Christian formation and the body-soul relationship in Gregory of Nyssa[1]

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'in order to remake you as an image of God, Christ himself through love of humankind became an image of the invisible God, so that he is shaped in you to that same form which he took up [in the incarnation] and so that he conforms you to the character of the archetypal beauty, towards becoming whatever you were from the beginning'.[2]

1. Introduction

Much of Gregory's spiritual advice seems to be coloured by his reading of Romans 12.2 : 'Be not conformed (συσχηματίζεσθε) to the world, but be transformed (μεταμορφοῦσθε) in the newness of your mind…'.[3] Rather than understanding 'spiritual formation' as simply synonymous with spiritual training, growth or progress, this chapter will take a closer look at Gregory's use of the language of form and formation (μορφή, σχῆμα and cognates) in order to ask whether it illuminates his anthropology. In particular, it will study how Gregory articulates the relationship between some pairs of concepts which are used to characterise the human condition: the body and the soul; the inner and the outer human; the spirit and the flesh. My sources are three of Gregory's ascetic writings: *De professione Christiana*, *De perfectione*, and *De instituto Christiano*.[4] One of the reasons

[1] An earlier draft of this paper was given at a workshop on Gregory of Nyssa and Aristotle, at the invitation of Anna Marmodoro (University of Oxford, December 2016) at which I was asked to address the question of whether there was evidence in Gregory for a hylomorphic theory of the relation of body and soul. I am grateful to Anna Marmodoro for the opportunity to test out my ideas, and to her and the other participants for their helpful suggestions for improvement, particularly to Mark Edwards, Ilaria Ramelli and Neil McLynn.

[2] Gregory of Nyssa, *De Perfectione* GNO 194, tr. Callahan (for editions, see note 3), cf 186:18 (tr. Callahan 104).

[3] In addition to the quotation above, see, e.g. *Inst* 45; *Perf* 186:18-20.

[4] Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera Ascetica*, ed. Werner Jaeger, J.P. Cavarnos, and V. W. Callahan, 3rd ed., vol. VIII/1, Gregorii Nysseni Opera (Leiden: Brill, 1986). = GNO. All page/line numbers refer to this GNO edition. I have consulted the following translations: Gregory of Nyssa, *Ascetical Works*, trans. Virginia Woods Callahan, vol. 58, Fathers of the Church (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1967); Rowan A Greer, *One Path for All: Gregory of Nyssa on the Christian Life and Human Destiny* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2015). Where no translation is cited, it is my own. The authenticity of *De instituto* and its relationship with Messalian writings has been the subject of some debate. In 1954 Werner Jaeger argued that the *Great Letter* attributed to Macarius was dependent on *De instituto* which was an authentic work of Gregory's and was not Messalian in character. There is now a consensus against this view. In this chapter I follow Reinhold Staats' view that *De instituto* is dependent on the *Great Letter* and to some extent corrects its more marked Messalian elements. Although Gregory's authorship of *De instituto* has been questioned, I see no strong reason to doubt it, either on grounds of its use of biblical quotations or its clear admiration of some features of Messalian spirituality. See: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius, *Two rediscovered works of ancient Christian literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, ed. Werner Jaeger (Leiden: Brill, 1954); Reinhart Staats, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer: die Frage der Priorität zweier altkirchlicher Schriften*, Patristische Texte und Studien 8 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968); H. Chadwick, "Review: Gregor von Nyssa Und Die Messalianer: Die Frage Der Priorität Zweier Altkirchlicher Schriften. By Reinhardt Staats. (Patristische Texte Und Studien, 8). Pp. Viii + 144. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968. DM. 34.00.," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, October 1969, /core/journals/journal-of-ecclesiastical-history/article/div-classtitlegregor-von-nyssa-und-die-messalianer-die-frage-der-prioritat-zweier-altkirchlicher-schriften-by-staatsreinhardt-patristische-texte-und-studien-8-pp-viii-144-berlin-walter-de-gruyter-1968-dm-3400div/FA9E4F3DC0504C2CCB32B7FE0487140E; Columba Stewart, *"Working the Earth of the Heart": The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to A.D. 431* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1991); Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, "De Instituto Christiano," in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Lucas F Mateo Seco and Giulio Maspero (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 432–33.

for this choice is that their focus is less on exceptional 'moments' of spiritual experience or prayer (which seem, in Gregory's thought, to be proleptic indicators of an eschatological goal) and more on what we might call everyday practice. In them, the spiritual and the ethical is intertwined.

A second reason for my choice of sources is that these treatises have rarely been used in order to investigate Gregory's theological anthropology. For obvious reasons, most attention in this regard has been paid to such works as *De hominis opificio* and *De anima et resurrectione* in which Gregory comes much closer to a fully-articulated (if perhaps not entirely consistent) anthropology or moral psychology. One of my aims here is to test some of the ideas which can be drawn from those works against the kind of practical spiritual and moral advice he gives in these ascetic writings: after all, one would expect such advice to follow from his foundational beliefs about what it is to be human. So, for example, Frances Young identifies a tension in *De hominis opificio* between, on the one hand, human beings as the 'crown and perfection' of God's good creation which they are commanded to enjoy, and man as two-fold', torn between living according to his *nous* and according to his sensual desires. Although she argues that 'it is over-simplifying to suggest that this is a tension between man as a psychosomatic unity and man understood in dualist soul-body terms', elements of that tension are present.[5] For example, Young notes how Gregory tries to balance, on the one hand, dualistic Pauline (not Platonic) language of the inner and outer man with, on the other, a more unitive anthropology, which speaks of three faculties of the soul – nutritive, sensitive, and intellectual – which sound Aristotelian, but which Gregory also associates with Paul (1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Cor.3:3; 1 Cor. 2:14-15).[6] Warren Smith's analysis focusses on this question of how Gregory expresses the complex nature of the human soul. He too notes the influence of Aristotle and stresses that, for Gregory, the soul appears not to have three *parts* as in Plato, but rather three powers.[7] The latter, broadly Aristotelian approach, leads to a more unitive anthropology because the nutritive and sensitive parts of the soul connect it with humans' bodily nature: 'The human soul, in Nyssen's early anthropology, reflects man's amphibious nature possessing both the rational faculties that enable man to participate in God's goodness and the faculties of the vegetative and sentient soul that allow him to acquire and utilize the material goods necessary for bodily existence.'[8] Smith argues that where Gregory uses language which echoes Plato's description of a tripartite soul, Gregory does so 'to illustrate the tension inherent in man's amphibious nature': 'The metaphor of the chariot is descriptive, not only of the conflict between the goods of the body and those of the soul, but also the dynamic tension between the desires rooted in the sensual world and the higher faculty of the soul whereby desire serves the intellect in attainment of its goods proper to man's higher nature'.[9]

Furthermore, given the importance of biblical exegesis in Gregory's work – and scholarly discussions about the relation of that to various philosophical sources – it will be instructive to see how Gregory uses the bible in these three ascetical works. In her study of Gregory's *De hominis opificio* and a treatise by Nemesius, Frances Young argued that 'for Gregory, the Bible is the starting-point, but

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[5] Frances Young, "Adam and Anthropos. A Study of the Interaction of Science and the Bible in Two Anthropological Treatises of the Fourth Century.," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37, no. 2 (1983): 120–21, doi:10.1163/157007283X00142.

[6] Ibid., 115.

[7] J. Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co, 2004), 71. following Michel R Barnes, "The Polemical Context and Content of Gregory of Nyssa's De Hominis Opificio," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994): 1–24.

[8] Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, e.g. 48, 75.

[9] Ibid., 75.

scientifically speaking it is inadequate. Current philosophical and scientific arguments are used to fill out and explain scripture. Thus the agenda in detail is fundamentally philosophical, and rational arguments are used to fill out and explain scripture.'[10] In treatises designed to answer practical questions about the ascetic life, is the Bible more clearly at the centre as one might reasonably expect? And is philosophical discourse absent?

In setting up my task in this way I am making several methodological assumptions. Firstly, although one should be aware that Gregory wrote different kinds of work, in different contexts and to different audiences, it is important not to impose those boundaries too rigidly. Traditionally, Gregory's works have been divided into dogmatic, exegetic and ascetic works, sermons and letters.[11] Although it is generally recognised that some of these categories overlap, Sarah Coakley, for example, has noted how Gregory's exegetical works have tended to be side-lined in discussions of his doctrinal theology.[12] The work of Coakley, Smith and other has redressed that balance to some extent. Here I ask whether three ascetic works, one (*De professione*) in the form of a letter, might further fill out the picture. Other kinds of boundary have been imposed by attempts to take the social context of Gregory's works more into account. For instance, Sandra Leuenberger-Wenger's illuminating study of Gregory's sermons on ethical issues assumes that they are addressed to a congregation which is neither particularly well-educated, nor part of an ascetic elite.[13] Conversely, however, she assumes that a large number of other works (including *De professione Christiana*, *De perfectione*, and *De instituto Christiano*) deal with the moral progress of the individual not a community and are addressed to those who are educated to a high standard.[14] Particularly with regard to the three works which are the subject of this chapter, I am not so confident about these assumptions. In at least one case, *De instituto*, Gregory's advice relates specifically to community life (albeit mainly addressed to leaders).[15] Furthermore, despite examples such as Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, one must not assume that members of an ascetic elite were members of an educational elite. At first glance, the style and tone of these three pieces, which mix ethical injunctions with many biblical references, proverb –like tales and exempla, indicate a type of writing which could have had a broad appeal across various educational levels.[16] A hypothesis worth testing is that Gregory's advice, although addressed to a single addressee or community leader, was intended to be passed to others – and that the *form* of his advice reflects this. Thus, the long lists of titles for Christ and associated Christian virtues in *De perfectione* sound a little as if Gregory is teaching a teacher: he

[10] Young, "Adam and Anthropos," 120.
[11] Thus, in the Brill GNO edition: *Opera dogmatica, Sermones*, *Opera ascetica, Epistulae*, *Opera exegetica*.
[12] Sarah Coakley, "Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction--Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of The Song," *Modern Theology* 18, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): especially 436-7.
[13] Sandra Leuenberger-Wenger, *Ethik und christliche Identität bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Part I on Gregory's sermons on the love for the poor, on fasting, against usurers, against fornication, and on those who take discipline badly. On the audience, see especially, pages 18 and 26.
[14] 'Der zweiter Teil beschäftigt sich mit Texten Gregors, die für ein literarisches Publikum geschrieben wurden und die Fragen der Ethik auf einem theoretischeren Niveau angehen…. Die Schriften, welche an ein interessiertes, gebildetes und gemeindeübergreifendes Publikum gerichtet sind, zeichnen sich inhaltlich dadurch aus, dass sie die Frage nach dem gutem Leben individueletisch als Frage nach der individuellen Vervollkommung stellen.' Ibid., 151.
[15] 'You have assembled zealously'; one of the questions Gregory's addressees have is 'how it is necessary for those in authority to direct the chorus of philosophy': *De Inst* GNO VIII:1, 40-41; tr. Callahan, 27-8.
[16] Here I have learned much from Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially 4-8.

provides a catena of material useful for training a community in discipleship. If this is the case the modern reader needs to have a broad view of both genre and addressees.

Secondly, although Gregory is influenced by various philosophical schools, it is rarely possibly to trace Gregory's non-biblical sources precisely by identifying particular quotations or allusions – or even particular vocabulary words. Gregory is particularly prone to use an image which he finds both in the bible and in a philosophical source or tradition (e.g. Jacob's ladder and the concept of steps in Plato and later Platonism).[17] Therefore, even if Gregory held a theory of the soul similar to that of Aristotle, he would not necessarily express it using Aristotle's own terminology. Furthermore, if he does use a word commonly associated with, say, Plato, one should not necessarily assume that Gregory is using it in a Platonic (or Neoplatonic) sense. What one should look for, between Gregory and his influences, is a deeper resonance between one idea and another – not precise echoes of vocabulary terminology. The main aim here is to achieve a better understanding of Gregory's anthropology, rather than to trace his influences in particular. To this end, this chapter will home in on certain metaphors, images and figures which illuminate the concept of formation: language about sculpture or building, for example. Whilst these portions of the text are rarely carefully-worked out analogies in the style of those used by a modern analytic philosopher, for example, nevertheless they are more than mere illustrative asides. In some cases they allow Gregory to develop an idea and move an argument on. Although their complexity is sometimes baffling, the way in which Gregory works on the detail of an image is also sometimes telling.

The three texts I will examine here all give an answer to the same basic question: what is the best way to live a Christian life? The answer – that the truly Christian life is one which is Christ-like and therefore not conformed to the ways of the world – is inflected slightly differently in the three texts. Thus in *De professione Christiana*, the emphasis is upon how one truly is a Christian, rather than merely seeming to be one by virtue of bearing the name 'Christian'. The same preoccupation with the name Christian characterises *De perfectione*, but here Gregory muses on what the various titles of Christ really mean and what significance they have, therefore, for the one aiming to imitate him. *De instituto Christiano* shares the assumption that being a Christian is to imitate, or to be conformed to, Christ but here the emphasis is on the power of the Holy Spirit bringing believers, in the words of Ephesians 4, 'to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ'.[18] In all three treatises, but especially in this last one, one finds Gregory's doctrine of *sunergeia*: divine grace working with human effort to bring the believer to perfection.

2. Is Christian formation a matter for soul and body – or for the soul alone?

A striking feature of these treatises is that Gregory writes as if moral effort and/or spiritual formation are matters for the body and soul *together*. This is particularly marked in *De instituto*

[17] See e.g. Morwenna Ludlow, "Divine Infinity and Eschatology: The Limits and Dynamics of Human Knowledge, according to Gregory of Nyssa (CE II 67–170)," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II: An English Version with Supporting Studies : Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Olomouc, September 15-18, 2004)*, ed. Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass, and Johannes Zachhuber (Leiden: Brill, 2007), especially 218-19 and 236-7. using the idea of a 'rebirth of images' from Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images the Making of St John's Apocalypse* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949).

[18] Eph 4:13: εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Christiano.[19] For example, Gregory suggests guidance for 'the soul and body (ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα) which are going to move towards God'.[20] The Christian must pray, following 1 Thessalonians 5.23, for her 'spirit and soul and body (τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα) to be preserved sound and blameless'.[21] Leaders of religious communities are instructed to minister to their flock 'not as if they are alien souls and bodies (μηδὲ ὡς ἀλλοτρίοις σώμασι καὶ ψυχαῖς)', but rather as if they are servants of Christ and 'our own hearts (ὡς ἡμετέροις σπλάγχοις)'.[22] The community of such persons should advance to their heavenly calling (πρὸς τὴν ἄνω κλῆσιν) in 'one body and one soul' (ἑνὶ σώματι καὶ ψυχῇ).[23] In *De perfectione* holiness is defined as pertaining to 'the soul and body' or 'the whole body and soul and spirit'.[24] There is less emphasis on the body in *De professione*, however, as we shall see, it implicitly works with a unitive anthropology.

What is generally absent from these treatises is the address to the soul specifically as the subject of spiritual formation, as one finds, for example, throughout Gregory's homilies on the Song of Songs. There the subject from beginning to end is the human soul and her 'incorporeal and spiritual and undefiled marriage with God'.[25] More specifically, the theme of ascent to the divine, or to heavenly things, or to higher and nobler things, pervades *In Canticum canticorum*: although Gregory rarely articulates the ascent in terms of the soul rising explicitly away from material things, nevertheless the subject of the ascent is 'the soul' (rather than, say, the believer, or the Christian).[26] This is not to say that this work has no room for the body or the resurrection of the body; but the consistency of focus on the soul is telling. In a work in which Gregory is at pains to emphasise that the Song is about a *spiritual* marriage, it is perhaps not a surprise that the subject is the soul; conversely, in a practical work of advice about ascetic life the focus is on embodied subjects.

In the three ascetic texts in question in this chapter, however, Gregory very rarely uses the image of the soul's ascent. One exception is a brief allusion in *De instituto Christiano* to the idea that is it necessary 'for the soul which is going to fly up towards the divine (ἀνίπτασθαι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον) and cleave to Christ' to drive all sin from the soul.[27] This resonates with Plato's description of the soul rising on wings to heaven in the *Phaedrus*: the same passage may also be recalled in Gregory's recommendation that one must stand by one's soul like a 'wise pilot' (σοφὸν κυβερνήτην), undistracted by the storms all around.[28] Another Platonic theme might be thought to be present at the beginning of the same work, where Gregory writes of the error of the soul's going astray (ἡ

[19] This may perhaps be one aspect of Gregory's rewriting of the *Great Letter* to bring it in a more orthodox direction. See above note 3.
[20] *Inst* 43:8-9.
[21] *Inst* 63:7-8.
[22] *Inst* 87:15-17.
[23] *Inst* 71:16-17, perhaps echoing Eph 4:1-4: ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε.... ἓν σῶμα καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα.
[24] *Perf* GNO VIII:1 206:2-3 (Callahan 115); 212:22 (Callahan 121; Gregory alludes to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, but reverses the order of τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα);
[25] τὴν ἀσώματόν τε καὶ πνευματικὴν καὶ ἀμόλυντον τοῦ θεοῦ συζυγίαν: *In Cant* I GNO VI 15:14-15 (tr. Norris, 15); the address is extended to souls collectively at the end: *In Cant* XV GNO VI 468:15-16 (tr. Norris 497).
[26] (and/or the body): GNO VI: 25, 138 (tr. Norris 27, 151); he rarely alludes to the Platonic image of the soul rising on wings and then only when the biblical text suggests it: *In cant* GNO VI: 185, 447-50 (tr. Norris: 197, 475-7). On the theme of steps, see Ludlow, "Divine Infinity and Eschatology."
[27] *Inst* 50:9-11; cf Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a-257b.
[28] *Inst* 82:1-6 (tr. Callahan, 154). Pilot of the soul in Plato: *Phaedrus* 247c and e.g. Republic 488d-e.

πλάνη)[29] if its innate and natural impulse of desire (συνουσιωμένην τε καὶ συμπεφυκυῖαν… τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ὁρμην) is enslaved by 'irrational passion and bitter pleasure' (διὰ πάθους ἀλόγου καὶ πικρᾶς ἡδονῆς).[30] In all these cases, there is an emphasis on the soul (especially the rational soul) as the locus of moral or spiritual progress. Nevertheless, our reading of these passages must be tempered by their contexts from which it is clear, as we have seen, that spiritual formation (and thus metaphorical ascent) applies to the whole person, and that salvation for the soul which is wandering or endangered by a storm is the reorientation of the whole person.

It is true that in a couple of places, it might be thought that the resolution to the problem is the release of the soul from, and through the disciplining of, the body. For example, in *De perfectione*, the Christian is instructed to sanctify 'his soul (ψυχὴν) by the deadening of his members' (διὰ τῆς τῶν μελῶν νεκρώσεως).[31] But this phrase recalls Colossians 3.5, where the author is making a constrast between sinful, that is 'earthly', things and holy or 'heavenly' ones, not between the spiritual and the material as such.[32] Despite the mention of limbs/members (τὰ μέλη), what is sacrificed in Gregory's text is not the body (σῶμα) as such, but flesh (σάρξ) or the 'wisdom of the flesh' (Rom. 8:7) – that is, following Pauline ideas, the life of sin. The idea of sacrifice itself derives from Gregory's reading of Christ as Passover (1 Cor. 5:7) and high priest (Heb. 4:14), in which the believer is bidden to present himself (ἑαυτὸν – not his soul) to God as a form of 'reasonable worship' (λογικὴ λατρεία: Rom. 12:1).[33] What is the mode of this sacrifice (ὁ τρόπος τῆς ἱερουργίας)? Gregory's answer is to quote Romans 12:2: 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.'[34]

Finally, in *De instituto* the reader is instructed not to be too preoccupied with bodily posture in prayer.[35] Does this indicate a side-lining of the body? It seems not, for Gregory's main point is there is no point in assuming the attitude of those at prayer' (ἐν τῷ σχήματι τῶν δι'εὐχην κειμένων), if one's thoughts are wandering and one is not really praying at all. Here, σχήμα means both the attitude, the physical pose of prayer, but also the mere appearance of praying. The underlying theme is more akin to the attacks on hypocrisy in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:5-8) or Gregory's own *De professione* and the motivation probably lies in Gregory's desire to disassociate himself from some of the more extreme aspects of Messalian beliefs about prayer.[36]

3. 'There are two things from which one human being is composed.'

We have found, then, that in these treatises Gregory tends to focus on the whole person when writing about Christian formation. If one digs a little deeper, one finds various expression of the view that the human being not only has, but is a unity of both material and immaterial aspects. This is an

[29] For the theme of πλάνη in Plato see, for example, *Phaedo* 81a; *Republic* 505c, 602c.
[30] *Inst* 40:11-12, 7-8.
[31] *Perf* GNO VIII/1 187:5-6, 11-12 (tr. Callahan 104-5).
[32] Col. 3:5: Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
[33] Perf 186:13-17 (tr. Callahan 104). The sense, both in Paul and in Gregory is of a spiritual, not a literal sacrifice.
[34] *Perf* 186:18-20 (tr. Callahan 104).
[35] *Inst* 82:6-11 (tr. Callahan 154)
[36] See above, note 3. There are a few other places which we can also discount, where, I would argue, 'soul' is simply short-hand for the person: e.g. Perf 185: Christ gives us immortality as if bestowing an honour on a soul; souls are the possession of God or the devil.

especially prominent theme in *De perfectione*. At one point Gregory argues that Christ is our cornerstone or coping-stone in the sense that he fits himself 'to the two walls of our life, that is, the body and soul (κατὰ σῶμα καὶ ψυχήν)'.[37] We will return to the soteriological significance of this later. Gregory also argues that, because of this dual nature, humans need two kinds of nourishment: the body needs perceptible food and the soul needs to be nourished by Christ.

> Human nature is not simple, but… there is an intelligible part mixed with a sensual part and that a particular type of nurture is need for each of the elements in us, sensible food to strengthen our bodies, and spiritual food for the well-being of our souls.
>
> οὐ μονοειδής ἐστιν ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις, ἀλλὰ τοῦ νοητοῦ πρὸς τὸ αἰσθητὸν συγκεκραμένου ἰδιάζουσα καθ' ἑκάτερον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν θεωρουμένων ἐστὶν ἡ τροφή, τῆς μὲν αἰσθητῆς βρώσεως τὸ σῶμα διακρατούσης, τῆς δὲ πνευματικῆς τροφῆς τὴν ψυχικὴν ἐμποιούσης ἡμῖν εὐεξίαν.[38]

Just as both parts of human nature need nourishment so they also need protection against the harms caused by sin: thus in *De instituto Christiano* Gregory writes:

> For there are two aspects of human existence from which one human being is composed, the soul and the body, and the latter surrounds from the outside and the former remains inside throughout [one's] life; it is necessary to watch diligently over [the body] as if it were a temple of God, taking care lest one of the obvious sins attack it and overthrow and destroy it....[39] and it is necessary to guard the inner one with all precaution lest some ambush of evil, emerging from the depths of some place or other, destroy the reasoning power of reverence and enslave the soul, filling it stealthily with passions which tear it asunder.
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> Δύο γὰρ ὄντων ἀνθρώπων, ἐξ ὧν ὁ εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἥρμοσται, ψυχῆς τε καὶ σώματος, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἔξωθεν περιέχοντος, τῆς δὲ ἔνδον παρὰ τὸν βίον μενούσης, τῷ μὲν δεῖ καθάπερ ναῷ θεοῦ παραγρυπνεῖν, τηροῦντα μή τι τῶν φανερῶν ἁμαρτημάτων προσπεσὸν κατασείσῃ καὶ διαφθείρῃ· τὴν δὲ ἔνδον χρὴ διὰ πάσης φρουρεῖν φυλακῆς, μή τις λόχος κακίας ἐκ βάθους ποθὲν ἀνακύψας καὶ τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας λογισμὸν διαφθείρας δουλώσῃ τὴν ψυχήν, πληρώσας τῶν διελκόντων αὐτὴν λάθρα παθῶν.[40]

It is important to note that, insofar as Gregory uses building or temple metaphors for his anthropology, it is implicitly the *whole human being* who is a building – as in the metaphor we cited earlier: our life has two walls, body and soul.[41] The result of this is *not* that the body is the house of the soul, but that the whole human person is the place where God dwells. However, Gregory seems to move his emphasis on whether the soul or the body especially is seen as God's temple. In *De perfectione* the emphasis is on the soul: Gregory urges that not only should the Christian imitate

[37] *Perf* 193:9-11: τοῖς δυσὶ τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν τοίχοις, τοῖς τε κατὰ σῶμα καὶ ψυχήν.
[38] *Perf* 190:16-23.
[39] Gregory here quotes 1 Cor. 3.17.
[40] *Inst* 54
[41] *Perf* 193:9-11: τοῖς δυσὶ τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν τοίχοις, τοῖς τε κατὰ σῶμα καὶ ψυχήν.

Christ, but that Christ should dwell in the Christian. According to Gregory, Paul 'imitated [Christ] so clearly, that he displayed his own Master formed in himself. By the most accurate imitation the pattern of his soul was changed to its prototype, so that it no longer seemed to be Paul living and speaking, but Christ himself living in him (ἐν αὐτῷ ζῆν)'.[42] In *De perfectione* Gregory urges the believer to receive the Eucharist (i.e. Christ) in a pure conscience, just as Christ was placed in a pure sepulchre: that is, the conscience or soul is Christ's dwelling place.[43] In *De instituto Christiano* the emphasis is more on the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, but again in the soul: 'for this is the grace of the Holy Spirit, possessing the entire soul (ὅλην κατασχοῦσα τὴν ψυχὴν) and filling the dwelling place (τὸ οἰκτήριον) with gladness and power, making sweet for the soul the sufferings of the Lord'.[44] However, as we have just seen the extract above from *De instituto* appears to describes the body as the temple of God, following Paul (1 Cor. 3.17).[45]

In a few places, Gregory moves from these relatively simple statements of the complementarity of body and soul to ask about how they function together. In his exegesis of the idea of Christ as the 'head of the church' (κεφαλὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας: Col 1:18)[46] in *De perfectione*, Gregory pursues the question of the relation of the soul to the body, as well of Christ to the church.[47] Although the body is described as τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ σώματι[48] – literally, the underlying body – the head (κεφαλὴ) is said by Gregory to be of the same nature and substance as the body (ὁμοφυής ἐστι καὶ ὁμοούσιος).[49] The parts of the body conform to the nature of the head: they are οἰκείως with it.[50] Gregory uses a series of words beginning with the prefix *sum-*/*sun-* to describe this relationship: συμφυΐα, συμπνοία, συμπάθεια[51]: 'There is one natural unity of each of the members with the whole, accomplishing by their unison a fellow-feeling of all the parts'.[52] The head-body relationship is crucial, because 'just as in the case of animals, the impulse towards action comes from the head in the body'.[53] Each *energeia* is governed by the senses.[54] By 'head' in this context, then, Gregory seems to mean something like the location of the impulse to action, which seems to include both rational thought and sense perception.[55] The implication, then, is that both head/mind/soul and body are of the same nature and must act harmoniously together in Christian action. The point of

[42] *Perf* 175:5-10; Gregory then quotes 2 Cor 13:3 and Gal 2:20.
[43] *Perf* 192:6-10.
[44] *Inst* 86:23-24. See also *Inst* 43 ('the rich and ungrudging Spirit is always flowing into those accepting grace…'); *Inst* 46;
[45] These ideas of the indwelling of God, or more specifically of Christ and/or the Spirit, are the other side of the coin to the idea that the soul can become the dwelling-place of evil, even of demons: an idea I have examined elsewhere.It is as if the person in whom God does not dwell is vulnerable to the incoming of demons, but that demons can be ousted by grace of God entering them. Morwenna Ludlow, "Demons, Evil, and Liminality in Cappadocian Theology," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20, no. 2 (2012): 179–211.
[46] Col 1:18 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας; cf Eph 4:15 and Rom 12:4.
[47] *Perf* 197-9.
[48] cf *Perf* 198:14.
[49] *Perf* 197:21.
[50] Perf 198:3, 12.
[51] Later Gregory quotes συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον from Eph. 4:16: *Perf* 199:10.
[52] *Perf* 197:21-24: μία τίς ἐστι τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον μελῶν πρὸς τὸ ὅλον ἡ συμφυΐα, διὰ μιᾶς συμπνοίας κατεργαζομένη πρὸς τὰ μέρη τῷ παντὶ τὴν συμπάθειαν.
[53] *Perf* 199:14-15.
[54] *Perf* 199:15-20.
[55] This would fit with Warren Smith's analysis, noted above, Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 75.

the analogy is to argue that unrestrained emotion (τό πάθος) can divide the head from the body 'like a sword'; Christians must ensure, therefore, that their emotions are under control.[56]

This is the second place in *De perfectione* in which Gregory uses the head-body analogy to recommend a harmonious cooperation of the parts of the self. In an earlier passage, Gregory suggests that a person cannot 'be accurately called a Christian who has the head of an irrational animal (ὸ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἄλογον) that is, who does not have by faith the head of the universe (ὸ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς κεφαλὴν), who is the Word of God (ὸ λόγος), even if he is sound in other respects. Nor would anyone be called a Christian who does not display the body of his way of life () as corresponding to the head of faith'.[57] The former is like a minotaur (a human body with a bull's head): he is a man whose idolatrous beliefs undermine the fact that he does good deeds. The latter is a centaur (a human head with a horse's body): he is torn between reason (and his assent to the Word of God) and passion.[58] So here the 'head' indicates not so much the location of someone's impulses to action, but rather of their beliefs. Thus, Gregory's concern here seems to be about the spiritual condition of those who are genuinely torn between two ways of life, one which is acting in accordance with, and the other which resists, the Word. He is writing about integrity of life, but not about hypocrisy. This contrasts with the opening theme of *De professione* (a passage to which we will return) where the problem is those Christians who only appear, but are not truly Christian: they are pretending by their actions to be what they are not.[59] In *De perfectione* there is no pretence; but Gregory sees a lack of integrity in the minotaur, a 'good pagan', whose virtue, he assumes, is out of kilter with his refusal to accept Christ.

4. 'There are three characteristic aspects of the Christian life'[60]

So, Gregory urges on his readers a fundamental integrity between head (representing moral agency and faith) and the body (which seems to mean both the limbs and organs, but also possibly those senses and emotions closely associated with the body). In other places he argues for the harmony not of certain parts of human nature, but rather of certain faculties. In *De perfectione*, Gregory announces that there are three characteristics (τὰ χαρακτηρίζοντα) of the Christian life: deed, word, thought (πρᾶξις, λόγος, ἐνθύμιον). To paraphrase Gregory, there is sequence in our life (ἡ ἀκολουθία τοῦ βίου): thought comes first, because thought initiates the word – and words reveal the thoughts which are generated by the soul. Finally, action (πρᾶξις) brings what is thought into operation (ἡ πρᾶξις, τὸ νοηθὲν εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἄγουσα).[61] Gregory's point appears to be partly that if

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[56] *Perf* 198:4-11 (tr. Callahan, 112).
[57] *Perf* 179:8-12 (tr. Greer and Smith, 27).
[58] The Centaurs were notorious examples in Greek myth of 'uncontrolled lust, violence, and greed for alcohol' which threatened civilised values (see Alan H. Griffiths, "Centaurs," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-1467.). Gregory's reference to the fight between reason and passion, may reflect stories about Chiron who proved the exception to the rule: he could be a rational teacher, but also showed evidence of his other, bestial nature.
[59] *Prof* 130-133, especially
[60] *Perf* 210:4-5 (tr. Greer and Smith, 42).
[61] *Perf* 210:4-11.

one's thoughts are in accord with Christ then the rest will follow.[62] He repeatedly emphasises that one must follow in one's thoughts *and* words *and* actions.[63] But this three-fold distinction seems to overlie a more fundamental two-fold one: that is, between what is 'inner' (thought) and the 'outer' actions and deeds which make the inner life evident. Gregory concludes that the result of someone imitating Christ is that 'there is congruence (συμφωνίαν) between the hidden (i.e. inner) person and the outer person, the well-ordered life corresponding with thoughts which run in accordance with Christ'.[64]

As we have just seen, Gregory insists that there should be a correspondence between a Christian's words and actions on the one hand and her thoughts on the other. In *De instituto Christiano* he calls his readers to eschew outer display in favour of caring for the inner soul.[65] A similar theme runs as a thread through *De professione Christiana*: the Christian's whole nature must accord with the name 'Christian'. She must truly be what she is called. Gregory implies that for some Christians the name a title of convenience. Some basic kinds of behaviour are simply a mask, giving the impression that someone is a Christian, when they are not.[66] In order to convey this idea, Gregory retells a story which appears to have been a Greek proverb.[67]An Alexandrian showman trained a monkey to dance, dressing it in the clothes and mask of a human performer. But when someone in the audience threw it some tempting food, it tore its mask to sheds in order to eat it and its true identity was revealed. 'In the same way', Gregory writes, 'those who fail truly to form their own nature itself by faith will be easily exposed by the greeds of the devil to be other than what they profess'.[68] When they are tempted, these ersatz-Christians 'destroy the mask of temperance or meekness or any other virtue when their own passions are stirred'.[69] Gregory appears to be making a point here which goes deeper than condemning those who pretend to be Christian when they are not (for reason of social advancement, perhaps). Rather, it is a more profound kind of hypocrisy which is under attack: that of those are those who think they are Christian, who go through the motions, but whose commitment is only skin-deep. To back this attack up and to focus the reader's minds on the question of how they should respond, the passage is full of the language of formation. Both the monkey's disguise and Christians' own deception is described as a 'cunningly-contrived form' (τὴν σεσοφισμένην μορφὴν, τὸ σεσοφισμένον σχῆμα)'; monkey-like Christians are those 'who fail truly to form their own nature (οἱ μὴ ἀληθῶς αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν ἑαυτὼν μορφώσαντες)' and whose virtues are just a mask (τὸ προσωπεῖον).[70] Although imitation (ἡ μίμησις) often has a positive connotation for Gregory, being part of the language of Christian formation, through the idea of the imitation of

[62] He may be drawing on a biblical passage, e.g. Matthew 15:18-19 'But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.'
[63] *Perf* 210:11 – 212:13.
[64] *Perf* 212:13-16: ὥστε συμφωνίαν εἶναι τοῦ κρυπτοῦ ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν φαινόμενον, συμβαινούσης τῆς τοῦ βίου εὐσχημοσύνης τοῖς κατὰ Χριστὸν κινουμένοις νοήμασι. Passion (τό πάθος) and the rejection of virtue (ἡ ἀρετή) are impediments to Christlike behaviour; sharing in the purity of Christ is the solution. Virtue e.g. *Perf* 211:14-15; passion *Perf* 211:24 212:4; *purity* Perf 212:4-13
[65] *Inst* 74.
[66] Especially *Prof* 130-1.
[67] For other examples of the story, see Graham Anderson, "Simulator Simius," *The Classical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1980): 259–60.
[68] *Prof* 133:4-6 (tr. Greer and Smith 19).
[69] *Prof* 133:13-15 (tr. Greer and Smith 19).
[70] *Prof* 132:21; 133:3; 133:4-5.

Christ, here Gregory plays on its double-meaning: just as the monkey was trained to make a show of itself' (or perhaps 'trained to dissimulate': σχηματίζεσθαι), so monkey-Christians are those who 'act the part of Christianity by a show of imitation' (οἳ διὰ μιμήσεως ἐσχηματισμένης τὸν χριστιανισμὸν ὑποκρίνονται).[71] Gregory's point seems to be directly precisely at the practice of Christian formation and, perhaps especially, those who train Christians in discipleship.

In these instances, Gregory's language about the inner and outer person (*anthrōpos*) is directed at hidden thought on the one hand and evident word and action on the other, and has its aim injunctions against hypocrisy. However, a slightly different use of such language is influenced by the Pauline/deutero-Pauline letters.[72] These see a contrast between the outer person – mortal and under the power of sin – and the inner person – subject to grace. The outer person is fleshly, but this does not mean that the contrast of the outer and inner denotes the body and soul as such. Rather, Gregory takes this New Testament idea and develops it in the direction of moral psychology. He himself, like the Pauline literature, clearly distinguishes between the quality of fleshliness (i.e. sinfulness) and the human body as such.[73] Thus, for Gregory 'body' (τὸ σῶμα) appears to denote the actual body of limbs and organs, or the words and actions made evident through the workings of the body, or the senses, or sometimes the passions associated with the body (like hunger). Flesh (ἡ σάρξ), on the other hand, denotes the life of sin.

5. Soteriology and spiritual/moral formation:

As we noted earlier, spiritual growth is sometimes expressed by Gregory as Christ being formed in the believer: Paul 'imitated [Christ] so clearly, that he displayed his own Master formed (μεμορφωμένον) in himself'.[74] At other points, it is the believer who is the one who is shaped – shaped, that is, by their relationship with God. Thus (besides quoting Romans 12:2) Gregory is extremely fond of quoting or alluding to Ephesians 4:13: believers have been given gifts 'for building up the body of Christ (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ), until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ'.[75] In other places, change is expressed in terms of the restoration of humanity's original beauty (a famously prominent theme in *De hominis opificio*): in *De instituto Christiano* this reformation is seen as being due to the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit working with the believer.[76] In all case, however, the central trope is that of a change in *form* (σχήμα, μορφή).

In an extended building metaphor in *De perfectione*, which we have already alluded to briefly above, Gregory suggests that human life has two walls – body and soul – and that Christ must be fitted to

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[71] *Prof* 133:12-13 (tr. Greer and Smith 19).

[72] See, for example, 2 Cor. 4:16: 'Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day' (εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡμέρᾳ.); Rom 7:22-3: ΄For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members'; Eph. 3:16: Paul prays that his addressees might 'be strengthened through his Spirit in their inner man' (δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον).

[73] He himself, like the Pauline literature, clearly distinguishes between the quality of fleshliness (i.e. sinfulness) and the human body as such: *Perf* 183; *Perf* 186 (*dianoia* assimilated to Christ vs flesh); *Perf* 195 (living in the flesh, not according to the flesh).

[74] *Perf* 175:6.

[75] εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μέχρι καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἑνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

[76] *Inst* 44, 46. See also *De perfectione* 186:18-20

both in order for humans to be saved. There are two groups of biblical references which Gregory seems to be drawing on here. First, he is alluding to predictions of a messianic leader as a crucial stone in a building, especially Isaiah 28:16: 'See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation' and Psalm 118:22's variation on the theme ('The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone [LXX: κεφαλὴν γωνίας]').[77] The latter is cited by the Synoptic gospels and Acts as a confirmation of Jesus' mission: *he* is the chief cornerstone.[78] Secondly, Gregory appears to be drawing on Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2: 4-8 which express the notion of the church as a building – a new spiritual temple in which God dwells (ναὸν ἅγιον, κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι, οἶκος πνευματικὸς), and of which Jesus is a crucial stone (ἀκρογωνιαίου, λίθον ζῶντα).[79] Both passages make much of the verb to build/be built, especially with prefixes which emphasise that they are being built together or on a foundation οἰκοδομεῖσθε, συνοικοδομεῖσθε (cf συναρμολογουμένη), ἐποικοδομηθέντες.

However, in order to understand this metaphor in Gregory, one must think not of the *corner* of a building with a crucial cornerstone (γωνία) as in his biblical precedents, but rather of a building with an inner and an outer wall. For as we have seen, Gregory not only regards human life as consisting of two walls, but he views the body as the outer and the soul as the inner aspect.[80] This double wall is topped with a stone (κεφαλή) perpendicular to each which connects them together. A close look at Gregory's Greek finds Gregory moving from quoting the γωνίας κεφαλὴ - the 'chief corner-stone' of Ps 118, the gospels and 1 Peter to writing merely of κεφαλὴ, which means – amongst other things – a coping-stone or the capital of a column.[81] Having lost the idea of a corner-stone, Gregory can adapt the motif to his theory of humans' inner and outer walls:

> Thus the coping-stone of all becomes our coping-stone, fitting himself with a square fit to the two walls of our life – that is, our body and soul – which are built with elegance and purity. So that if one part of the building is deficient, whether the external elegance is not built into the purity of the soul, or if the soul's virtue does not balance the outward appearance, Christ would not become the coping-stone of such a half-completed life, for he fits himself only to a double and squarely-built house.
>
> οὕτως ἡ τοῦ παντὸς κεφαλὴ καὶ ἡμετέρα γίνεται κεφαλή, τοῖς δυσὶ τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν τοίχοις, τοῖς τε κατὰ σῶμα καὶ ψυχήν, δι' εὐσχημοσύνης καὶ καθαρότητος ἐποικοδομουμένοις διὰ τῆς διαγωνίου συμφυΐας ἑαυτὴν ἐφαρμόζουσα. ὡς ἐὰν

[77] See also Zechariah 4:7: 'he shall bring out the top stone amid shouts of "Grace, grace to it!" '.
[78] Matt.21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17 and in Acts 4:11.
[79] Ephesians 2:19-22: 'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ), built upon the foundation (ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ) of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone (ἀκρογωνιαίου). In him the whole structure is joined together (συναρμολογουμένη) and grows into a holy temple in the Lord (ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ). In whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God (συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι)'. 1 Peter 2: 4-8 'Come to him, a living stone (λίθον ζῶντα), though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house (λίθοι ζῶντες οἰκοδομεῖσθε οἶκος πνευματικὸς), to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [There follow citations of Isa. 28:16, Ps 118:2 and Isa. 8:14 'He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against… a rock one stumbles over'].
[80] *Inst* 54
[81] See Liddell and Scott: κεφαλή II c

> ἐλλείπῃ τὸ ἕτερον τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων, ἤτοι τῆς κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον εὐσχημοσύνης τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς καθαρότητι μὴ συνοικοδομουμένης ἢ τῆς ψυχικῆς ἀρετῆς τῷ φαινομένῳ μὴ συμβαινούσης, οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τοῦ ἡμιτελοῦς τούτου βίου κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ μόνῃ τῇ διπλῇ τε καὶ διαγωνίᾳ οἰκοδομίᾳ ἑαυτὸν ἐφαρμόζων·[82]

Christologically, the clear implication of this extract is that in the incarnation Christ became human in both body and soul and that both aspects were necessary for salvation.[83] This is perhaps not surprising, but more surprising perhaps is the way that Gregory thinks that salvation continues to be played out in the believer: Christ *continues* to fit himself to humans in both aspects of their nature. The ascended Christ thus has a single relationship with the believer – he does not relate, for example, in one way to the soul and in another to humans' bodily existence.

However, this passage has interesting implications for the relation of divine grace and human effort. Christ will fit himself to the believer: but the believer seemingly must make sure that she is not deficient in the way she has built herself. Thus Gregory repeats the message we have heard before: that human integrity demands a good match between inner and outer, but with an emphasis on the possible soteriological consequences.[84]

Elsewhere, Gregory expresses human effort in terms of imitation (μίμησις), adaptation (οἰκείωσις) and assimilation (ὁμοίωσις). For example:

> It is necessary for the one who desires to be adapted (οἰκειωθῆναί) to someone to take on by imitation the mode/manner (τὸω τρόπον) of the one to whom he is being adapted (οἰκειοῦται). Therefore it is necessary for the one who desires to become the bride of Christ to be assimilated (ὁμοιωθῆναι) to the beauty of Christ through virtue according to his ability.[85]

In another passage the specific language of formation is more prominent: 'our life must be conformed (συμμορφωθῆναι) to this name', that is, the name of Christ.[86]

A crucial aspect of this theory is Gregory's concept of the *imago dei*. For him, Christ is the true image (εἰκών) of the Father; human life should reflect Christ's. Humans are the image of an image.[87] Immediately after the analogy of Christ fitting himself to our building, Gregory writes that Christ 'in order to make you once more (σε ποιήσῃ πάλιν) the image of God, because of his love of humanity, also himself became the image of the invisible God. As a result, he has been formed (μορφωθῆναι) in you in the form (μορφῇ) he assumed and made his own [in the incarnation]; and through himself you have again been conformed (συσχηματισθῆναι[88]) to the exact imprint of the archetypal beauty, so to become what you were from the beginning'.[89] Should this seem rather passive, Gregory

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[82] *Perf* 193:9-18
[83] For a similar assertion, expressed in Gregory's favourite metaphor of leaven in the dough, see: *Perf* 206.
[84] Note the use of a word from the root σχῆμα (εὐσχημοσύνης) to describe the outer aspect.
[85] *Inst* 50:1-4.
[86] e.g. *Perf* 181:19. Sometimes Gregory very much struggles to make sense of his own metaphors. Therefore, after arguing that Christ leavens the whole dough-like lump of human nature, he argues that believers, the dough, must imitate the purity of their leaven, that is, Christ. *Perf* 206.
[87] *Perf* 188; cf *Perf* 195:1ff and *Inst* 40.
[88] echoing Rom 12:12.
[89] *Perf* 194:14 – 195:5 (tr. Greer and Smith 35).

immediately follows it up with one of his most famous metaphors: Christ's action is like a teacher painting an image on a panel for his students to imitate. Christians need to imitate this picture, painting themselves with virtues.[90] Again, the language of form is vital to Gregory's explanation. Pupils are bidden to copy the form (μορφὴν) on the tablet. Unlike the cunningly-contrived form (τὴν σεσοφισμένην μορφὴν) of the monkey's disguise this is a beautifully-made form (κεκαλλωπισμένην μορφὴν). The challenge here, is that the believer should not distort the form as he copies it and thus turn it into a deformed face (ἄμορφον πρόσωπον).

Gregory's images of building and painting are examples of Gregory's doctrine of *sunergeia* or the working together of God and human believer. This is especially prominent in *De instituto Christiano*. It is as if Gregory is at pains to argue that the indwelling of Holy Spirit means neither that the believer can rest easy, nor that progress is due to the believer alone: the gift of the Holy Spirit remains as co-worker (συνεργὸν) and companion (σύνοικον), building up (οἰκοδομοῦν) the good in each one in proportion to the eagerness of the soul in its deed of faith'.[91]

6. Conclusions

From the evidence of these three pieces, one could say that Gregory's moral psychology is unitive in three ways: first, moral effort and improvement work in the human being as (ideally) a harmonious system of body and soul. Secondly, moral and spiritual development are seen in terms of the human being shaped by divine grace: this shaping comes about from a working together of God agent and the human recipient who is not entirely passive in the process of being thus formed. Finally, this shaping is seen in terms of being shaped in the shape of an archetype: that is, Jesus Christ, whom Gregory continually insists was incarnate in both body and soul together. The imitation of Christ shapes or en-forms the believer – and that it does so in both soul and body. Thus, although Gregory sometimes writes about the soul fleeing the body, this is not the dominant idea in his advice to those taking on ascetic discipline. Rather, such discipline is inherently embodied and takes place in community (i.e. a group of ensouled bodies).

Often the idea of Christian formation as imitation of Christ is linked to the idea of the image of God – an image which is perfectly instantiated in Christ, but in which believers can participate. The language of form might even suggest here that had a hylomorphic theory of the body-soul relationship: that is that he thought that the human soul was the form of the body. Could it be therefore, that for Gregory the soul is the form of the body, but that the way the soul forms the body is conditioned by the extent to which it does, or does not, reflect the image of God? For he seems to argue that the form of the soul will affect the external aspects of human nature, as the passage about thought, word and deed made clear. Gregory's example of the most harmonious working together of body and soul is the incarnate Christ. Christ is not just a mere example however, for through the power of God, Christ re-shapes or forms the believer in his own image. For Gregory, then, God or Christ or sometimes the Holy Spirit is in some sense the form of the whole person, both body and soul.

With regard to previous work on Gregory's theological anthropology, the general direction of these ascetic works fits with that in pieces of writing like *De hominis opificio* and *De anima et*

[90] *Perf* 195:14 – 196:15.
[91] *Inst* 40; cf *Inst* 87.

resurrectione: Gregory vacillates between stating that the human *is* a harmonious working of inner and outer, of soul and body, and between urging his addressees to overcome the tension between these two aspects. But in the ascetic works, the reason for this vacillation is clearer: Gregory is on the one hand expressing an ideal and, on the other, offering advice on how to overcome the effects of sin in order to achieve that. The latter requires identifying points at which the harmony is disrupted. Thus, this investigation of Gregory's moral psychology here backs up the arguments of Smith and Young, but perhaps clarifies some reasons for the tensions which both scholars identified.

Finally, this chapter has tried to show in particular how Gregory, through repeated recourse to the language of formation, emphasises not only the reciprocity of divine action (Christ formed himself in human form) and human response (conformation to Christ), but also the risk involved in Christian formation: humans might create a form which is a mere mask; or they might badly copy the form set out before them and make it an ugly one. Such language conveys some interesting theological ideas, but it also suggests something about the kind of writing these pieces were. These ascetic works are noticeably less technical and philosophical than *De hominis opificio* and *De anima et resurrection*: they may have been written for well-educated individuals, but their emphasis on spiritual/moral formation and their use of homely metaphors to do so, suggests that their purpose was not a reasoned defence of a particular anthropology, but the instilling of enough foundations so as to allow the communication of key ideas of practical theology from Gregory to his addressees and then again from his addressees to their own flocks.

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