; “On the Beatitudes,” 56.

61. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 58.16; “Homilies,” 145.

62. Völker, *Gregorio di Nissa*, 40.

At the same time, Gregory stresses the value of desiring both physical and spiritual nourishment.⁶³ He underlines the importance of asking God not only for spiritual sustenance but also for daily bread to meet corporal needs and to satisfy temporal necessities. For him, it is essential to seek both present needs and future blessedness, since the two are fulfilled together: All human necessities are met together with the gift of the divine “kingdom and justice.”⁶⁴ This reflects Gregory’s view of the integrity of human nature, in which the physical and spiritual dimensions are essential to live out the virtue of justice.

In the concluding part of the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory links hunger and thirst for justice directly to the person of Jesus. As Mateo-Seco observes, Gregory affirms that the believer is called to live a passionate craving that develops into “an interpersonal relationship of knowledge and love” towards Christ.⁶⁵ Gregory depicts Christ as the ultimate justice and the one who offers “himself to the appetite of his hearers.”⁶⁶ This longing for the eternal treasure is therefore nothing other than the desire for Christ himself,⁶⁷ described as “the wisdom from God, justice, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30), the “bread coming down from heaven” (John 6:50), the “living water” (John 4:10).⁶⁸

Gregory also recalls David’s thirst for God, which filled his soul as he contemplated divine justice (see Ps 41[42]:3; 16[17]:15).⁶⁹ From the Christocentric dimension, he defines such quenching as “true virtue,” for it yearns solely for the good, name-

63. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 68.10–19; “Homilies,” 145.

64. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 58.19–21; “Homilies,” 145.

65. Mateo-Seco, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 160.

66. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.2–3; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

67. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 169.27–170.24; “On the Beatitudes,” 90. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 82.13–19; “On the Beatitudes,” 26.

68. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.3–6; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

69. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.8–9; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

ly, “God, the Word himself, the ‘virtue.’”⁷⁰ To hunger and thirst for Christ is, therefore, to long for the goodness of divine justice, which leads to spiritual wealth and blessedness.⁷¹

This desire is never exhausted, for Gregory maintains that continuous spiritual growth (*epektasis*) is attained through Christ, the “justice of God.” Returning again to the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, he draws on Pauline imagery: like the Apostle, the believer must yearn for intimacy with Christ (Gal 2:20) and “run for the prize,” which is Christ himself (Phil 3:12–13).⁷² The depth of participation in Christ corresponds to the richness of fulfilment by divine blessedness, kindling an insatiable longing for God. For Gregory, this represents an unending Christocentric movement of spiritual growth, where true justice is experienced as part of daily life.

In the same homily, Gregory’s Christological insights on the hunger for virtuous justice also reflect the concept of the will of God. To help his listeners grasp the essence of true justice, he teaches that it can be realized by imitating Christ, who himself was hungry.⁷³ Gregory underlines that “hunger could be a blessed thing,” if one “knows what it is that the Lord hungers after.”⁷⁴ Through rhetoric questioning, he explains that Jesus’ food is to fulfill the will of God (John 4:34), which is nothing less than the salvation of humankind (1 Tim 2:4).⁷⁵ Recalling Jesus’ words to his disciples after meeting the Samaritan woman (John 4:34), Gregory emphasizes that this spiritual food is the will of God, the

70. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.15; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

71. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.15; “On the Beatitudes,” 55.

72. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.25–123.3; “On the Beatitudes,” 55–6.

73. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 116.20–22; “On the Beatitudes,” 51.

74. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 116.20–22; “On the Beatitudes,” 51.

75. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 116.25, 117.1–2; “On the Beatitudes,” 52.

“ultimate good.”⁷⁶ Through allegorical imagery of hunger and thirst, he shows that those who desire divine nourishment are sustained by the goodness of God’s salvific will.⁷⁷

In the *Fourth Homily on the De oratione dominica*, Gregory comments on Jesus’ prayer in the *Our Father*: “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). He teaches that the believer is called to desire all the virtues that express this will, including “justice, piety, and estrangement from passions.”⁷⁸ True goodness of virtue, he explains, is nothing other than the fulfilment of God’s will.⁷⁹ Yet this fulfilment is possible only through divine power, since every person is “flesh, sold into slavery under sin” (Rom 7:14).⁸⁰ As Maspero notes in the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Gregory argues that fallen human nature can recover the “wings” of beatitude and incorruptibility only by God’s grace, by holiness and justice.⁸¹ From this perspective, Gregory makes clear that the profound yearning for divine justice is an outright choice for God. Aided by grace, the believer can decisively turn away from evil.

6. *Choosing Only God’s Justice*

Gregory suggests that true justice is attained when one hungers and thirsts solely for God’s righteousness and utterly rejects evil. For him, this choice is fundamental to the spiritual journey towards divine beatitude.

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory explains more precisely which form of justice Jesus refers to.⁸² He juxtaposes

76. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 116.25–117.26; “On the Beatitudes,” 52.

77. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 117.1–27; “On the Beatitudes,” 52.

78. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 48.10–13; “Homilies,” 139.

79. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 48.8–13; “Homilies,” 139.

80. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 48.8–9; “Homilies,” 139.

81. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, 448.5–16; Maspero, “Anthropology,” 41.

82. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 113.21–116.4; “On the Beatitudes,” 49–51.

God's treasures with the devil's offerings, using medical allegory of hunger and thirst. Natural appetites, though indicative of health, turn harmful when indulged beyond measure. Hunger, he argues, should be satisfied with true nourishment—bread, not stone. Recalling Christ's first temptation to turn stones into bread (Matt 4:2–3), Gregory contrasts the natural satisfaction provided by God with the “unnatural appetite”⁸³ proposed by the devil. The evil one offers what does not nourish, thus diverting the soul from the blessed path to divine justice.

Gregory scorns those who “set before them the bread of greed,”⁸⁴ feasting on gold and silver to satiate their vanity. Such a lifestyle, he warns, leads away from divine goodness of true justice. He presses his point rhetorically:

What has the inedible material silver to do with natural need, when it is served with its heavy and unmanageable weight? What is the sensation of hunger? Is it not the craving for what is lacking? When strength has been expended, the shortage is filled up again by the corresponding addition. It is bread or some other edible food that nature wants. If someone puts gold to the mouth instead of bread, does that cure the want? When therefore someone aims at inedible substances rather than foods, he is simply spending his effort on stones: nature looks for one thing, he is occupied with another.⁸⁵

He then asks those who “do not listen to nature”⁸⁶ but are more “concerned with getting a big load of silver on the table.”⁸⁷

Are you not by your actions listening to the one who counsels you the look to stone? Why [116] go into detail about the rest of this stony food, the shameful spectacles, the passionate sounds, by which they

83. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 114.25–26; “On the Beatitudes,” 50.

84. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 114.26–27; “On the Beatitudes,” 50.

85. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 114.26–115.11; “On the Beatitudes,” 50.

86. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 115.14; “On the Beatitudes,” 51.

87. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 115.15–16; “On the Beatitudes,” 51.

prepare their pursuit of evils, cooking their food on the coals of intemperance?⁸⁸

In these passages, Gregory rhetorically urges his listeners to choose between the divine Word and the devil. He emphasizes the necessity of rejecting all that is superfluous, as proposed by the evil adversary.⁸⁹

In the *Fourth Homily on the De oratione dominica*, Gregory links this teaching to the petition: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt 6:11). True bread, he argues, must be obtained through honest labor rather than greed, for bread gained justly is the gift of God, who is true justice.⁹⁰ Thus, daily sustenance becomes both a sign of divine provision and the fruit of a life ordered by righteous virtue.⁹¹

However, Gregory acknowledges that attaining “the grace” of the beatitude of divine justice requires effort and perseverance.⁹² In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, he describes the struggle between the eternal, virtuous good of divine justice and the transient allure of worldly desires. Through allegorical and rhetorical contrast, he shows that the believer is called to seek virtue, unlike those who “pursue[s] the top of [one’s] own shadow.”⁹³ In doing so, one can achieve the unceasing goodness of true beatitude.⁹⁴ Gregory asks pointedly: “Does not every kind of pleasure which is achieved by the body fly away as soon as it comes near, without

88. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 115.29–116.4; “On the Beatitudes,” 51.

89. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 116.18–19; “On the Beatitudes,” 51.

90. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 55.20–23; “Homilies,” 144.

91. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 55.19–21; “Homilies,” 143. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 56.1–3; “Homilies,” 144.

92. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 117.25–26; “On the Beatitudes,” 52.

93. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.10; “On the Beatitudes,” 54.

94. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.11–12, 24–28; “On the Beatitudes,” 54–55.

staying even for a moment with those who grasp it?”⁹⁵ For Gregory, earthly pleasure ends as it is attained, leaving no lasting meaning. This same idea appears in the pseudo-Gregory’s *In sanctum Ephraim*,⁹⁶ where Ephraim is praised for rejecting what was superfluous and bearing the “yoke of justice” in both practice and contemplation.⁹⁷

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory urges his listeners to choose God above all by living virtuously, a way of life that leads continual fulfilment. Freed from evil, the believer is satiated by lasting divine beatitude,⁹⁸ for true happiness is “well-founded, permanent, and lasting through every period [of] life.”⁹⁹ Commenting on this homily, Marguerite Harl and Mateo-Seco observe that Gregory contrasts the shallow gratification of earthly pleasures with the abundant and youthful joy of virtue, which inflames desire without extinguishing it.¹⁰⁰ In this context, Gregory makes clear that this fullness is inseparable from virtue, and that the choice to live justly serves a determining criterion on the Day of Judgment.

7. Divine Justice at the End of Time

The consequence of choosing good over evil is made clear in Gregory’s fear-inducing emphasis on the coming of Christ and the last judgment. Through his rhetorical approach, he portrays how, on that day, Christ will separate the righteous from the wicked.

95. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 120.1–3; “On the Beatitudes,” 54.

96. *In sanctum Ephraim* is considered as dubious work of Gregory of Nyssa (see Mateo-Seco and Maspero, eds., *Brill Dictionary*, xxii; Moutsoulas, *Γρηγόριος Νύσσης*, 330–40; Balás, *Metousia Theou*, xii).

97. Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum Ephraim* (PG 46 :829.25).

98. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 120.10–11; “On the Beatitudes,” 54.

99. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 120.10–11; “On the Beatitudes,” 54.

100. Harl, “Recherche sur l’orgénisme d’Orgène,” 403–4; Mateo-Seco, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 157.

Gregory's account of God's justice at the Final Judgment is developed in his *In sanctum Pascha*. Here, Gregory offers a vivid rhetorical presentation¹⁰¹ of the resurrection of both body and soul,¹⁰² focusing on the contrast between those saved and those condemned. As Jacobus C. M. van Winden observes, for Gregory, the goodness in God's creation finds fulfilment in the resurrection of the dead, which in turn deepens the desire for a virtuous life.¹⁰³ From this perspective, Gregory's Christocentric vision of divine power, justice, and providence culminates in the mystery of the resurrection. Distinguishing between universal resurrection and salvation, he exhorts his congregation to yearn unconditionally for unity in God's fulfilment, so that when all will rise, they may be judged and led by Christ into eternal blessedness.

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory intensifies this appeal by evoking fear of the coming Judgment.¹⁰⁴ He points out that this justice is ultimately administered by Christ. In his *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*, he argues that the Son will come in the glory of the Father to judge every soul.¹⁰⁵ The righteous, he affirms, will inherit a resurrection to life, while the wicked will face a resurrection to judgment.¹⁰⁶

This vision of Christ as righteous judge also appears in pseudo-Gregorian writings. In the *Liber de cognitione Dei*, Christ is portrayed as king and judge,¹⁰⁷ while in the *Testimonia adversus Judaeos*, the Lord is described as "girdled with righteousness, and his sides clothed with truth (See Isa 10:33–34; 11:1–5),"¹⁰⁸ judg-

101. Harl, "L'éloge de la fête de pâques," 94.

102. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermones, pars I*, 267.1–268.7; "Discourse."

103. van Winden, "In defence of the Resurrection," 113.

104. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 111.9–16, 20–22; "On the Beatitudes," 48. See Maspero, "Apocatastasis," 59.

105. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium Liber II*, 319.16–320.5. See Maspero, "Essere," 19–20.

106. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium Liber II*, 319.16–320.5. See Maspero, "Essere," 19–20.

107. Gregory of Nyssa, *Liber de cognitione Dei* (PG 46:269.11).

108. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:208.3); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 23.

ing the humble with equity and bringing low the proud.¹⁰⁹ The psalmist is cited to affirm that the eternal God holds the scepter of justice and anoints with the oil of joy those who love righteousness and hate lawlessness (Ps 44 [45]:7–8).¹¹⁰ God’s righteousness, the text adds, endures forever (Ps 110[111]:3),¹¹¹ and a new nation will rise up to serve the Lord in faithfulness to his justice (Ps 21[22]:31).¹¹²

Gregory implies that the path one chooses—particularly in embracing divine justice through Christ—ultimately determines the possibility of lasting beatitude. This eschatological emphasis heightens the urgency of his moral exhortation, though it may also provoke fear of judgment. The tension between love of God and fear of judgment lies at the heart of Gregory’s understanding of salvation and human free choice. For Gregory, salvation is both gift and responsibility: it is already given in Christ, yet it requires ongoing moral response.

Jean Daniélou affirms, for Gregory, “in Christ, salvation had been acquired for man’s ‘nature’ without any possibility of loss, but that the individual still has the power of dissociating himself from it by his own free choice.”¹¹³ This is evident in the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, where Gregory teaches that divine blessedness is granted to those who earnestly seek God through Christ. Echoing Pauline teaching (Gal 2:20; Phil 3:12–13), he suggests that the believer can share in the hidden fruits of Paradise.¹¹⁴ Through his Christocentric, eschatological rhetoric, Gregory exhorts his audience to choose the goodness of God, practice justice, and reject evil.

109. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:207.39–40); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 23

110. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:208.10); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 23.

111. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:228.44); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 53

112. Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonia adversus Judaeos* (PG 46:228.18); Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Jews*, 51.

113. Daniélou, *Origen*, 289.

114. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.25–123.3; “On the Beatitudes,” 56.

In the *Fifth Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory links divine justice, mercy and blessedness within a Christological framework. At the Last Judgment, he argues, in the presence of Christ, the assembled multitudes will honor those who truly practiced divine justice, shown in the merciful and loving sharing of their earthly riches.¹¹⁵ Using vivid imagery, Gregory portrays Jesus raising his hand and pointing his finger to the beneficiaries,¹¹⁶ declaring, “in as much as you did it to one of these the least of my brothers” (see Matt 25:40).¹¹⁷ Justice, Gregory teaches, is enacted through merciful action and love for those in need. He contrasts the desire for material wealth with the longing for divine riches, presenting justice as a moral and spiritual commitment expressed in compassionate acts.¹¹⁸ In this way, Gregory challenges any attempt to separate ethical conduct from spiritual life, affirming that divine justice is intrinsically bound to relational love and mercy.

Gregory is convinced that the believer must live divine justice by choosing mercy over greed. Like other virtues, divine justice is to be cultivated, as it leads to everlasting blessedness.¹¹⁹ In the *Fifth Homily on the Beatitudes*, he recalls Paul’s teaching that, in the “presence of the Judge of all creation,”¹²⁰ one reaps what one sows (see Gal 6:7–8).¹²¹ Divine beatitude is thus achieved when the believer seeks union with the Triune God and is filled with the divine virtues.

115. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 135.16–19; “On the Beatitudes,” 65. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 126.24–127.16; “On the Beatitudes,” 59.

116. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 134.20–21; “On the Beatitudes,” 64.

117. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 134.18–19; “On the Beatitudes,” 64.

118. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 117.27–118.7; 125.1–6; “On the Beatitudes,” 52, 58.

119. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 117.27–118.7; 125.1–6; “On the Beatitudes,” 52, 58.

120. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 134.12; “On the Beatitudes,” 64.

121. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 136.8; 130.26–131.5; “On the Beatitudes,” 62, 65.

8. *Divine Justice and Holiness*

Gregory teaches that through intimacy with the Trinitarian life, the believer can live out the true goodness of divine justice. In practicing this virtue, one is led to lasting and sanctifying spiritual wealth. Gregory holds that God's treasures, including divine justice, are to be cherished through the embrace of divine indwelling. This view reflects Gregory's belief that divine justice is not merely a standard to live by, but a gift of grace made possible through communion with God.

In the *Fourth Homily on the Beatitudes*, considering the doctrine of participation in God's perfection, Gregory urges his listeners to be satiated by the presence of the blessed Trinity. He recalls Jesus' promise that he and his Father will come and make their home within those who desire him (John 14:23),¹²² adding that the Holy Spirit "made his home there first."¹²³ This intimate relationship with the Trinity satisfies the yearning of spiritual growth to which every person is called. Recalling the homily *Adversus iis qui baptismum differunt*, Gregory encourages his audience to let the Spirit of the Lord be upon them, receiving the fruits of the Spirit—such as justice—so that these may be rooted in their lives.¹²⁴ He teaches that the believer is called to yearn for God's righteousness through baptism. By means of this sacrament, one receives and cultivates the virtues of the Lord, fulfilling the commandment of faith.¹²⁵

Gregory emphasizes that holiness is not achieved merely by human effort, but through an ongoing relationship with the Trinity, in which virtue flows from divine presence rather than moral striving. He argues that divine virtues constitute an essential path by which every person is called to holiness. In *Adversus Macedo-*

122. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.24–25; "On the Beatitudes," 55.

123. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 122.24–25; "On the Beatitudes," 55.

124. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermones, pars III*, 362.6–8; "Homélie sur le Baptême," 126.

125. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermones, pars III*, 369.1–8; "Homélie sur le Baptême," 141.

nianos de Spiritu Sancto, he describes the Trinitarian God as essentially holy¹²⁶ and emphasizes that this holiness is manifested in enduring, life-giving goodness and justice.¹²⁷ These virtues belong to the divine nature and are shared with those who live in union with the Holy Trinity.¹²⁸ Gregory understands them as both descending from God and ascending back to God, forming a circular movement of relationship. The more one is open to receiving these virtues, the more one can live them daily, progressing towards the fullness of God's goodness and righteousness. In this way, Gregory places divine justice within a relational rather than simply moral framework, challenging any reduction of virtue to ethical rule-keeping.

In the *First Homily on the De oratione dominica*, Gregory asserts that God dwells in the heart through prayer. When this happens, sin loses its place in the soul and "the adversary remains ineffective."¹²⁹ Prayer, he argues, brings justice because it is a "mediator between disputants,"¹³⁰ drawing the believer close to God and away from the evil one. Prayer is therefore not only communication with God but a transformative practice that safeguards the soul and sustains the moral life. For Gregory, the virtue of justice arises not only from inner determination but from God's continual presence in prayer. He states that if the believer

performs every task with prayer, he will turn himself away from sinning by taking the straight path to what he pursues, with no opposition dragging the soul down to passion. But if, in his departure from God, he becomes entirely given to his pursuit, it is altogether unavoidable that whoever is outside of God winds up being entirely in the opposite state.¹³¹

126. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora, pars I*, 92.20–21; "On the Holy Spirit," 317.

127. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora, pars I*, 92.21–27; "On the Holy Spirit," 317.

128. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera dogmatica minora, pars I*, 92.21–27; "On the Holy Spirit," 317.

129. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 8.1–4; "Homilies," 111.

130. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 7.27–8.4; "Homilies," 111.

131. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 8.8–13; "Homilies," 111.

In the same homily, Gregory calls prayer the cornerstone of the spiritual journey (cf. Luke 18:1), since it upholds prudence, restrains anger and pride, purges resentment and envy, corrects impiety, and destroys injustice.¹³² In *Adversus eos qui castigationes aegre ferunt*, he reproaches those who neglect prayer and fail to live justice as virtue.¹³³ Gregory highlights the inseparable bond between justice, virtue, and prayer as essential to authentic Christian life. His emphasis on the moral effects of prayer shows that, for him, inner spiritual discipline and the outward practice of the virtue of justice are inseparable. This challenges modern perspectives that seek to distinguish personal spirituality from ethical responsibility.

Likewise, in the *Second Homily on the De oratione dominica*, referring to Jesus' words "Our Father in heaven" (Matt 6:9), Gregory urges his audience to remember the importance of placing God, the true light, above all things and of keeping themselves apart from evil. Citing the apostle Paul, he recalls that there is no fellowship "between light and darkness" (2 Cor 6:14).¹³⁴ Light corresponds to light, as justice to justice, while opposites share no affinity.¹³⁵ At the beginning of this homily, Gregory uses rhetorical imagery to say that the one who prays and names God as Father is clothed with the robe of Christ, bearing the commandments and the virtues of the patriarchs.¹³⁶ He adds that the one who prays the *Our Father* "adorns his head with the crown of righteousness, (2 Tim 4:8) and has his hair soaked with heavenly perfume, and comes to be inside the heavenly innermost sanctuary, which is truly closed off and inaccessible to all profane reasoning."¹³⁷

132. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 8.15–21; "Homilies," 111.

133. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermones, pars III*, 325.9–12; "Homélie," 150.

134. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 24.16–17; "Homilies," 124.

135. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 24.17–19; "Homilies," 124.

136. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 33.7–14; "Homilies," 129.

137. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 33.14–17; "Homilies," 130.

Gregory emphasizes that, by praying and calling God “Father,” one becomes fully identified with divine justice and separated from what is unholy. Prayer, therefore, is not merely communication with God but a form of transformation that places the believer within sacred space. For Gregory, justice is inseparable from a life shaped by prayer.

Commenting on the phrase: “hallowed be your name” (Matt 6:9),¹³⁸ Gregory explains that these words are a prayer to be robed in divine virtues:

May I, by the cooperation of your aid, become blameless, just, pious, abstaining from every wicked deed, speaking truth, working justice, walking in rectitude, illustrious in self-control, adorned with incorruptibility, beautified by wisdom and prudence, thinking on things above, gazing above things of earth, made radiant with angelic ways of life.¹³⁹

In this passage, Gregory argues that the *Our Father* reveals the proper disposition for the virtuous life, including justice. This vision of virtue is participatory: the virtue of justice is not achieved through human striving alone, but through open willingness that receives it in cooperation with the divine. The believer becomes just by being open to divine aid, which shapes life from within. Living under the divine crown of righteousness, one may enter the everlasting “innermost sanctuary.” Similarly, in the *Seventh Homily on the Beatitudes*, Gregory invites his audience into this inner sanctuary, holy of holies, as children of God—the “peacemakers”—thus paving the way to divine beatitude.¹⁴⁰ By calling God Father and accepting to be his children, believers are transformed into holiness that reflects divine virtues, including justice.

138. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 36.23–25; “Homilies,” 132.

139. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 36.25–28; “Homilies,” 132.

140. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 149.1–4; 151.15–17, 28; “On the Beatitudes,” 75, 77. See Mateo-Seco, “Adyton.”

9. Conclusion

Gregory teaches that the goodness of divine justice constitutes a path to holiness, with Christ as the central expression of this virtue. In his Christocentric argument, he maintains that the Incarnation discloses divine mercy as the fullest expression of justice for fallen humanity. Through Christ, the supreme goodness of God is revealed as justice that brings light and salvation, while eradicating death from the course of human history. This divine justice, offered to all, manifests its superabundance in the enduring character of God's mercy. Gregory further teaches that every person is called to share in this goodness and justice, and that, by God's grace, these attributes may be lived as virtues. In this way, he demonstrates the profound interrelation between soteriology and moral transformation: salvation in Christ is inseparable from the call to live justly, for it springs from both salvation and its source, Christ.

Defining justice as a virtue, Gregory stresses that no virtue is separable from the others, since each reflects and participates in the divine nature. He also identifies Christ with the virtue of justice,¹⁴¹ and teaches that this beatitude is offered to all. For Gregory, therefore, the believer is blessed not only by receiving Christ in their life but also by imitating him and practicing his justice and goodness—even to the point of martyrdom. In this way, justice becomes both the mark of true discipleship and the path through which believers are conformed to Christ.

Employing allegorical rhetoric, Gregory reminds his audience that by cultivating a hunger and thirst for the virtue of justice, one attains Christ's promise of "satisfaction which sharpens the appetite by fullness and does not blunt it."¹⁴² He contrasts the works of the Word, Jesus Christ, who directs hunger in accordance with nature, with those of the devil, who alienates humanity by luring it into greed for lifeless food. For Gregory, the commitment to divine justice—quenched through Christ—is a yearning for God's

141. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 168.15; "On the Beatitudes," 89.

142. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 121.4-5; "On the Beatitudes," 54.

will that leads to eternal salvation. This contrast between Christ and the devil highlights Gregory's sharp distinction between good and evil, where justice is not only a virtue but a sign of belonging to God rather than to evil.

Gregory also insists on the Christological link between divine justice and the decisive choice between God and evil. His rhetoric seeks to persuade by instilling fear of the coming Day of Judgment, while stressing the value of attaining blessedness through Christ's treasury of justice.¹⁴³ In this context, he also relates justice to mercy, affirming that believers are to seek divine goodness and justice through mercy, love, and sharing. Thus, Gregory presents justice not as detached judgment but as inseparable from compassion, where participation in justice is realized through acts of mercy that mirror the generosity of God.

In Gregory's view, the choice of divine justice can be made only through an intimate relationship with the Trinitarian God. He describes the unending journey into God's perfection (*epektasis*), manifested in goodness and justice, as a daily struggle sustained solely by divine grace. Prayer, he teaches, preserves this grace in the believer's life and provides protection against evil. Through prayer, one is drawn into union with the "innermost sanctuary" of God and is continually transformed, reflecting the light of divine justice.

Thus, Gregory's Christocentric teaching reveals a circular dynamic: every believer is offered the divine grace of justice and, at the same time, called to live it out. This perfection is realized through intimacy with Christ, the true justice, who leads his disciples towards the everlasting beatitude of God's righteousness. In this way, Gregory's account of justice not only reflects his Christocentric theological vision but also establishes a framework in which soteriology, virtue, and participation in God are integrated into a coherent whole.

143. Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera exegetica*, 111.9–16, 20–22; "On the Beatitudes," 48.

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