

The Alexandrian and the Cappadocian Fathers of the Church in the writings of Thomas Aquinas

Los Padres alejandrinos y capadocios en los escritos de Tomás de Aquino

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Resumen: Santo Tomás considera que los escritos de los Padres están directamente relacionados con las Escrituras ya que fueron escritos bajo la influencia rectora del mismo Espíritu Santo. Existe, pues, una continuidad de pensamiento entre los Padres como representantes de la autoridad de los Apóstoles y la Biblia. Por este motivo, sería bueno reconocer cuán profundamente santo Tomás se inspira en el pensamiento de los Padres. En esta contribución presentaremos los temas principales dentro de los escritos de los Padres Alejandrinos y Capadocios que han influido en el propio pensamiento de santo Tomás.

Palabras clave: Atanasio de Alejandría, Cirilo de Alejandría, Basilio Magno, Gregorio Nacianceno, Gregorio de Nisa, Tomás de Aquino.

Abstract: *St. Thomas considers the writings of the Fathers as directly related to Scripture since these were composed under the guiding influence of the same Holy Spirit. There exists therefore a continuity of thought between the Fathers as representatives of the authority of the Apostles and the Bible.¹ For this reason, one would do well to recognize how deeply St. Thomas draw upon the thought of the Fathers. In this contribution we will present the main themes within the writings of the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers that have influenced St. Thomas's own thought.²*

Key words: *Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Thomas Aquinas.*

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¹ The text of this article has been revised by Jörgen Vijgen who has also harmonised and completed the footnotes. The following abbreviations are used: PL (Patrologia Latina), PG (Patrologia Latina), SC (Sources Chrétiennes), CPG (Clavis Patrum Graecorum), LE (Leonina Editio).

² See L. ELDERS, *Thomas Aquinas and His Predecessors. The Philosophers and the Church Fathers in His Works*, 101-102. Spanish translation: *Santo Tomás de Aquino y sus Predecesores: presencia de grandes filósofos y Padres de la Iglesia en las obras de santo Tomás*, Santiago de Chile, 2018. For an excellent introduction into the whole of the Greek Fathers see G. EMERY, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'Orient chrétien", 19-36.

I. The Alexandrian Fathers: Athanasius and Cyrillus

I.1. *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*

Born about 295 Athanasius was ordained by his bishop Alexander whom he accompanied to the Council of Nicaea (325), where his discussions with Arians impressed the orthodox bishops. In 328 he succeeded his bishop to the see of Alexandria. But the emperor Constantine who sympathized with the Arians, banished Athanasius to Trier. After the death of the emperor he returned to Alexandria. Shortly after his return a synod deposed him. Athanasius went to Rome and was reinstalled by the pope. But a short time after, Constantine, the sole emperor of the East and West, had a synod condemn him. Athanasius had to leave Alexandria and retired to the monks in the Egyptian desert. After some years a new emperor called him back. Athanasius tried to bring the Christians in Alexandria to unity but was exiled again. Soon after he was recalled and spent the last seven years of his life in peace. He died in 373. Among his writings we mention his *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, *Orationes contra Arianos*, *Oratio contra gentes*, several Apologies and Dogmatic Letters, and his Life of St. Anthony.

There are some quotations from Athanasius in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the *Summa theologiae* and the *De potentia* but a very great number in the *Contra errores graecorum*. This is not surprising given the fact that the work is an examination of a collection of texts from the Greek Fathers (*Libellus* or *Liber de fide Trinitatis*), probably compiled by Nicholas of Durrazzo. The latter references, however, are not reliable, sometimes even false, in the sense that they are nowhere found in the works of Athanasius³. For this reason, these very numerous quotations we find in this work, will not be mentioned as texts of Athanasius.

In the *Summa contra Gentiles* (= SCG) IV, 24 we read that “Athanasius said that the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not as made

³ Cf. F.H. REUSCH, *Die Fälschungen in dem Traktat gegen die Griechen (Opusculum Contra. errores graecorum ad Urbanum IV)*, 673-742; A. DONDAINE, O.P., “Nicolas de Crotone et les sources du Contra errores Graecorum de saint Thomas d’Aquin”, 313-340; the introduction to the Leonine edition vol. 40A of *Contra errores Graecorum* (Ad Sanctae Sabinae, Romae, 1967), particular 1-20.

or created nor as engendered but as proceeding”.⁴ *SCG IV*, 41 relates that Athanasius did not compose the so-called *Symbolum Athanasianum*, but since the doctrine of the text contains the integral truth of the faith, it was received by the authority of the supreme pontiff and is considered a rule of the faith.

In the *Summa Theologiae* (= *S.Th.*) II-II, q. 95, a. 4 Athanasius explains why Christ orders the devil not to make public that he is the Messiah: the devil would together with the truth have proclaimed his own iniquity.⁵ In *S. Th.*, III, q. 18, a. 6, arg. 1, Athanasius, basing himself on the text of Luke 22: 42 (“not my will but your will may be done”) speaks of two wills in Christ.⁶ Thomas points out the harmony between the Father and the Son as presented by Athanasius: God wanted that the human will of Christ would also act moved by itself.

Commenting on a passage of Athanasius from his *Letter to Epictetus* on the risen Christ in *S.Th.* III, q. 50, a. 3 arg. 2 and ad 2 Thomas writes that this text should be understood in the sense that the human nature which Christ had taken on in the incarnation is restored in the union of his soul with his body. Thomas adds, however, that the risen body is not simply the same.⁷ In *De potentia* q. 9, a. 5, sc. 2, Thomas quotes a text in which Athanasius confirms that the name ‘person’ can be used for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but names which signify the divine essence, such as eternal, cannot be used in the plural. When we apply this to God’s essence there is only one eternal. In q. 10, a. 2 we read that Athanasius felt that since there is no earlier and later in God, the term ‘principle’ should not be used of the Father, but Thomas notes that ‘principle’ need not imply a temporal origin. In q. 10, a. 4 ad 14 we read that when the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son it necessarily means that from all eternity he proceeds from the Son.

⁴ On the patristic foundations of this doctrine see G. EMERY, “La procession du Saint-Esprit ‘a Filio’ chez saint Thomas d’Aquin”, 531-574 and his *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 269-297.

⁵ See ATHANASIUS, *In Lucam* 4, 33 (PG 27, 1397); See CPG 2141 (9).

⁶ See ATHANASIUS, *De incarnatione et contra Arianos*, n. 21 (PG 26, 1021). This work comes from the pseudo-Athanasian corpus.

⁷ For a Latin translation of this Letter see PG 26, 1056. As Jörgen Vijgen notes: “[Athanasius] quotes from this letter only 4 times and only in the Tertia Pars. St. Thomas most likely had access to the fifth century collection of canonical and dogmatic texts *Collectio Quesnelliana*.” See J. VIJGEN, “In Defense of Aristotle: Thomas Aquinas on the Identity of the Living Body and the Corpse of Christ”, 65-76.

In his writings in defense of the mendicant life, St. Thomas mentions Athanasius on only two occasions, but these are important because they underscore the importance St. Thomas assigns to Athanasius. Despite the words of Christ in Mt 10, 9 that his disciples should not possess gold, several bishops and even “some of the most saintly bishops” (*de quorum sanctitate dubitari non potest*), as for instance Athanasius and Hilarius, did have possessions. In this connection Thomas quotes a text of Augustine from *Contra mendacium* to the effect that when judging whether some conduct is allowed or sinful, one must not only look at the precept, but also at the life and moral behavior of the person in question.⁸ In response to the objection that the mendicant life presents a rupture from the tradition, he asks the question: “Has Christian teaching failed from the days of the masters and the doctors, Athanasius, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine, and the rest, until our times, in which men are even better instructed than they formerly were in Christian doctrine?” A negative response would constitute a rejection of divine providence; “rather, according to the wisdom whereby He disposes all things sweetly, He provides at divers seasons the aids to man’s salvation peculiarly befitting those times.”⁹

De unione Verbi, art.1, arg. 1 has a text of Athanasius in which we read that God and man are one Christ. One can try to explain this union by that of the body and the soul, but not in the sense, Thomas says, that the Word would be the form, but in the sense that the body is his proper instrument joined to him.

The treatise *Contra errores Graecorum* aims at clarifying certain ambiguous statements attributed to some of the Greek Fathers. As a general rule, St. Thomas notes that “if there are found some points in statements of the ancient Fathers not expressed with the caution moderns find appropriate to observe, their statements are not to be ridiculed or rejected; on the other hand neither are they to be overextended, but reverently interpreted.”¹⁰ In *Contra errores graecorum*, chapter 7, a text attributed to Athanasius says that the Father by himself needs nothing to achieve his perfection. Thomas comments that it is certain that the Father is fully perfect, but that he would not be perfect if he did not have the Son and the life giving Spirit. In chapter 10 of the first part of the *Contra errores Graecorum*, some refer-

⁸ *De Perfectione* ch. 18 (21) (Leonine edition = LE vol. 41B, 94).

⁹ *Contra Retrahentes* ch. 16 (LE 41C, 73-74).

¹⁰ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, prologue (LE 40A, 71).

ences to a text ascribed to Athanasius are quoted which might be authentic. The Greek Fathers, and also Athanasius, repeatedly call the Holy Spirit the *image* of the Son. Thomas refers to the *Third Sermon* of Athanasius at Nicaea and to his *Letter to Serapion*. Basil also uses this expression. Thomas explains that by the term ‘image’ they only want to say that it means to have one’s existence from another. But in the proper sense of the term only the Son is the image of the Father. Thomas says that it would be presumptuous to contradict these Greek doctors. Yet one can only say that the Holy Spirit is the image of the Son if by ‘image’ is meant that he has his being from another as its origin.¹¹

In chapter 14 of the same treatise, Thomas gives an explanation of the expression that a divine person is sent into the world, sc. we can say so in so far as he begins to exist in the world in a new way by some effect of his (“*inquantum in novo modo incipit esse in mundo per aliquod effectum*”).¹² According to the Greek Fathers a divine person is not sent unless by him from who he eternally proceeds. A text of Athanasius referred to in chapter 16 implies that before the incarnation of the Son God did not dwell by his grace in the hearts of men. Thomas corrects the sentence: at that time the presence of God may have been weak but was real. In the following chapters Thomas repeatedly corrects less precise sayings of Athanasius, as reported in the *Contra errores*, as for instance in chapter 21 that “the Son by taking up man into himself as a divine person, made man God”, but this way of saying would mean that a *suppositum* in human nature (a human person) is united to the Son of God. However, Thomas notes that strictly speaking one should say that what happened is that man is God.¹³

In his *First Letter to Serapion* Athanasius says that after his resurrection Christ would have done away with the entire image of Adam. But Thomas writes in chapter 22 that we must understand ‘image of Adam’ in a three-fold way: the same human nature as we have; as bearing the guilt of the original sin, and as subject to punishment.¹⁴ A text attributed to Athanasius seems to suggest that a creature cannot cooperate with God. Thomas analyzes the saying in chapter 23 and explains the limited way in which a

¹¹ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 10 (LE 40A 77-78).

¹² *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 14 (LE 40A 80).

¹³ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 21 (LE 40A 83): “... unde exponenda est sic: ‘homo factus est Deus’ id est factum est ut homo sit Deus”.

¹⁴ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 22 (LE 40A 83).

creature can be said to cooperate with God, that is to say as an instrumental, secondary cause.¹⁵

In the *Catena aurea* on the Gospel according to Luke one encounters many short texts of Athanasius which, however, for the greater part do not express his proper dogmatic positions but can be inserted in generally accepted theological explanations. Some will be quoted which are somewhat proper to St. Thomas or because they remind the reader of his combat against Arianism. On the circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2: 21), Athanasius is reported to have said that one is freed from the old generation from Adam by the removal of that part of the body which is the cause of the birth of the body.¹⁶ The child Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2: 40), but, according to some Arians, the meaning of the sentence is that a human body has been changed into divine nature. But if so, how would growth be possible?¹⁷ In chapter 4, verse 9 the devil tells Jesus “If you are the Son of God”. Athanasius is said to have remarked that the devil did not dare to fight against God but thought that he was fighting with a human being like the one which originally he had been able to seduce.¹⁸ In chapter 5, verse 12 ff. a leper throws himself down before Jesus. Athanasius comments that he adored God who was in Jesus’ body, but did not think that Jesus was a creature of God.¹⁹

A man in charge of the local synagogue approached Jesus with a prayer for his only daughter who was dying (Luke 8: 41-49). Someone from the house of this Jairus came to tell him not to bother Jesus for meanwhile his daughter had already died. Jesus told Jairus not to be afraid but to have faith. Athanasius is said to have commented Jesus demands faith from those who ask him a favor, not because he needed the support of others since he is the Lord, but in order not to give the impression that he distributes his gifts according to the social position of people; he favored those who believed.²⁰ In Luke 10: 22 Jesus says that everything has been entrusted to him by his Father. Athanasius notes that the Arians did not understand this correctly. According to them, if Jesus received his wisdom and power from his Father, there was a time he did not have these. Hence, he is not of the substance of

¹⁵ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 23 (LE 40A 84).

¹⁶ *Catena in Lucam* II, 6. References are to the *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia*.

¹⁷ *Catena in Lucam* II, 12.

¹⁸ *Catena in Lucam* IV, 3.

¹⁹ *Catena in Lucam* V, 4.

²⁰ *Catena in Lucam* VIII, 8.

his Father.²¹ In his prayer on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22: 42) Jesus says: “Let your will be done, not mine”. These words, says Athanasius, show a dual will of Christ, one of his human body, the other divine.²² In Luke 23: 35 we read that the leaders of the people mocked at Jesus: “He saved others, let him save himself”. Athanasius comments that as the Lord and the true Savior Jesus wanted to be known, by not saving himself, but by freeing the creatures.²³

I.2. Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril who occupies a central place among the Fathers of the Eastern Church because of his theological writings, was born in Alexandria, where he received his formation at the city’s famous center of learning. In 403 he accompanied the bishop, -his uncle-, to Constantinople where he took part in the deposition of St. John Chrysostom, against whom he seems to have fostered a grudge over the years, as also against the see of Antiochia. In 412 he was elected to the see of Alexandria. In 428 Nestorius, the originator of Nestorianism, became the bishop of Constantinople. After an exchange of letters both Cyril and Nestorius appealed to pope Celestine. The theory of Nestorius was condemned at a synod held in Rome in 430. The emperor Theodosius II then called all the bishops of the empire together in Ephesus. The council was presided by Cyril. Nestorius was condemned and was ordered to retract his heresy of the two persons in Christ; Mary was solemnly proclaimed *Theotokos* (Mother of God). But Nestorius called a counter synod together, so that the emperor put both leading bishops (Cyril and Nestorius) in prison, but soon after he allowed Cyril to return to Alexandria, while Nestorius had to retire to a monastery in Antiochia. After some years Cyril was reconciled with the see of Antiochia. He died in 444.

While in his younger years Cyril combatted Arianism, after 428 his very numerous writings were mainly directed against Nestorianism. Among his commentaries on the Old and New Testament, his homilies on the Gospel according to Luke deserve special mention, 156 of these

²¹ *Catena in Lucam* X, 6.

²² *Catena in Lucam* XXII, 11.

²³ *Catena in Lucam* XXIII, 6.

homilies survived in a Syriac version.²⁴ Thomas mentions these homilies more than 300 times in his *Catena* on Luke. Since paganism was still alive in Egypt, Cyril composed an apology of the Christian faith to refute the apostate emperor Julian's (*Contra Julianum*). He also left a great number of letters and sermons. Thomas qualifies Cyril's lifelong theological activity noting that Cyril was faithful to the Catholic faith as taught by the Church of Rome.

In the *SCG* IV, 24 and 38, Cyril is mentioned as having defended the doctrine that Christ is one person. In *S. Th.* III, q. 16, a. 4 Cyril is quoted from his *Letter 17 to Nestorius* saying that he who places two persons (hypostases) in Christ is anathema.²⁵ In III, q. 20, a. 2 arg.1 Cyril is quoted as writing the same Letter²⁶ that we cannot say that Christ is the lord or servant of himself. Thomas adds that the latter saying is true, if one supposes that there are different *supposita* (persons) in him. In *S. Th.* III, q. 35, a. 4 the same Letter is mentioned in which he affirms that Mary is the Mother of God, a dogma confirmed by the Council of Ephesus.²⁷ Thomas explains that we must confess that Christ is born from a woman, from whom he received his human body. In *S. Th.* III, q. 43, a. 4 the miracles wrought by Christ are said to be sufficient to show his divinity, but in performing a miracle he sometimes adds something human to his divine power, such as imposing his hands.²⁸ In III, q. 75, a. 1, on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Thomas quotes a beautiful text of Cyril: "Do not doubt whether it is true, accept in faith the words of the Savior, who being the truth himself does not lie".²⁹ In *De potentia* q. 10, a. 4 ad 24 Cyril confirms against the Nestorians that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.

In *Contra errores graecorum*, chapter 6, Thomas corrects a few texts of Cyril: certain attributes which are said of the Father are proper to him, such as paternity and being unengendered. In the *Catena* on Matthew 1: 1 Nestorius is quoted as saying that Mary gave life only to a natural human body³⁰, but Cyril quotes Philippians 2: 6 and insists on the words "being in

²⁴ See CPG 5207 (3).

²⁵ CYRILL, *Epist. 17 ad Nestorium* (PG 77, 120).

²⁶ CYRILL, *Epist. 17 ad Nestorium* (PG 77, 112).

²⁷ CYRILL, *Epist. 17 ad Nestorium* (PG 77, 120).

²⁸ CYRILL, *Commentarii in Lucam* on 6:19 (PG 72, 588).

²⁹ CYRILL, *Commentarii in Lucam* on 22:19 (PG 72, 92).

³⁰ See BEDE THE VENERABLE, *In Luc.* I, 1 (CCSL 46, 32).

the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” and asks Nestorius who was the one who was “in the nature (form) of God”³¹. In another text on Matthew 1:19 Cyril argues against Valentinus that the holy body of Christ is formed out of Mary.³²

The vast majority of references, however, occur in the *Catena* on the Gospel of Luke. In chapter 4, verse 19 Jesus says that the Spirit of God has anointed him. Cyril notes that not his divine nature is anointed, but his human nature by which he is a relative of us.³³ Jesus went to Capernaum although he knew that the people there were disobedient and their hearts hardened, but he acts as a good physician who tries to save those who suffer from illnesses. The miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:45) as a sign of the apostles throwing the net of the evangelical doctrine: crowds of heathens will accept the Gospel message.³⁴ In 6: 9 Jesus asks the question if it is against the Law to do good or to cure on the Sabbath, to save a life. Cyril praised the question as very opportune: if it is allowed, his adversaries must stop seeking ways to advance calumnies against the Christ.³⁵ In 6:18 Jesus’ compassion with the crowds is mentioned. Cyril says that this virtue makes us conform to God.³⁶ Jesus says, “do not judge” (6: 36): in this connection Cyril speaks of a very bad passion within us (*pessimam passionem nostrarum conscientiarum*), which is the beginning of contempt of others. Instead of critically regarding themselves and conversing with God, people examine others.³⁷

Jesus did not work the miracle of bringing back to life the son of the widow of Naim only by his words, but laid his hand on the bier, so that we may acknowledge that the body of Christ is effective with regard to man’s salvation (Luke 7:11).³⁸ Cyril applies a sentence of the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4) to certain Christians: they go to church and enjoy attending

³¹ *Catena in Matthaeum* I, 1; see Cyrill, *Epistola ad Monachos Aegyptii*. As Martin Morard has shown in his electronical edition of the *Catena* area, St. Thomas most likely quotes from the Latin translation of the conciliar acts of Ephesus by Rusticus. See *Catena aurea* (Mt.), ed. Morard et coll., CNRS, 2019, CMT1,1 § 1.22 (Cyrillus) [<https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr>, version du 25.3.1.2019].

³² *Catena in Matthaeum* I, 9.

³³ *Catena in Lucam* IV, 4. See Cyrill, *Commentarii in Lucam* (PG 72, 536).

³⁴ *Catena in Lucam* V, 2. See Cyrill, *Commentarii in Lucam* (PG 72, 533).

³⁵ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 2.

³⁶ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 4.

³⁷ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 9.

³⁸ *Catena in Lucam* VII, 2.

the divine mysteries, but when leaving the church, they forget the sacred doctrine. When their faith is not fluctuating, they remain Christians, but when a persecution is raging, they flee, since their faith has no roots.³⁹ Commenting on the scraps remaining after the miracle of the loaves (Luke 9:10) Cyril notes that charity for one's neighbor will receive a great reward from God.⁴⁰ In his profession of faith Peter (Luke 9: 21) said that Jesus is the Christ of God. Here, Cyril says, the very wise Peter professes that Christ is one against those who presume to divide the Emmanuel into two Christs.⁴¹ When Christ pointed out the hardships of the calling of his disciples, saying that foxes have their holes and birds their nests (Luke 9:58), Cyril reads a mystical sense in the passage: these animals signify the malign powers of the devil.⁴² Jesus was praying in a certain place, says Luke 11:1. Cyril asks why Jesus prayed if he is full of God and does not really need anything. The answer, he says, lies in the Our Father.⁴³ If it is through the finger of God, Jesus said, that I cast out devils, then you know that the kingdom of God has come to you (Luke 11:20). Cyril comments that the Holy Spirit is called the finger of God, the Son being the hand and the arm of the Father, since the Father works everything through him.⁴⁴ "I have come to bring fire to the earth" (Luke 12:49) to which Cyril comments that our Savior purifies the intellect of those who believe in him through what the Gospels testify.⁴⁵

The elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son (15:19) is sometimes compared to the Jewish people, but Cyril wonders how the words of the dutiful son who always obeyed the orders of his father can be applied to the Jews who are so often accused of crimes in the Bible.⁴⁶

Jesus did not restrain those who praised him as God, but rather reprimanded those who wanted to prevent the crowds of doing so: if they keep

³⁹ *Catena in Lucam VIII*, 2.

⁴⁰ *Catena in Lucam IX*, 3.

⁴¹ *Catena in Lucam IX*, 4: "Sed notandum quod unum confessus est esse Christum prudentissimus Petrus contra presumentes emmanuelem in duos christos dividere."

⁴² *Catena in Lucam IX*, 12.

⁴³ *Catena in Lucam XI*, 1.

⁴⁴ *Catena in Lucam XI*, 5: "Sicut igitur digitus non est alienus a manu, sed ei naturaliter insitus; sic Spiritus sanctus consubstantialiter connexus est Filio, et per eum omnia filius operatur."

⁴⁵ *Catena in Lucam XII*, 13.

⁴⁶ *Catena in Lucam XV*, 4.

silent, the stones will cry out (19: 38).⁴⁷ Christ as the Son of David (20:42): Cyril wonders how the ‘new pharisees’ (he means a sect of heretics, such as the Nestorians) who do not confess that Jesus is Son of God, born from the holy Virgin, but who divide the Son into two, understand the words that Jesus is the Son of David and the Lord of David, not by a human but by divine dominion.⁴⁸

II. The Cappadocian Fathers

During the first part of the fourth century Arianism still prospered in Asia Minor, but after the middle of the century a revival of orthodox Christian thought took place in which the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianze and St. Gregory of Nyssa played a central role.

II.1. Saint Basil

Basil, born around 330 in a very Christian family, studied in Caesarea, Constantinople and in Athens. In 370 he became the bishop of Caesarea and developed an impressive apostolate among the people. Most of his writings are devoted to the battle against Arians such as his *Adversus Eunomium*, but his emphasis on the value of the ancient Greek intellectual culture must also be mentioned, as is visible in his *Address to Young Men on Greek Literature* on how to profit best from the writings of pagan authors. Besides the references to his *Adversus Eunomium* there is a small number of quotations from his *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, which St. Thomas is reading in the translation by Eustachius, and from a treatise on the Holy Spirit as well as from his homilies on the Gospel according to Luke.

In *S. Th.* I, q. 34, a. 2 arg. 5 Basil is quoted as suggesting that the Holy Spirit is the Word of the Son according to Hebrews 1: 3: “*portans omnia verbo Virtutis suae*”. But Thomas rejects this: it is improper to understand the *verbum* of the text as the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ In *S. Th.*, I, q. 66, a. 3 he reports

⁴⁷ *Catena in Lucam* XIX.

⁴⁸ *Catena in Lucam* XX, V.

⁴⁹ BASIL, *Adversus Eunomium* V, c. 11 (PG 29, 732).

as an opinion that Basil says that the blessed will be in the light outside the world where they will have a dwelling in peace.⁵⁰

In his *Hexaemeron* Basil suggests that the reason why in the first chapter of Genesis the creation of the angels is not mentioned is that Moses begins his story by what comes first for us, sc. sensible things. The creation of light on the first day was fitting, since by the light all things are manifested (*S. Th.*, I, q. 67, a. 4).⁵¹ Basil understands by firmament something solid and compact, an explanation approved by Thomas (*S. Th.*, I, q. 68, a. 1).⁵² Basil notes that the plants were created before the shining stars (*luminaria*). Moses said so to prevent the danger of idolatry, the veneration of the stars. But Thomas adds as a final remark a text from Chrysostom: the luminous bodies cooperate in the production of plants (*S. Th.*, I, q. 70, a. 1 ad 4).⁵³ In *S. Th.*, I, q. 70, a. 3 different views are examined as to whether the celestial bodies are ensouled. Origen and Jerome believe so, but Basil⁵⁴ and Damascene reject the presence of souls in them, while Augustine hesitates. Thomas himself is firmly negative.

In the last article of the question which deals with the intellectual potency of the human soul Thomas, having studied the synderesis in the previous article, mentions conscience. The synderesis is presented as the intellectual habit of the first principles of the moral order. Examining conscience in this article Thomas explains that it is an act, sc. the act by which we approve or accuse what we have done previously. But some authors, he says, such as Basil, use conscience in the meaning of a habit, as synderesis is (*S. Th.*, I q. 79, a. 13).⁵⁵ In *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 1 ad 2, a text which deals with natural law, Basil says that conscience (or synderesis) is the law of our intellect.⁵⁶ In *Quolibet* III, q. 12, a.1, arg.2 Thomas quotes a text of Basil that conscience is the natural instance of judgment (*naturale iudicatorium*). Thomas explains that it is the law in so far as it is the habit which contains the precepts of the natural law. In *S. Th.*, II-II q. 66, a. 1 the

⁵⁰ BASIL, *Hexaemeron* 2, 5 (PG 29, 41/SC 26bis, 164). For the Eustachius translation which he is using see PL 53, 885C.

⁵¹ BASIL, *Hexaemeron* 1, 2 (PG 29, 4/SC 26bis, 92), *Hexaemeron* 2, 5 (PG 29, 41/SC 26bis, 164).

⁵² BASIL, *Hexaemeron* 3, 3 (PG 29, 24/SC 26bis, 199).

⁵³ *Hexaemeron*, 5, 1 (PL 29, 26/SC 26bis, 280).

⁵⁴ *Hexaemeron* 3, 9 (PG 29, 76/ SC 26bis, 237).

⁵⁵ BASIL, *Hom. 12 in Principium Proverbiorum* 9 (PG 31, 405).

⁵⁶ *Hexaemeron* 7, 4 (PG 29, 158/SC, 414).

question is discussed by Basil whether it is allowed to possess something as one's own belongings. Commenting on Luke 12:, 18 Basil asks where the wealthy man got his belongings from. Thomas points out that he received his possessions from God. In the second article of *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 66 the question is raised whether one can possess something as being his own. In the answer to the second difficulty Basil says that one who has an abundance of possessions must share with others. Thomas approvingly quotes Basil to argue that involuntary distraction in praying is not sinful (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 83, a. 13, arg. 3).⁵⁷

In the *De veritate* q. 4, a. 1, arg. 11 we read a text attributed to Basil: God is called word, in so far as all things are 'brought out' by him; he is wisdom by which all things are known, and light by which all things become manifest. Thomas notes that the verb 'to bring out' (*proferre*) is not properly said of God.⁵⁸ Somewhat further on in the third article in arg. 1, Basil is quoted as saying that the way in which the Son relates to the Father, the Holy Spirit is related to the Son and so is called Word. But Thomas writes that we speak metaphorically when we call the Holy Spirit 'word', since he proceeds by way of the will.⁵⁹ In question 17, article 1, arg. 5 the issue is raised whether conscience is a faculty (potency), as Basil thinks it is, referring to Psalm 48,6 ("*conscientia est naturale iudicatorium*"), or not.

In *De potentia* q. 2, a. 5 ad 6 Thomas corrects a text of Basil which says that the Son receives in common with all creatures.⁶⁰ Thomas notes that the generation of the Son and the formation of creatures are only by analogy of the same kind. In q. 3, a. 18, ad 4 Thomas quotes Basil with approval who writes that God first created the spiritual beings, although Moses does not mention them in Genesis 1, since the people would not have had any understanding for spiritual beings.⁶¹ Basil also says that in Genesis 1 the 'spirit of God' does not signify the elements air and fire.⁶² Basil was inclined to believe that the water above the vault (*firmament*) served to cool off the heat of the heavenly bodies (*De Pot.*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 5). But according to Basil

⁵⁷ *Constitutiones monastichae* 4 (PG 31, 1335).

⁵⁸ See the note in LE 22/1 fasc. 2, p. 118 on Vigilius Tapsensis as possible author of the phrase.

⁵⁹ BASIL, *Adversus Eunomium* V (PG 29, 732).

⁶⁰ BASIL, *Hom. De Fide* (PG 31, 467A).

⁶¹ *Hexaameron* 2, 3 (PG 29, 33/SC 26bis, 150).

⁶² *Hexaameron* 2, 6 (PG 29, 43/SC 26bis, 166).

the same water is meant and the same earth, as those we have now, but differently disposed, while according to Augustine at first these elements are formless matter (l.c., ad 17). In q. 5, a. 7 the question is examined whether when the heaven is no longer in motion, the elements will remain. In the *corpus articuli* Thomas quotes a text of Basil who says that in Genesis 1 the extremes also mean the intermediate bodies.

In the *De malo* q. 13, a. 2, arg. 4 Thomas quotes a comment of Basil on Luke 12: 18 (the wealthy man who constructs larger barns to put up all of his harvest: “You have the bread of the hungry, the dress of the naked”) as an argument in favor of avarice being a mortal sin.⁶³ Basil is speaking of the case that one must give what is superfluous to the poor. In *Quodlibet* VIII, 8 co. we read Basil’s comment on Psalm 28: “The voice of Yahweh over the waters etc.”: at the end of the world what is good and beautiful remains, what is ugly will go to the underworld.⁶⁴ In his *Contra impugnantes*, where he defends the use of secular studies in theology, Thomas quotes Augustine, Dionysius and Basil who in their writings also used much secular wisdom.⁶⁵

Turning now to the treatise *Contra errores Graecorum*, which Thomas wrote at the request of Pope *Urbanus IV*, we encounter numerous mentions of texts of Basil. In chapter 2 Thomas corrects various statements by Basil which would indicate that in dignity and order the Holy Spirit is second after the Son. Properly speaking, however, there is a total equality between the persons of the Trinity.⁶⁶ In ch. 10 Basil is said to have called the Holy Spirit the *spiramen* (breath), emanation and also the image of the Father and the Son, but Thomas observes that in the Western Church he is not called the image unequivocally.⁶⁷ Similarly, calling the Spirit the Word of the Son, as Basil seems to do, should be understood says Thomas, as a word in us inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸

Basil explains a text of Athanasius (‘the Spirit gives grace and sends the Son’) as meaning the Father, understanding ‘the Spirit’ as the divine essence and being.⁶⁹ Basil seems to say that the angels have all the same

⁶³ *Hom. in Luc.* 12, 18, no. 7 (PG 31, 277A).

⁶⁴ *Hexaemeron* 6. See the important note in LE 25/1, pp. 79-80.

⁶⁵ *Contra impugnantes* cap. 12, par. 3 (LE 41A, 136).

⁶⁶ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 2 (LE 40A, 73).

⁶⁷ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 10 (LE 40A, 77).

⁶⁸ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 12 (LE 40A, 78).

⁶⁹ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 14 (LE 40A, 80).

nature, but this should not be understood, Thomas says in ch. 25, as meaning that the angels are totally equal, but as sharing the same generic nature.⁷⁰

In the second part of his treatise *Contra errores Graecorum*, Thomas argues that the texts of the Church Fathers mentioned before, show the true faith. As Basil says, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son is one and the same (p. 2, ch. 1). The Holy Spirit receives his essential being (as Lord and omnipotent) from the Father and the Son, from whom he proceeds and by whom he is given to us (ch. 3). In ch. 8 Thomas quotes a text from Basil that the Holy Spirit receives his being from the Father through the Son.⁷¹ With Basil Thomas notes that the Son “breathes” and gives the Holy Spirit (ch. 16). Similarly, he approvingly quotes Basil to the effect that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as the Son proceeds from the Father (ch. 27).

There are a few scattered quotations from Basil in the *Catena* on the Gospels according to Matthew and to John, but, as with Cyrill, the vast majority (more than 110 references) to Basil occur in the *Catena* on the Gospel according to Luke. We find, for instance, a fine explanation of Mary’s Magnificat, and occasionally Basil has a special comment, as on the vocation of Levi (Luke 5: 27-32), the tax collector who, as the first apostles, left his work house when Jesus called him. Basil says, that apparently, he did not care about leaving behind his administration and his money.⁷² Jesus said: “Alas for you who laugh now, you shall weep” (Luke 6: 25). Basil comments that when Jesus blames those who laugh now it is evident that for the believer there will never be a time for laughing, especially when living amidst such a large crowd of people who die in sin. for whom we must be sad.⁷³ Jesus said that we should love our enemies and do good to those who hate us (Luke 6: 27). Since man consists of body and soul, we must do good to the soul of our enemies by arguing, admonishing them and leading them to conversion. With regard to the body we should help providing what it needs.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 25 (LE 40A, 84); see BASIL, *Adversus Eunomium* III, no. 2 (PG 29, 657).

⁷¹ *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, ch. 8 (LE 40A, 93); see BASIL, *Adversus Eunomium* V (PG 29, 732).

⁷² *Catena in Lucam* V, 6.

⁷³ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 6.

⁷⁴ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 7.

Love your enemies, Jesus says (Luke, 6: 34). Almost all of us sin against this commandment, Basil says, especially those in government and those in powerful positions, who react sharply against criticism, not only if they are offended, but also if they are not respected. They consider all those their adversaries who do not honor them as much as they feel they should be honored.⁷⁵ In Luke 10: 25 a lawyer asks Jesus what to do to inherit eternal life. Basil comments: if someone asks how to secure God's love for him, divine love cannot be taught (*indocibilis est divina dilectio*), just as we do not learn to love our parents or our disciples.⁷⁶ On the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25) Basil comments that the brigands first beat up the poor man, next deprived him of his clothes; he sees here an example of sin: sin distorts and damages and so precedes the privation of grace.⁷⁷

During the visit of Jesus at the house of Lazarus in Luke 10, Mary sat down at his feet: all that our Savior says and does is a rule for piety and virtue, since he took on our body in order that we would imitate him according to our strength.⁷⁸

II.2. Saint Gregory of Nazianze

As his friend Basil, Gregory was the son of a wealthy, aristocratic family. Born about 330 he studied in his youth at schools in Caesarea and Alexandria, from where he went to Athens, the famous city of learning, where he met Basil, with whom he entered a close friendship. He left Athens in 357 and went to Basil who had withdrawn to a lonely area, somewhat south of the Black Sea. His father who was the bishop of Nanzianus wanted him as an assistant and ordained him, although Gregory still had a longing for monastic life. He returned for a while to the solitude in the north. But Basil made him a suffragan bishop of a small city, to counteract the influence

⁷⁵ *Catena in Lucam X*, 6.

⁷⁶ *Catena in Lucam X*, 8.

⁷⁷ *Catena in Lucam X*, 9: "Vel potest intelligi quod expoliaverunt eum, plagis prius impositis precedunt enim vulnera nuditatem, ut intelligas quod peccatum gratie precedat carentiam."

⁷⁸ *Catena in Lucam X*, 10: "Omnis autem operatio et verbum salvatoris regula est pietatis et virtutis; ob hoc enim induit corpus nostrum, ut nos conversationem illius imitemur pro posse." On this principle see R. SCHENK, "Omnis Christi Actio Nostra Est Instructio: The Deeds and Sayings of Jesus as Revelation in the View of Thomas Aquin", 104-131.

of the Arians, although Gregory returned to assist his father. He retired again to Seleukia for a life of study and contemplation. But the orthodox Christians in Constantinople, who had suffered from the Arians under the emperor Valens and lost many churches, asked him to help them. So, he delivered there his five famous sermons on the divinity of the Logos, which won over much of the people and established his fame. He was made archbishop of the city by the new emperor Theodosius, but because of the opposition of many bishops to this unusual appointment by civil authority he soon retired and went to Nazianze to devote his life to study and prayer. His friend Eulalius became the successor of his father.

Of his works, besides the five famous sermons which gave him the name of "The Theologian", his other orations should also be mentioned. Next his Apology of his flight (to avoid the priesthood) which is a splendid treatise of the priestly office (from which he first escaped), to accept it later. There also are his Poems and his Letters.

At the doctrinal level Gregory avows that he is indebted to Basil, whom he said to have taken as his guide. On several points, however, Gregory is more precise in his theological writings than Basil. He defends the doctrine of the Trinity avoiding the heresy of Arianism and Sabellius. He emphasizes the unity of God and the doctrine of the relations between the divine Persons indicating what characterizes the origin of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit, whom he declares to be a divine Person consubstantial with God. Christ has a complete human nature and thus also the rational human soul. His divine and his human nature are combined in his divine person. Mary is called by him the mother of God. Gregory also confirms the sacrificial character of the sacrament of the Eucharist. In *S. Th.*, I, q. 61, a. 3 Thomas quotes St. Jerome's words that Gregory's authority was so great with regard to the Christian doctrine that no one ever dared to criticize his statements, as is also the case with Athanasius⁷⁹. However, compared to those of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, the number of quotations from Gregory of Nazianze in Thomas's writings is very small: fifty-one references in total of which twenty-five in the *Catena aurea*.

In the *S. Th.*, I, q. 61, a. 3 Thomas mentions Gregory's view that the angels were created before the material world, whereas he himself thinks that Genesis 1,1 intimates that the spiritual beings and the material world were created together. In *S. Th.*, III, q. 2, a. 1, arg.3 Gregory is quoted as saying

⁷⁹ See RUFINUS, *Prolegom. in Orat. Gregorii Naz.* (PG 35, 305).

that the divine nature became incarnate⁸⁰. Thomas explains this less exact expression as meaning that it was united to the Person of the Son who became man. In *S. Th.*, III, q. 16, a. 7 Thomas explains that the words “Man became God”⁸¹ can be understood in different ways but are only true in a restricted sense. In *S. Th.*, III, q. 17, a. 1, ad 2 he quotes Gregory to explain that we cannot say that Christ is other and other (in the sense of other persons) but is other in that his invisible divine nature is not his human nature.⁸²

The reason why the human body of Jesus was of the lineage of David was to join the royal family with the priestly caste, for Christ is both king and priest, Gregory says (*S. Th.*, III, q. 3, a. 2 ad 2). Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John in order to submerge the entire old Adam in the water (*S. Th.*, III, q. 39, a. 1)⁸³ Jesus presented himself to be baptized by John to sanctify baptism (III, 39, 2). In the next article Thomas raises the question whether the time of Jesus’ baptism was convenient. In his answer to the first and third difficulties Gregory tells us that Christ was not baptized as if he needed to be purified. For us it is not wise to postpone baptism: the risk of dying without baptism should be avoided (III, 39, 3 ad 1 and ad 3).

In Luke 4:1 we read that Jesus fasted for 40 days eating nothing. Gregory says that we adapt the amount of our fasting to our possibilities.⁸⁴ In Luke 8: 9 we read that Jesus spoke in parables. Gregory comments that, according to some, different listeners among the audience are meant: some are subject to eternal death, others will be saved, but to the disciples the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed, for they want to be admitted to it.⁸⁵ With regard to the mission of the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10: 1), Gregory observes that the Gospel was to spread not less by their virtuous life than by their preaching.⁸⁶

In chapter 13: 5 Christ warns us to be prepared: unless we repent, we shall all perish. Gregory comments that it is not proper to the Lord to inflict punishment without first warning us. As in the parable of the barren

⁸⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, *Oratio* 45 (PG 36, 633).

⁸¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, *Epist.* 101 (PG 37, 180).

⁸² GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, *Epist.* 101 (PG 37, 180).

⁸³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, *Orat.* 39 (PG 36, 352).

⁸⁴ *Catena in Lucam* IV, 1.

⁸⁵ *Catena in Lucam* VIII, 2.

⁸⁶ *Catena in Lucam* II, 9.

fig tree we are given a chance to mend our life and become saints.⁸⁷ When Jesus says that the kingdom of God is among us (Luke 17:21), Gregory comments that everyone who has been justified by faith and is well equipped with virtues can obtain the kingdom of heaven.⁸⁸

II.3. Saint Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory is born about 335 and was educated also by his brother Basilus. Upon the advice of Gregory of Nazianze he left for the solitude of the monastery founded by Basilus south of the Black Sea but was nominated bishop of the see of Nyssa. A synod of Arian bishops deposed him of his diocese, but after the death of the emperor Valens he returned to his see. Together with Gregory of Nazianze he made an important contribution to the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. He died about 385. His numerous works are divided in dogmatic treatises, exegetical works, ascetical treatises, orations, sermons and letters. He conceived the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father through the Son. He insisted on the image of God in man. He is referred to more than 150 times in the works of Aquinas, of which more than 70 are quotations from his commentary on the Gospel according to Luke. A large number of these actually stem from Nemesius of Emesa because Thomas and his contemporaries mistakenly attributed *De natura hominis* by Nemesius of Emesa to Gregory of Nyssa.

In *Sent.* II, d.1, q.2, a.4 ad 3 we read that Gregory (Nemesius) narrates that for Plato the human soul is in the body as its motor and that man is a soul using a body. In d.17, q.2, a.2 he also says that man is a soul vested with a body. Being a person is proper only to the soul. The separate soul is a real man. Aquinas' response is firm: "quae omnia absurda sunt secundum philosophiam et improbata a philosopho."

In *Sent.* III, d. 27, q. 3, a. 4 Gregory explains the text of Deuteronomy 6:4 that we must love God with all our heart, with all our soul and all our strength. Thomas politely observes that these words also include the body, so that according to the Bible the body is also implied in the execution of the commandments. In *Sent.* IV, d. 21, q.1 we read that if we have not suf-

⁸⁷ *Catena in Lucam* II, 12.

⁸⁸ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 3.

ficiently expiated our sins, we must submit to the conflagration of the fire of the purgatory.

In *SCG* 2, 79 Gregory is said to have attributed to Aristotle the opinion that the soul is not subsistent and hence corruptible. The text, however, is again taken from Nemesius, *De natura hominis*. Thomas comments that, differently from the other forms, the soul remains in existence after the death of the body. A text of Gregory quoted in in *SCG* 3, 73 says that through the provision of their governing instincts things are led to a fitting end in a certain likeness with the way God acts. In *SCG* 3, 90 - in a text of Nemesius - divine providence is excluded from governing man, in order to preserve human freedom of will.

According to a text of Gregory in the *S. Th.*, I, q. 22, a. 3 God governs creatures of a lower level by higher ones. Gregory (Nemesius) quotes Plato as saying that there are three forms of providence. In *S. Th.*, I, q. 81, a. 2 and q. 82, a. 5 s.c. Gregory (Nemesius) says that the irrational soul is divided into concupiscent and irascible parts. In q. 98, a. 2 Gregory (Nemesius) affirms that human generation in paradise was by coition.

Turning now to the *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 6 we see that Thomas has Gregory confirm that what is done out of fear is mixed voluntary and involuntary. In *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 7, a. 2 there is question of the circumstances of our acts. Ignorance of the circumstances makes the actions involuntary (the text is by Nemesius). In q. 7, a. 4 we read that the most important circumstances are why we do something and what we do. In q. 13 Gregory is used to claim that choice is not an act of the appetite nor of counsel alone and that animals and children do not choose. In q. 35, a. 5 Gregorius (Nemesius) is invoked to argue that there is no sadness contrary to the pleasure contemplation gives us. Sadness burdens the soul, Gregory says in q. 37, a. 2. Gregorius (Nemesius) tells us that all sadness is bad but in q. 39, a. 1, ad 1 Thomas distinguishes between sadness on the part of the evil that causes it and sadness on the part of the subject that feels and rejects the evil. Shame, Gregory (Nemesius) says in q. 41, a. 4, arg. 3 is about an immoral act one has already committed. Anger is the armiger of concupiscence, Gregory (Nemesius) says in q. 46, a. 2, arg. 1, in so far as it makes one fight where concupiscence impedes us. Damascene and Gregory (Nemesius) consider anger as composed of sadness and desire in q. 46, a. 3, arg. 3. Thomas says in q. 46, a. 8 that sadness and desire are not components of anger but its causes. Gregory and Damascene speak of three types of anger, considered

from the point of view of what makes anger grow. In the questions on original sin, the natural law, the Ancient and the New Law and grace there are no references to Gregory. These lie outside the subject of Nemesius' book. This observation also applies to the questions on the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The first and only reference to Gregory in the *Secunda Secundae* is in q. 83, art. 4 where Thomas examines whether joy is an effect of devotion. In his sermon at the funeral of the Empress Placilla Gregory is quoted saying that like laughter follows upon joy, tears and sighs are signs of sadness.⁸⁹ The absence of quotations in this part of the Summa is explained by the fact that the book of Nemesius does not treat of the main virtues.

In *S. Th.*, III, q. 37, a. 3 ad 1, Gregory says in one of his sermons that the presentation of Jesus in the temple (Luke 2: 22) is very particular because of his virginal conception and birth.⁹⁰ In *S. Th.*, III, q. 46, a. 4 in his explanation of why Jesus died on a cross Thomas first quotes Augustine and Chrysostom, to mention next the explanation of Gregory who in a sermon on the cross, points out the symbolic value of the cross extending into horizontal and vertical directions.⁹¹

In the *De veritate* q. 24, a. 7 we read his (Nemesius) statement that creatures can sin, since they are made out of nothing. In q. 25, a. 2 s.c.1 Gregory is quoted as distinguishing between the concupiscent and the irascible appetite. - In 26, 4, arg. 1 Gregory (Nemesius) and John Damascene distinguish the passions of the soul according to whether they concern the present or the future, and what is good and what is evil. A future good is the object of hope. In the *De potentia*, 3, a. 9 ad 9 Gregory (Nemesius) tells us that in the process of generation the soul has at first all the perfections which appear later, not actually but virtually. The human fetus would have this soul and acquire the perfections gradually. Thomas rejects the opinion of Plato, as presented by Gregory (Nemesius) in q. 5, a. 10, that the human soul is not the form of the body, but accidentally united to it.

In the *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 2 Gregory (Nemesius) writes, against Aristotle, that the human soul is not the form of the body but is united to it by contact. In *De malo* q. 13, a. 4, s.c.1, we read a sharp condemnation

⁸⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio funebris in Flacillam imperatricem* (PG 46, 380).

⁹⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De occursu domini* (PG 46, 1157).

⁹¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *In Christi Resurrectionem*, hom. 1 (PG 46, 624).

of those who demand interest on the money they have lent to someone.⁹² In the *De unitate intellectus* ch. 3, Gregory (Nemesius) mentions again Plato's view that man is a soul using a body. In the *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 19, he (Nemesius) says that the intellectual substances are in 'intelligible' places, either in themselves or in higher substances. In *Compendium theologiae* II, ch. 8 Gregory wonders who is so stupid as not to praise God when he observes the pure life of the faithful.⁹³

In *Contra errores graecorum* 2, ch. 8, Gregory is said to have written that if the Father breathes the Holy Spirit through the Son, it follows necessarily that the Son is also a principle of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴ In ch. 29 Thomas quotes a statement of Gregory which intimates that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and also from the Son.⁹⁵ In chap. 40 we read a text in which Gregory says that if a Christian has not expiated his sins in this life, he will be purified in purgatory.⁹⁶

Turning now to references to Gregory of Nyssa in the *Catena* on the four Gospels, we notice that there are two quotations in the one on the Gospel according to Matthew, and one in the *Catena* on Mark, but seventy comments on texts of the Gospel according to Luke. On the following pages the reader will find a selection of some twenty of these texts.

Commenting on Luke 3: 5, 17 where John the Baptist proclaims that hills will be flattened Gregory (or rather Nemesius⁹⁷) says that the goods placed on prospect for those who live honestly are not of a nature that they can be explained in words, since no eye has seen, no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love him. Likewise, the punishment for sins which may now affect us, cannot be compared to what one may suffer after death. Christ speaks of fire as a punishment for sinners after this life, but this inextinguishable fire is different from fire as we have it here.⁹⁸

In a comment on Luke 4: 4 Gregory (or rather Nemesius) says that virtue is not nourished by bread nor does our (spiritual) life prosper on

⁹² GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Super Eccl.* hom 4 (PG 44, 672).

⁹³ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Oratione Dominica* 3 (PG 44, 1154/SC 596, 402).

⁹⁴ *Contra errores Graecorum*, II, ch. 8 (LE 40A, 93).

⁹⁵ *Contra errores Graecorum*, II, ch. 29 (LE 40A, 99). In both these cases the source is Gregory's *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei* (PG 116-136).

⁹⁶ *Contra errores Graecorum*, II, ch. 40 (LE 40A, 104).

⁹⁷ See E. DOBLER, *Falsche Väterzitate bei Thomas von Aquin*, Fribourg (CH), 136.

⁹⁸ *Catena in Lucam* III, 5.

meat. Our spiritual life is nourished by a different food: chastity, wisdom, justice, the joy of knowing.⁹⁹ On Luke 5: 12-16 Gregory (Nemesius) comments that Christ is perfect in both soul and body since he is the Word become flesh, and since both his soul and body are united to his divinity.¹⁰⁰ Regarding the Beatitudes in Luke 6: 20-22, he notes a comment by Gregory (Nemesius) that virtue alone and not pleasures in this life can bring joy.¹⁰¹

Commenting on the miracle in Naim (Luke 7, 11-17) Gregory notes that it is not like the miracle when Elias called back to life the son of the widow of Sarepte, nor like that of Peter who prayed for Tabitha: Christ who called non-beings into existence can address the dead as being alive. With regard to the miracle of Jesus nourishing the crowd in Luke 9: 10 ff., Gregory says that at this occasion God did not rain manna, but that this gift to the people came from the immense barns of divine power.¹⁰² Christ told us (Luke 12: 23-33): Sell your possessions and give alms to the poor. Gregory comments that this command must not be understood in this way that Christians may not dispose of any money either for themselves or for the poor.¹⁰³

Christ's request to invite the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind to dinner (Luke 14: 13) spurs Gregory to comment "Reflect who they are, and you will discover their preciousness. They have put on the image of the Savior."¹⁰⁴ Commenting on the observation in Luke 14: 28 that someone who intends to build a tower, will first sit down and see if he has the means to carry out his plan, Gregory observes a difficult undertaking consists in successive increases "for neither is one stone the whole fabric of the tower, nor does a single command lead to the perfection of the soul."¹⁰⁵

Commenting on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19 ff.), Gregory (Nemesius) says that even after his death this man is hampered by his earthly life, since who becomes enticed by fleshly desires, will not even after his death distance himself from his passions.¹⁰⁶ In a comment

⁹⁹ *Catena in Lucam* IV, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Catena in Lucam* V, 4.

¹⁰¹ *Catena in Lucam* VI, 5.

¹⁰² *Catena in Lucam* IX, 3.

¹⁰³ *Catena in Lucam* XII, 9.

¹⁰⁴ *Catena in Lucam* XIV, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Catena in Lucam* XIV, 6.

¹⁰⁶ *Catena in Lucam* XVI, 11.

on Christ kneeling during His prayer on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22: 39 ff.), Gregory notes that “it is plain that human nature contains nothing worthy of God’s imitation” but that Christ kneeled because of the man which He assumed, giving us an example to be humble at all times.¹⁰⁷ In the same chapter Gregory mentions Apollonius’ heresy that Christ does not have a human will of himself and asks the rhetorical question “Let him then say what will is it which God would have by no means to be fulfilled?”¹⁰⁸ Passing to the crucifixion of Christ, Gregory says that one may wonder how one of the two criminals crucified with Christ was judged worthy to enter paradise. Gregory refers to Gen. 3: 24 where it is said that the angel posted outside paradise carried “a flaming sword, turning every way (*versatilem*), to keep the way of the tree of life”. This leads Gregory to comment that “it should obstruct the unworthy, but open a free entrance to life to the worthy.”¹⁰⁹ As so often in his biblical exegesis, Thomas presents another solution he also attributes to Gregory: while Christ’s soul was separated from his body during at the time of the Passion, His soul remained united to His divine person and as such He prepared for the thief an entrance into Paradise.¹¹⁰

III. Conclusion

Whereas for instance for St. John Chrysostom many Latin translations were available, this is not the case for the authors we have been investigating.¹¹¹ In the case of Gregory of Nyssa much of St. Thomas’ knowledge actually stems from Nemesius. Thomas has nevertheless succeeded in bringing out essential points of the theological thought of the five Fathers of the Greek Church, whom we mentioned here and their role in defending the faith against the heresies of Arius and Nestorius. Since the material in especially the second part of the treatise *Contra errores Graecorum* is wholly unreliable the texts of which Thomas disposed did not allow him to give a detailed analysis of the theory of the Greek Fathers on such points as the

¹⁰⁷ *Catena in Lucam* XXII, 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Catena in Lucam* XXII, 11.

¹⁰⁹ *Catena in Lucam* XXIII, 7.

¹¹⁰ *Catena in Lucam* XXIII, 8.

¹¹¹ See L. ELDERS, *Sur les traces de saint Thomas d’Aquin : Étude de ses commentaires bibliques. Thèmes théologiques*, 351-378.

procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, the purgatory and the authority of the Roman Pontiff in matters of the faith.

His remark at the beginning of the *Catena aurea* on Mark that he had Greek commentaries translated to make his exposition more complete is especially evident in his *Catena aurea* on the Gospel of Luke wherein we have encountered the vast majority of references to the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers. The instances mentioned above give us an insight into his tireless search for the truth *a quocumque dicatur*.¹¹²

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¹¹² [Note Jörgen Vijgen: Only after completion of this study in the Spring of 2019 was Father Elders able to take notice of the important collection of essays edited by Michael Dauphinais et alii, *Thomas Aquinas and the Greek Fathers*, Sapientia Press, Ave Maria FL, 2019 and in particular the contributions by K. Anatolios (on Athanasius) and J. B. Ku O.P. (on Gregory of Nazianzen). Father Elders passed away on October 14, 2019 at the age of ninety-three].

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