

## Taxis and Akolouthia as used by Gregory of Nyssa

*Please note: this article appears on the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page linked with the Lectio one. It is inserted here as a supplement of sorts to an article on the Lectio Page entitled Progression and Succession. The reason is to show how Gregory uses two key words, taxis and akolouthia (order and sequence) to describe first the succession of things in the natural order and then to spiritual matters. More work, of course, will required to show how the topics of both articles work together.*

In a nutshell, Gregory of Nyssa situates the way we process experiences under two general headings: taxis, a comprehensive order, and within this taxis are more specific features or gradations...akolouthia...which flesh out the overall order. Both are interdependent; we cannot conceive of using one part of this framework without including the other. Such an observation seems to hold true regardless of the endless variety of attributes which these two realities delineate. This insight is central to this essay, and I hope to describe it, even if indirectly, through citations from the works of Gregory of Nyssa.

This rather concise outline to a lesser known yet central feature of Gregory's thought conveys a deceptively simple if not obvious insight; hopefully my remarks supplemented by the appropriate references will illuminate the structure...the taxis...of our experiences through the medium of theoria. This is a favorite word not only of Gregory but of other writers of the Greek patristic tradition. In its theological sense, theoria may be translated as contemplation, a word with a relatively broad interpretation. Theoria seems to signify close, attentive observation whether with regard to the natural or spiritual order.<sup>(1)</sup> Even more basic to the meaning of theoria the act of seeing, that is, seeing as a special type of beholding which perceives the universal character of the object under our regard while overlooking its particular idiosyncrasies. Not that such details are unimportant; rather, they are subordinate to "higher" levels of reality or at least categorizations of reality enjoined by the eye of theoria. The natural result of such contemplation is a certain detachment from the immediacy and pressing demands of a given situation which to the eyes of those not yet opened appears as aloofness. Gregory of Nyssa is fond of using the word apatheia to define this impartiality which has important implications for a life lived in accord with virtue, arete.

Perhaps an apology is in order for introducing a number of Greek words right at the beginning of this essay, but their meaning is important to comprehend the way Gregory of Nyssa does theology. The reader will find fairly extensive lists of citations from Gregory's works below grouped under these important Greek terms. It is hoped that by proposing the following arrangement, we can better get a grasp not only on Gregory's methodology but even more important, to intuit the basic sameness of reality while remaining unaffected by its vagaries:<sup>(2)</sup>

taxis->akolouthia-><-theoria-><-apatheia->arete

or

order->sequence-><-contemplation-><-detachment->virtue

For the moment, we can disregard both apatheia and arete, the true goal of Christian living, and focus upon the first steps which lead us there, namely, through taxis and akolouthia. Observe that theoria assumes a middle point inasmuch as it is instrumental allowing us to distill both order and sequence from our experience of the world at large and thus imparting a sense of what is going on at any given moment. As already suggested, my intent in discussing these matters is to shift the focus of our attention away from the contents we are naturally inclined to see in a given order (taxis) and sequence (akolouthia). The result is not a cold abstraction popularly associated with an "apathetic" perspective—an uninformed interpretation of apatheia—but a vision which in popular terms enables us to keep sight of the forest despite the trees.

Theoria is instrumental for effecting such disinterestedness; it does so with the intent of first intuiting the fundamental sameness of human experience and then opens a path which permits us to transcend this sameness. For Gregory of Nyssa, transcendence or its moral manifestation expressed through disinterestedness, apatheia, is not a thinly disguised Stoic indifference;<sup>(3)</sup> it is a genuine passing-beyond of all constraints whether physical, psychological, sociological or spiritual. Precisely for this reason theoria in the outline above has an arrow pointing both to the left and to the right; theoria's gaze looks two ways, "back" to the situation at hand (its order and sequence, again indifferent to its contents) and "forward" to our response with regard to how a particular condition impinges upon our awareness and behavior, i.e., our moral response. Although theoria is the principle means for achieving this transcendence and deserves greater attention than the scope of this study, Gregory's use of the term deserves investigation in its own right<sup>(4)</sup>.

The second half of our equation, detachment (apatheia) and virtue (arete), are attractive qualities which enable us to function in a wide variety of circumstances, favorable or unfavorable. As our response to of God's grace, they transcend the limited nature of space and time which falls under the domain of chronos, "time," the place-where taxis and akolouthia are to be found. However, we may say that apatheia and arete have their proper order and sequence which is subordinate only to the Gospel's imperatives, a fact Gregory of Nyssa constantly underscores. It is precisely this incarnate feature resulting from the real focus of our theoria upon the person of Jesus Christ that brings to life the insight we have gained into the various orders and sequences which confront us daily.

The bridge established by theoria between order and sequence, detachment and virtue, suggests a point subject to misunderstanding, namely, the impersonal feature of divinity. Upon hearing such a word there springs to mind a theistic, even atheistic outlook, where a person is subject to remote, cosmic forces. Furthermore, the negative aspect of this insight is reenforced by modern science which tends to reduce the human person to the status of a mere composite of elements. This familiar situation is sufficiently documented and requires no further explanation, at least in the context of this essay. Yet closer examination of someone like Gregory of Nyssa's stature avoids this modern degrading view, despite the objection that he belongs to an era very remote from ours. While drawing from sources colored by what even today we would consider impersonal,<sup>(5)</sup> he nevertheless applies that rigorous procedure of taxis and akolouthia to his observation on the human condition in light of the Christian Gospel. Both the benefits and pitfalls of this procedure are briefly pointed out in this document, yet it is up to an individual to

actually apply it to his or her life. Such is the advantage of theoria, of seeing, which divests the see-er of personal concerns in favor of cultivating an im-personal perspective.<sup>(6)</sup>

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As already noted, the steps within a taxis are called akolouthia which more accurately mean a sequence or chain of events, that is, those particular "pieces" which compromise a given order. Immediately related to the notion of sequence there comes to mind a logical train of events but this does not necessarily have to be the case. For purposes which will become clearer later on, this sequence may consist of chronoi (temporal, logical or even disorganized features of everyday life already noted) or kairoi (transcendent events as related to God's revelation which we see in both the Old and New Testaments).<sup>(7)</sup> Despite their wide-ranging variety, what makes all events "commonplace," especially those characterized by chronos, is the aspect of vanity or mataiotes as set forth in the Book of Ecclesiastes and which Gregory of Nyssa fleshes out to readers in his Commentary.

This leads to a central question: how are we to perceive such vanity, mataiotes? It is important to ask this question because it represents our dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs--our experience within the domain of chronos--and signals a desire to seek something loftier. A clue to our disillusionment lies in vanity's most basic feature, insubstantiality, or more accurately, change (trope), whose opposite quality of atreptos is comparable to the moral discipline of apatheia. For the most part, change was abhorrent to the ancient Greeks, and it was natural for someone as Gregory of Nyssa schooled in the Platonic tradition to be affected by this view. For a sample of Gregory's interpretation of mataiotes, refer to several brief passages from his Commentary on Ecclesiastes where the italicized words directly pertain to a definition of "vanity:"

Vanity may be described as something which lacks existence but exists only in the utterance of this word. The reality behind the word is non-existent; only the letters transmit a useless, empty sound. J.281

But he who instructs us in lofty matters responds by calling present events "vanity" since anything existing in the present lacks existence. J.296

Since Ecclesiastes begins by defining vanity for us as a foolish word or action, we do not consider as deficient anything which has a goal, whether of deed or speech. J.290

He claimed to know the efforts needed to attain pleasure and accomplished everything which he had enumerated [cf. Eccl 2], an experience which taught him that vanity is the common end of mens' pursuits. J.307

Trust in material objects leads to the highest form of vanity. J.342

In brief, "vanity" consists of anything which "lacks existence," and such existence is marked by

trope. Although it lies outside the scope of this essay, the bishop of Nyssa situates our faculty to perceive insubstantiality as part and parcel to our being made in God's image and likeness.<sup>(8)</sup> But as Jean Danielou has noted<sup>(9)</sup>, for Gregory the biblical book of Proverbs represents the first stage of spiritual development followed by Ecclesiastes, and both attain fulfillment in the Song of Songs. It seems that focus upon "vanity" might be too much for a beginner in that initial awareness of the folly and transience of creation could lead to despair without proper instruction. Precisely for this reason Gregory situates Proverbs as the first step; its role as tutor to introduce the novice into spiritual reality is marvelously combined with pithy sayings related to human relationships and a taste for things divine. They all combine to jump-start the beginner, as it were, without causing discouragement.<sup>(10)</sup> The introductory words of each biblical book clearly reveal Gregory of Nyssa's three-fold framework:<sup>(11)</sup>

Proverbs: That men may know wisdom and instruction, understand words of insight. Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!" Song of Songs: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

Opposed to the realm of *chronos* where "vanity" is principally to be found, we have *kairoi* which are rarer circumstances and hence of greater significance since they represent an interruption into chrono-logical time or those conditions which compose the fabric of our daily lives<sup>(12)</sup>. Naturally we expect a spiritual master such Gregory of Nyssa to focus his attention on *kairoi* events. Since the biblical Book of Ecclesiastes deals with the theme of time's passage (i.e., *chronos*), we would anticipate in Gregory's Commentary on it distinctions between these two modes of time as event from some of the more important references related to *chronos* listed below. His somewhat pessimistic attitude is to be expected, but when considered in the larger scheme of his spiritual doctrine, this attitude is provisional; it is a necessary precondition to appreciate more advanced stages of the Christian spiritual life as represented by the Song of Songs.

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The normal way of getting an overall view of a particular taxis or order--again, keep in mind that we are concerned more with its form instead of its contents--is by becoming aware of the individual *akolouthia* within it, nothing more. That is to say, this taxis as a whole first becomes an object of our contemplation...seeing...our *theoria* which as mentioned above can may be characterized as being impersonal. We become acquainted with a situation which has repeated itself often enough that we end up bored or disillusioned with it. As the citations of "vanity" from the Ecclesiastes Commentary above demonstrate, such monotony can lead us to *theoria*; the objects which have held our attention are now clearly appreciated as "vain" or fully recognized as marked by trope, "changeability." Gregory rightly identifies such trope with what a person advanced in the spiritual life would call empty pursuits. However, as I have already pointed out, this "vanity"/trope may be expanded to include all things which comprise a taxis and *akolouthia*, and this embraces virtually all human experience. A passage from Gregory's *Against Eunomius* demonstrates this fact:

It is clear, even with a moderate insight into the nature of things, that there is nothing by which we can measure the divine and blessed Life. It is not in time, but time flows from it; whereas the creation, starting from a manifest beginning, journeys onward to its proper end through

spaces of time; so that it is possible, as Solomon somewhere says [cf. Eccl 3.1-II where we have the famous example of various "times" enumerated], to detect in it a beginning, an end, and a middle; and mark the sequence of its history by divisions of time. But the supreme and blessed life has no time-extension accompanying its course, and therefore no span nor measure. PN.69

Here Gregory associates the most basic taxis of our experience, time or *chronos*, with three constant characteristics or *akolouthia*: beginning (*arche*), middle (*mesoteta*) and end (*telos*)<sup>(13)</sup>. Note that his word for "time extension" (lacking in the divinity) is *diastema*, a word rich in meaning and discussed elsewhere on this Home Page<sup>(14)</sup>. Such a three-fold division or *akolouthia* is perhaps the most all-inclusive observation we can make of a given taxis marked by *chronos*. In light of the Eunomius citation above, we may more accurately define *chronos* as *diastema*; even when applied to a *kairos* event, this transcendent eruption into *diastema* still retains a definite order and sequence as we can observe from the extensive lists taken from the Old and New Testaments with regard to the use of *chronos*.

Although the actual terms are not mentioned, perhaps the best passage implying the theological ramifications of *taxis-akolouthia* can be found in Gregory's Great Catechism (Chapter 32) where in Reinhard Hubner's words, "die Parallelitat gerade dieser Texte mit der Aussage uber die potentielle Heiligung der ganzen Menschheit in der Inkarnation":<sup>(15)</sup>

For since from no other source than from the concrete lump of our nature had come that flesh, which was the receptacle of the Godhead and in the resurrection was raised up together with that godhead, therefore just in the same way as, in the instance of this body of ours, the operation of one of the organs of sense is felt at once by the whole system, as one with that member, so also the resurrection principle of this Member, as though the whole of mankind was a single living being, passes through the entire race, being imparted from the Member to the whole by virtue of the continuity and oneness of the nature.

Note the "taxis of the resurrection" which consists in various *akolouthia* as the italics above reveal. I have also underlined key words which point out the parallels between the divinity and our humanity. A key point here is Gregory's focus upon "the operation of one of the organs of sense" (*he tou henos ton aistheterion energeia*) which alerts the rest of the body that something is affecting it. This analogy is then used with regard to the resurrection which affects humanity as "a single living being."

We may parallel this taxis with a passage from *On the Making of Man*, Chapter 39:

But just as we say that in wheat, or in any other grain, the whole form of the plant is potentially included—the leaves, the stalk, the joints, the grain, the beard—and do not say in our account of its nature that any of these things has pre-existence or comes into being before the others, but that the power abiding in the seed is manifested in a certain natural order (*taxis*), not by any means that another nature is infused into it—in the same way we suppose the human germ to possess the potentiality of its nature, sown with it at the first start of its existence, and that it is unfolded and manifested by a natural sequence (*akolouthia*) as it proceeds to its perfect state, not employing anything external to itself as a stepping-stone to perfection, but itself advancing its own self in due course to the perfect state.

This excerpt is a necessary antecedent to the taxis of the resurrection pointed out within the

Great Catechism text. As for the former, consider the underlined words which manifest an analogy which makes a transition from wheat to the "human germ." Again, the italicized words represent the akolouthia within the taxis Gregory is considering.

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For more insight into taxis, consider the remarks of Paulos Mar Gregorios who builds on Jean Danielou's insight<sup>(16)</sup> (italics are mine):

The Stoics had used it [akolouthia] not only in a logical sense, but also with a moral meaning. Akolouthos tei phusei zen meant for the Stoics to live according to nature, i.e., in accordance with the Logos that indwells the cosmos and all things in it"<sup>(17)</sup>. ...For Gregory, it becomes of the utmost importance to understand things in their proper sequential order, and then to state what is understood in the right sequential order...In the controversy with Eunomius, however, the idea takes on a fundamental significance. Eunomius argued that the Son and the Spirit came later in the sequence of revelation and therefore that they are inferior to the Father who comes first in the sequence of revelation...akolouthia or order and sequence belongs only to the created order and not the Creator. In the created order it is possible to find order and sequence and know things in terms of their mutual relationship. But in the uncreated there is no sequence or rank...and our method of knowing things, which Gregory sees as discovering the taxis and akolouthia of things, cannot go beyond the created order<sup>(18)</sup>.

While certainly true, taxis and akolouthia are related to kairoi, transcendent events, only insofar as they delineate eruptions of eternity within time. In other words, kairoi are midwives between two distinctly different yet complementary spheres. Since taxis and akolouthia deal primarily with chronos (according to Gregorios, they are not applicable to kairos), they stop at the doorstep of eternity<sup>(19)</sup>. For a fuller discussion, refer to citations from Gregory's In Hexaemeron below which discusses creation as well as the Appendix containing some references to diastema.

According to the Ecclesiastes Commentary, scriptural akolouthia will manifest the cosmic one. Here Gregory of Nyssa uses the principle of akolouthia as a starting point for this taxis or order. Note the italicized words which demonstrate this more clearly:

The words which now follow [he ephexes akolouthia tou logou] conduct the soul to a loftier philosophy about creation. It shows that the universe contains everything, and its harmony does not admit the dissolution of created beings; instead, we have concord between them all. Neither is the universe severed from any of its parts, but all things remain in their essence by the power of him who truly exists. Indeed the Being [God] is true existence or absolute goodness, and any name we ascribe to him points to his unutterable reality. How can we ever find that name "which is above every other name" as the divine Apostle says [Phil 2.9]? But any name meant to explain the ineffable power and nature [of God] signifies that which is good. Therefore this good [God] or that which transcends any good has true existence through which it bestows existence and continues to give power and permanence to creation, whereas anything outside it lacks existence [i.e., the "vanity" of Ecclesiastes]; whatever lies outside the realm of existence does not

remain in being. J.406

This reciprocation between scripture and cosmos has a parallel in 1Cor 15.21-3: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order (en to idio tagmati<sup>(20)</sup>): Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." Note the italicized words "as" and "so" which tie together the two realms of human and divine, chronos and kairos. Such death is a chrono-logical event, whereas Christ's resurrection is the central kairos event of the Christian mystery. According to Paulos Mar Gregorios, "The Christian life itself is seen by Gregory as a break with the flow of evil in which we are caught, so that we are able to leave the akolouthia of evil in which sin has placed us, and move along the akolouthia of good towards perfection".<sup>(21)</sup> Refer to Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Inscriptions of the Psalms which vividly describes this break with evil:

Persons with downy-like, thin wings who are weak and unsuited for flight resemble flies; they become thoroughly entangled by the nets of such threads. I mean that such spider webs snare people by delights, honors, glories and various desires, and they become prey and food for that beast [the devil] on the hunt. If any bird resembling an eagle looks directly at the light's rays by not turning away the eye of its soul and has fallen in among these spider webs while stretching forward on high, the air alone from the rushing motion of the bird's flight scatters everything by the power of its wings. J.52

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When Gregory discusses diastema as a fuller manifestation of chronos and therefore of taxis and akolouthia,<sup>(22)</sup> often he situates it within his extensive acquaintance of scientific knowledge of the day. An important way of doing science both then and now is to employ the faculty of theoria, close attention to the various manifestations of phenomena. Certainly this principle is more in line with our modern understanding of such a theoretic word. We may catch a glimpse of his approach through the following excerpts:

there being something in man whereby he shows an innate fitness to think out within himself, through the contemplative (theoretikes) and inventive faculties, such thoughts, and having prepared such mechanisms in theory, to put them into practice by manual skill, and exhibit in matter the product of his mind. On the Soul and the Resurrection. 36B; PN.435

but idea is an intellectual and not a corporeal method of examination (theoria). On the Making of Man, 212D; PN.414

having nothing in common with any other of the qualities that are contemplated (theoroumenon) in the substratum. On the Making of Man. 213A; PN.414

For a discussion as to natural substance in general will not be of any assistance to our purpose with regard to the consideration (theoria) of the parts. On the Making of Man, PG#44.241B; PN.423

Since we will now briefly set forth the meaning of these words and the fruit (protheoria) of our previous considerations, let us again state their context and seek their accurate meaning. I know

that we all share one condition and that I myself partake of foolishness. Why, then, have I devoted myself to wisdom? Commentary on Ecclesiastes, J.364.8

When considering (theoria) created things, we see that all our notions are bound by time; they attempt to transcend their proper limits but cannot. Intervals of time constitute all our thoughts as well as the substance of a person who gives rise to such thoughts. Such intervals are created. The good we teach, however, must be pursued and guarded. Commentary on Ecclesiastes, J.412.11

What, again, of ontology, of the science of ideas, in short of all intellectual speculation (theoria) as applied to great and sublime objects? Against Eunomius, J.277.13 i; PN.263

it is not everyone, for instance, who can observe with the theodolite, or prove a theorem (theoria) by means of lines in geometry, or do anything else, where art has introduced, not mere sight, but a special use of sight. Against Eunomius, J.387.21 i; PN.305

Every term--every term, that is, which is really such--is an utterance expressing some movement of thought. But every operation and movement of sound thinking is directed as far as it is possible to the knowledge and the contemplation (theoria) of some reality. Against Eunomius, J.393.17 i; PN.307

I speak of the word which is begotten by the mind: for the mind, being itself incorporeal, brings forth the word by means of the organs of sense. All these varieties of generation we mentally include, as it were, in one general view (theoria). Against Eunomius, J.196.25, ii; PN.204

Since the stars are responsible for our corporeal frame at birth, anyone who carefully observes (theoria) the heavens knows in advance his constitution yet cannot discern his life span, let alone whether he will be healthy or ill. Against Fate, J.49.15

Of all existing things there is a twofold manner of apprehension, the consideration (theoria) of them being divided between what appertains to the senses; and besides these there is nothing to be detected in the nature of existing things, as extending beyond this division. Catechetical Discourse, PN.480

While the practice of theoria applied to phenomena is certainly valid, Gregory sees a fuller application of the word in light of what we commonly call spiritual contemplation. Unlike us today, theoria for Gregory did not suffer compartmentalization; it is a faculty covering every perception of which we are capable, starting with the physical and ranging through the spiritual<sup>(23)</sup>. In his *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, the bishop of Nyssa presents this faculty in a simple yet profound sentence: "The speculative (theoretikos) and critical (diakritikos) faculty is the property of the soul's godlike part (theoides); for it is by these that we grasp (katalambanomen) the Deity also (PG46.89b)." Note that theoria is essential to the soul's constitution, that is, it has the ability to katalambano, "to grasp," an inborn aptitude not confined to either the physical or spiritual realms. Even more important, both our speculative and critical capacities are not divided but enjoy unity, a point Danielou made in the last footnote: "Entre ces divers domaines, il y a communication."

*On the Soul and the Resurrection* brings to mind Gregory's definition of God or theos as "to see," theathai<sup>(24)</sup>. Here it is united with two words, diakritikos and katalambanomen, which have two prepositions as suffixes, dia and kata ("through" and "according"). Abstracting from either

inclination to do "science" or "contemplation" ( according to Gregory, theoria passes seamlessly between the two), we see this "seeing" in its broader interpretation as operative in both disciplines. The two fields which we nowadays take for granted as fully separate employ the aptitude of "seeing" dia as well as kata. While keeping in mind this modern distinction, it is interesting to shift our focus away from the disciplines themselves to the faculty of theoria engaged in them, for both are indispensable facets of "seeing," of theathai. Here again we may situate Gregory's notion of akolouthia, sequence, which follows a pattern or taxis for "seeing" "through" (dia) and "according" (kata).

Authentic scientific research is marked by a strong desire to dispel illusions and erroneous perceptions with regard to the object under consideration. This bears a parallel with Gregory's second stage (akolouthia) within his overall taxis which consists of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, namely, the vanity of Ecclesiastes. Again, keep in mind that the book of Ecclesiastes holds second rank after Proverbs which introduces us to wisdom; it is like a scientist who before becoming capable of making errors, must have a working knowledge of his or her profession. Only then within the broader context of acquired knowledge or wisdom can we discover what is "vain."

Within Gregory of Nyssa's framework, theoria-as-seeing is confounded by "vanity;" our innate capacity to utilize that dia and kata form of "seeing" mentioned above is filtered through deficient or biased perceptions, and we can no longer perceive the correct order and sequence of events. No small wonder that the fuller meaning of theoria as applied to spiritual contemplation is often considered as maturation in clarity in seeing. For example, refer to Gregory's Song Commentary (J.190): "by more careful consideration we should shift our attention from the material appearances to a spiritual contemplation." Note the key word "shift," metaballo, which literally means "cast over" or "beyond" and which may be traced to a shift in our theoria away from vanity to that which is true.

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In an outline several pages above I posited theoria midway between taxis and akolouthia (to its left) and apatheia and arete (towards its right). After having gained accurate insight into the order and sequence of our particular field of interest, we require a mental as well as a spiritual discipline to enliven this insight in order to pass it on to other like-minded persons. Thus Gregory of Nyssa stresses the value of apatheia (see references below) on our part.<sup>(25)</sup> Apatheia as detachment differs considerably from its common understanding as passivity in the face of events; we may say that it allows us to see...to practice theoria...with an all-inclusive understanding difficult to express in words and functions on a plane quite different from the one with which we are familiar.

We may situation apatheia within the realm of pure awareness, that is, awareness minus a subject-object relationship and where taxis and akolouthia do not apply. That is, here no (chronological) order exists with any sequence of events because all things lie open to apatheia's impartial gaze. The nature of apatheia is not easy to grasp because it precludes any meddling on our part, that is, a desire to manipulate people and things to our advantage: the very fact that we engage in theoria with the resulting sentiment of apatheia is a goal unto itself. In Gregory of

Nyssa's following sentence, note the connection between detachment and seeing or light (*italicized words*) which implies the practice of virtue, arete: "For the rays of that true, divine virtue shine forth in a pure life by the outflow of apatheia and make the invisible visible to us and the inaccessible comprehensible by depicting the sun in the mirror of our souls." Song Commentary, J.90

With a clearer understanding of apatheia as both freedom from coercion and error as well as freedom to practice virtue through the medium of theoria,<sup>(26)</sup> we are in a better position to discern how a given taxis applies to divine revelation along with the various akolouthia which flesh it out. Such apprehension seeks to discover how many akolouthia are present in a given taxis, that is, whether the various sequences are deficient or too abundant to express a given order. From what we have seen thus far, a crucial element involved here is chronos, time-as-duration. Such individual akolouthia must "fit in" with the nature of the taxis at hand and give it expression. For this to be so, the akolouthia or sequences must be "in subjection" to the broader scheme of things. Gregory uses the word hupotage for this special type of order which means "subjection," and it finds consummation in the Son's submission to his heavenly Father.

The theme of order and sequence is subordinate to hupotage. While not directly related to the two concepts under discussion, awareness of its role in the larger scheme of things is helpful. Such hupotage is an eschatological reality, finding expression in the Son's "subjection" to his heavenly Father. Perhaps it is not too far afield to suggest that such hupotage is Trinitarian and that taxis and akolouthia are physical expressions of this Trinitarian reality, an insight readily available to anyone who engages in theoria. With this in mind, here are some references to this word which may be taken as the consummation of taxis and akolouthia in the fullest theological sense; all are from Gregory's short treatise on First Corinthians 15.28, commonly known as *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*.<sup>(27)</sup>

"To God be subjected, my soul, for from him is my salvation" [Ps 61.2]. 6.10 But it is clear that the Son's subjection should not be understood according to any mode of human speech. 6.16

As for mutable nature's participation in the good, it is necessary for such a nature to be subjected to God which allows us to have fellowship in this good. 7.7

For the apostle does not say that the Son is always subjected, but that he will be subjected at the final consummation. 9.8

Subjection is complete alienation from evil. When we are removed from evil in imitation of the first fruits, our entire nature is mixed with the same fruit. 16.12

This is what we mean by the Son's subjection: when, in his body, Christ rightly has the subjection brought to him, he effects the grace of subjection. 16.16

When the good pervades everything, then the entirety of Christ's body will be subjected to God's vivifying power. 18.20

Subjection to God is our chief good when all creation resounds as one voice, when everything in heaven, on earth and under the earth bends the knee to him [cf. Phil 2.10]. 20.11

Paul signifies by the Son's subjection the destruction of death. 21.4

The Son's subjection to his Father signifies that he knows our entire human nature and has become its salvation. 23.18

However, we are separated from evil for no other reason than for being united to God through subjection. Subjection to God then refers to Christ dwelling in us. 25.4

Our subjection consists of a kingdom, incorruptibility and blessedness living in us; this is Paul's meaning of being subjected to God. 28.11

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As already intimated, the subtle distinctions between kairos and chronos are discussed elsewhere on this Home Page, and it is not my intention to repeat the matter here; I only wish to draw attention to Gregory's abundant use of these terms in his Commentary on Ecclesiastes. In this essay I am interested primarily in the form of taxis and akolouthia, regardless of the infinite variety of qualities we may attribute to them. To better discern their natures, a process of abstraction in the literal sense is helpful, i.e., to ab-traho...to draw out from...their respective natures any accidentals involved, however significant or trivial. What do we get? From taxis, a shape and from akolouthia, consistency within this shape. Thus from these two features springs an assessment of common experience in one or two ways, towards chronos or towards kairos; we situate our perception of shape and pattern either according to temporal or eternal reality. That "vanity" mentioned above and of which Ecclesiastes speaks is one manner of how we distinguish between them. Consider the following outline:

#### TAXIS {AKOLOUTHIA} -> KAIROS or CHRONOS

It seems that in the broader scheme of things, Gregory of Nyssa stresses "vanity" as a decisive principle for discerning between the two modes of time. One only has to refer to his Commentary on Ecclesiastes to see this particular taxis which finds consummation in chronoi, temporal events we experience at their worst when marked by tedium and monotony<sup>(28)</sup>. However, when kairos or divine eruptions constitute a given taxis, our recollective faculty assumes a secondary role<sup>(29)</sup>. What does this mean? Close observation of our mental activity reveals that we are constantly preoccupied with thoughts and give scant attention to the present moment where admission to the divinity is most accessible<sup>(30)</sup>. Such a deeper meaning of that "vanity" of which Ecclesiastes speaks he sees reflected in the repetitive patterns of nature; at least this is typical of how a "vain" person perceives them. As the Old and New Testament references to kairos in the First Appendix below reveal, divine interventions frequently catch the person involved off guard, present him or her with something out of the ordinary and permanently fix this kairos in the mind to which all subsequent experiences are subordinate and hence referred. In these instances awareness both the taxis and akolouthia of chrono-logical time are compressed in favor of a new perception of time or better, its suspension, whose immediate effect is registered within the memory<sup>(31)</sup>.

I stress this interaction with a kairos event to illustrate the true nature of taxis and akolouthia. Although we may be aware that a divine intervention is taking place in the here and now, almost more important is our memory of it<sup>(32)</sup>. Due to kairos' divine origins, its effects produce more reliable witnesses upon our memories, a fact which persons receptive to God readily acknowledge. Our recollective faculty by nature is secondary in that they reproduce an event which has already transpired regardless of how minuscule the temporal gap. Thus the memory which is play a role in establishing a correct order and sequence (taxis and akolouthia) are transformed or better, are suspended. One could see how a philosopher as Plato whom we may also call a mystic perceived eternal forms; these, in turn, participated in a higher (divine) reality, for all such forms are composed of order and sequence.

Pondering upon suspension of our recollective faculty can be risky in that it is open to various interpretations, some of which may not be in line with what is true. Hence the value for a memorial (as in the footnote above) which has been set up and proven by numerous generations who have found trustworthy echoes of the original experience which gave it birth. In light of such an experience, we discover to our delight that memories rooted in the chronological sense loosen their grip, a hold which we previously thought was impossible to escape. Now we remember two things: the "vanity" of Ecclesiastes which had governed our lives and that sacred time which, as already noted, has been transformed into a sacred place<sup>(33)</sup>. Such transference from time into space (place) has the distinct advantage of establishing in our minds both the compulsive and liberating effects of time, i.e., chronos and kairos.

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The following is a relatively extensive list of references from the works of Gregory of Nyssa related to the two keys words of this essay, taxis and akolouthia:

#### Taxis

#### On the Making of Man

Let us, however, before discussing this point, consider the matter we passed over (for the subject of the order of created things almost escaped our notice), why the growth of things that springs from the earth takes precedence, and the irrational animals come next, and then, after the making of these, comes man. 144.40

If, therefore, Scripture tells us that man was made last, after every animate thing, the lawgiver is doing nothing else than declaring to us the doctrine of the soul, considering that what is perfect comes last, according to a certain necessary sequence in the order of things. 148.20

That the intellectual element, however, precedes the other, we learn as from one who gives in order an account of the making of man; and we learn also that his community and kindred with the irrational is for man a provision for reproduction. For he says first that "God created man in the image of God" ...then he adds the peculiar attributes of human nature, "male and female

created He them." 181.39 Now seeing that the full number of men pre-conceived by the operation of foreknowledge will come into life by means of this animal generation, God, Who governs all things in a certain order and sequence, -since the inclination of our nature to what was beneath it...made some such form of generation absolutely necessary for mankind, -therefore also foreknew the time coextensive with the creation of men. 205.27

Others, on the contrary, marking the order of the making of man as stated by Moses, say, that the soul is second to the body in order of time, since God first took dust from the earth and formed man, and then animated the being thus formed by His breath: and by this argument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul. 229.29

But just as we say that in wheat, or in any other grain, the whole form of the plant is potentially included...and do not say in our account of its nature that any of these things has pre-existence, or comes into being before the others, but that the power abiding in the seed is manifested in a certain natural order, not by any means that another nature is infused into it - in the same way we suppose the human germ to possess the potentiality of its nature, sown with it at the first start of its existence, and that it is unfolded and manifested by a natural sequence as it proceeds to its perfect state. 236.14

#### Hexaameron Liber

otherwise it would not have been rightly called a beginning, if there had existed another beginning of it: for, since it is second in order, it neither is nor is called a beginning. 64.56

and you crave to become familiar with the necessary order of established things, how, when heaven and earth were completed, so that there might be light, it waited for a divine command, but darkness exists even without a command. 65.36

But when the power and wisdom were brought together for the perfection of each part of the world, a certain necessary series with an order follows upon this, so that something may exist first out of the whole universe of things and may appear. 72.31

but as a necessary order of nature in things that ought to be arranged demands, he thus told each thing that had been done, and he philosophized about the arrangements in nature. 72.39

Again, Moses, because it was made with a certain nature, order and harmony, out of necessity refers to God as its author, and from those things that were spoken, as I perceive it, taught that everything which shows itself as consequence due to the necessary order was first known to God. 76.27

Yet so that, while remaining above the warm nature, it may neither be pulled apart by the movement of that subordinate one, nor be fully changed in the varied order by the heart [of that subordinate one], but granting to itself no access to the fire underneath, it may remain whole. 84.21

And so Scripture has added the nature of number to the parts of the world, indicating the consequence of the order for nouns of number. For he said, "It was made with evening, and it was made with morning; the second day." 85.41

And indeed when the second day had passed away, and the wise order of established things, by which the water was separated from the earth, having been completed with all numbers, God's voice and command is said. 88.38

You perceive a necessary order of nature: how, when the waters had been extracted from the land [etc.]. 89.1

and by the first will of God the universe of things wholly existed at once, and the order of wisdom obtained in the necessity of its placement, a permanent power and series of the divine commands. 113.32

After the universality of things had been grasped by these words, it set forth the certain natural order of each one after the other. 113.39

Nor is there any confusion or disturbance on account of the immutable order from the divine wisdom which is supplied for the natural proper measure of each, so that the oblique circle, or the head, might occupy the higher region and in this, moreover, might obtain every sign as a sure seat, in signs, in fact, of every star, not by chance, but by the order by which they are gathered together in their places. 117.4

The weakness of our nature is unable to gaze upon the remaining reason of outstanding wisdom in all things, which is nonetheless the certain order of the whole world in which these things were made, from the description of the lawgiver. 117.36

For of these, as the order is immutable, so too is the nature always mutable. 117.58

it pertains to the material, at the same time let it be said that all things are established by an artificer; however, each of their distinctions which are seen in the world are completed by a certain order and natural series, in that space that was mentioned.. 120.17

however, each of their distinctions which are seen in the world are completed by a certain order and natural series, in that space that was mentioned. 120.22

### On the Inscriptions of the Psalms

One must first consider the end which this book [of scripture] has in view; one may then clearly see the system of ideas set forth which the well-thought out order of the psalms indicates for realizing their goal. 25.3

In order to have a more accurate understanding of the doctrine concerning the virtues as indicated throughout the entire psalter, it would be profitable to first enumerate them for presenting a systematic, orderly plan of how a lover of this way of life may live in virtue. 27.5

The order of the universe is a kind of musical harmony of varied shapes and colors with a certain order and rhythm, an arrangement that is integral and in accord with itself and never dissonant, even if various parts differ greatly. 30.28

The first true archetype is music, for harmony and concord harmonize all things with respect to

each other through an order, arrangement and system. 32.12

We understand the five divisions of the psalter as steps leading to further higher [steps] which are distinguished by the sequence of the word order. 65.7

In each of these five divisions [of the psalter] the text considers the good which enables us to obtain God's blessedness with respect to the sequence of a certain order. 65.19

Beyond this lies a better hope to which the psalm testifies by a careful order of words. 67.21

A more careful examination reveals their sequence and order. 93.17

Such is the order of psalms lacking inscriptions in the Hebrew text. 93.23

Should a person consider the time in which David lived and the sequence of his deeds, he would not find the distribution of the psalms to agree with the order of historical events. 115.11

We respond to this by returning to the underlying principle of our treatise, namely, that our teaching is not necessarily concerned with the order of history. 115.14

He [sculptor] does not immediately begin from a completed form but his art of fashioning stone must proceed with order and care, otherwise, he could accomplish nothing. 115.23

What is the process of sculpturing our souls? 116.27

This order is consistent with the Spirit; he does not teach us mere history but how to conform our souls through virtue to God. 117.2

Each instrument is used according to the order of the need at hand. 117.19

This arrangement salvation has in view, and the excellent order of these examples contributes to this end. 118.2

Both the psalter and historical examples demonstrates this, but our goal is to understand the order of the psalms which leads us to the good. 122.5

What need is there to explain every detail since we have sufficiently pointed out to you in our introduction the means to attain the good through the order of this Psalter? 124.6

However, the order of temporal, carnal deeds is not concerned with the spiritual meaning. 133.11

evil, the enemy to virtue's order, had been destroyed and the names of the enemies exist no more. 141.21

The order of the psalms does not concur with the sequence of historical events but pertains to those who have been perfected in accord with their progress through virtue. 151.15

so that the beginning and end of virtue may appear as one whole while the material events are irrelevant to the order [of the psalms]. 151.21

This is not the end of the upward journey for persons advancing through virtue, for the sequence of the next belonging to the next psalm [fifty-seven] transcends the one before it by the magnificence of its contemplation. 166.16

### Commentary on the Song of Songs

After these two books [Proverbs & Ecclesiastes] he speaks in the philosophy set forth in the Song of Songs and shows us the ascent to perfection in an orderly fashion. 17.11

So too one can see in the soul an analogy to the body's growth where there is a certain order and sequence leading to a life in accord with virtue. 18.6

Because of this, the son in Proverbs is named a bride, and Wisdom is changed into the role of a bridegroom so that a person might be espoused to God by becoming a pure virgin instead of a bridegroom. 23.2

Having become a "father of lies" [Jn 8.44], he arranged himself in battle order against everyone who chooses the good. 55.14

"Set love before me" [Sg 2.4]. 99.19

"Let all things among you be done decently and in order" [1 Cor 14.40]. 112.20

It is necessary that everything be well ordered, especially with regard to love. 121.12

It is important to realize the order of love for which the Law is a guide: how one should love God, neighbor, wife and enemy, lest the practice of love be disordered and perverted. 121.1

What is the order of the words here? How does each word relate to the other? How is the sequence of thought preserved unbroken in a kind of a chain? 150.4

We will respond to the best of our ability, treating it in an orderly fashion. 347.17

Since these powers are established by God, the order of spirits and transcendent powers remains distinct and constant, for their order is not upset by evil. 446.2

In imitation of this array, the soul arranges everything in order and marvels at these forces set in array. 446.6

Beings are created and renewed not in accord with the same sequence and system. 457.20

Human nature takes up its perfection not at once as in the beginning but progresses towards the good by an order which gradually gets rid of our inclination towards evil. 458.16

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## Akolouthia

### On the Making of Man<sup>(34)</sup>:

Then he [Moses] proceeds to introduce the genesis of those creatures which are regulated by sense: and since, following the same order, of those things which have obtained life in the flesh, those which have sense can exist by themselves even apart from the intellectual nature, while rational principle could not be embodied save as blended with the sensitive,-for this reason man was made last after the animals, as nature advanced in an orderly course to perfection. 145.24

We have, however, discussed these points in passing, as following on our argument, since they were introduced by our speculation on the point before us. 164.27

And thus there came into our argument, following out this line of thought, the view we have just stated, by which we learn that in the compound nature of man the mind is governed by God, and that by it is governed our material life, provided the latter remains in its natural state, but if it is perverted from nature it is alienated also from that operation which is carried on by the mind. 164.38

But if Daniel and Joseph and others like them were instructed by Divine power, without any confusion of perception, in the knowledge of things to come, this is nothing to the present statement; for no one would ascribe this to the power of dreams, since he will be constrained as a consequence to suppose that those Divine appearances also which took place in wakefulness were not a miraculous vision but a result of nature brought about spontaneously. 172.19

The course of our argument, however, has diverged to another point. 177.16

We find it [difference between Prototype & image] in the fact that the former is uncreate, while the latter has its being from creation: and this distinction of prototype brings with it a train of other properties; for it is very certainly acknowledged that the uncreated nature is also immutable, and always remains the same, while the created nature cannot exist without change. 184.39

Let us give our attention, however, to the next point of our discussion. 204.14  
but in order that by these means faith on their part might follow concerning more important matters. 216.39

He [Christ] raises the damsel to life again, as if from sleep, by His word of command, leading on human weakness, by a sort of path and sequence, to greater things. 217.43

Now so far in its course their doctrine, even if it does overstep the bounds of truth, at all events derives one absurdity from another by a kind of logical sequence; but from this point onwards their teaching takes the form of incoherent fable. 232.42

by this train of reasoning they will have the soul to pass into nothing; thus a return once more to the better state is impossible for it. 233.2

and lower than the insensible we find the inanimate, to which, by consequence, the principle of their doctrine brings the soul. 233.11

in the same way we suppose the human germ to possess the potentiality of its nature, sown with it at the first start of its existence, and that it is unfolded and manifested by a natural sequence as it proceeds to its perfect state, not employing anything external to itself as a stepping stone to perfection, but itself advancing its own self in due course to the perfect state. 236.20

for even the form of the future man is there potentially, but is concealed because it is not possible that it should be made visible before the necessary sequence of events allows it; so also the soul is there, even though it is not visible, and will be manifested by means of its own proper and natural operation, it advances concurrently with the bodily growth. 236.43

Thus our community in that generation which is subject to passion and of animal nature, brings it about that the Divine image does not at once shine forth at our formation, but brings man to perfection by a certain method and sequence, through those attributes of the soul which are material, and belong rather to the animal creation. 256.3

#### On the Song of Songs<sup>(35)</sup>

So too one can see in the soul an analogy to the body's growth where there is a certain order and sequence leading to a life in accord with virtue. 18.6

Thus, the next part of the virgin's prayer in the Song's first words says, "your breasts are better than wine, and the scent of your perfumes is beyond all ointments." 34.18

The consequence of what was just examined leads us to contemplate the bride's words to her maidens: "I am black and beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem." 45.16

The intention of these words is clear from the sequence of words we have closely examined above. However, the text's order is unclear. 63.16

It is said that ignorance of oneself is the beginning and consequence of never having known anything of the things which one ought to know. 72.11

The Song's text draws human nature to God by a certain method and order, first illuminating it through the prophets and the precepts of the Law. 144.19

The Song next sets before us the bride's teeth while omitting praise of her mouth and lips, a fact worth examining. 223.10

#### On the Inscriptions of the Psalms

The divine book of the psalms wonderfully shows us the way [to blessedness] by a systematic, natural order showing the various means for man to attain blessedness both by a simplicity

which is evident and a teaching which is plain. 26.15

The first true archetype is music, for harmony and concord harmonize all things with respect to each other through an order, arrangement and system. 32.13

Psalms One-hundred and six says that rivers are the floods of passions and streams of waters are the fruits of evil. 61.6

We understand the five divisions of the psalter as steps leading to further higher [steps] which are distinguished by the sequence of the word order. 65.7

I think it is better to briefly mention the sequence of the historical events so that the phrase "Titular inscription" might offer us guidance. 80.19

A more careful examination reveals their sequence and order [psalms lacking inscriptions]. 93.17

I omit the rest of this text not to weary you by the consequence of our examination because everything has one goal, the very end of the psalter. 106.1

By the insertion of diapsalma in the middle of such psalms, they can lead to a more sublime understanding of the good. 110.12

For anyone who may wish to examine the psalter, its order seems to differ from the course of historical events. Should a person consider the time in which David lived and the sequence of his deeds, he would not find the distribution of the psalms to agree with the sequence of historical events. 115.11

Then he [the divine sculptor] cuts away superficial material and begins to form his subject matter to the likeness of his final goal by removing anything which hinders the representation. 116.17

The first section of the psalter speaks of how we have been separated from a life in evil; the following sections, right to the end of the psalter, present an imitation [of Christ] according to a certain order. 117.1

He [Holy Spirit] seeks consistency in the psalms' words while disregarding the historical sequence of events. 117.6

This arrangement salvation has in view, and the excellent order of these examples contributes to this end. 118.2

The river of gladness makes the city of God rejoice and the Most High sanctifies his own dwelling, while the progression of other such things from this psalm symbolically proclaims hidden things. 126.22

The psalmist wishes to advise those who in their pride pursue useless things, the fruit of vain preoccupations. 131.5

The historical elements lying in the psalm inscriptions are of no consequence to us, but only the

intention of their order is important. 133.5

I aim for this goal in order to then attain the ascent which follows, that is, obtaining victory from victory. 133.23

The remainder of the psalm explains the restoration of our human nature whose head [Christ] is impervious to the enemy's victory. 150.15

The order of the psalms does not concur with the sequence of historical events but pertains to those who have been perfected in accord with their progress through virtue. 151.15

The entire sequence of Psalm Fifty-seven laments the destruction of wretched men. 163.6

This is not the end of the upward journey for persons advancing through virtue, for the sequence of the next psalm [fifty-seven] transcends the one before it by the magnificence of its contemplation. 166.15

The sequence of these historical symbols is indeed clear to anyone who considers them. 169.24

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## Theoria

### Commentary on the Song of Songs

By an appropriate contemplation of the text, the philosophy hidden in its words becomes manifest, once the literal meaning has been purified by a correct understanding. 3.4

With regards to anagogy, it makes no difference what we call it-tropology or allegory-as long as we grasp the meaning of [scripture's] words. 5.6

Paul calls his consideration of them allegory [Gal 4.24]. 6.3

In all these different expressions and names of contemplation Paul is teaching us an important lesson: we must pass to a spiritual and intelligent investigation of scripture so that considerations of the merely human element might be changed into something perceived by the mind once the more fleshly sense of the words has been shaken off like dust. 6.13

Many such examples could be gathered from other prophecies to teach us the necessity of contemplating the words according to their deeper meaning. 12.3

I have composed my commentary in the form of homilies following a contemplation of the text of the Song of Songs. 13.14

I issue this warning before entering upon the mystical contemplation of the Song of Songs. 15.12

As we apply ourselves to this contemplation, we must put aside thoughts of marriage as Moses commanded [cf. Ex 19.15] when he ordered those being initiated to cleanse themselves from marriage. 25.16

Now the time (kairos) has come to begin our interpretation of the divine words of the Song of Songs. 27.19

The consequence of what was just examined leads us to contemplate the bride's words to her maidens [cf. Sg 1.5]. 45.17

Thus the interpretation of the Song's prologue according to the two preceding days had the benefit of washing and purifying from the flesh's mire our understanding of its words. 71.15

If one looks at these words [cf. Sg 1.11-12] in the context of the interpretation given above, the intention seems to be in harmony with it. 83.4

The Song of Songs now leads us to desire a contemplation of the transcendent good. 137.6

The bride does not name all those earlier ascents contemplation and clear recognition of truth, but she calls them the "voice" of the bridegroom whom she desires. 138.10

and we must therefore see how our consideration of the present text can be adapted to our earlier reflections. 140.7

The analogical interpretation, however, is close to the understanding which we developed earlier. 144.18

All these examples are like voices summoning the soul to contemplate the [heavenly] mysteries. 178.2

By a contemplation of the words before us, we are clearly taught not to limit the greatness of God's nature. 179.21

be mindful that the description of the bridal chamber and marital elements is material for contemplation. 180.8

By "night" the bride shows us the contemplation of what is unseen, and like Moses, she is in the darkness of God's presence [cf. Ex 20.21]. 181.5

by more careful consideration we should shift our attention from the material appearances to a spiritual contemplation. 190.17

by a more subtle contemplation, they make the food delectable. 226.1

Thus Paul reduces the dense body of the Law into fine pieces and makes it spiritual through contemplation. 226.16

Therefore, the exercise of temperance rightly partakes of contemplation, for just as the

pomegranate's tart skin is nourishing and guards the fruit's sweetness by completely surround it, so is a harsh, austere life of self-control a guardian for the benefits of temperance. 230.13

Anyone who considers these examples in an allegorical fashion will see their significance in reference to a life of virtue. 274.16

Because the Song's divine words contain some difficult, veiled ideas concealed in obscurity, we need to apply greater attention to the text. 294.14

Despising all such wonders through the contemplation of true goodness, the body's eye becomes tired, and the more perfect soul is not attracted to anything visible. 313.2

Therefore, when the soul enjoys only the contemplation of Being, it will not arise for those things which effect sensual pleasure. 314.3

Even if he remained a long time near the gushing water, he would always behold the water as for the first time, for the water never ceases to gush forth. 321.15

the only thing left for her contemplation is the unseen and unattainable in which God dwells. 323.6

The bridegroom's hands offer us two considerations: they suggest that the incomprehensible divine nature is made known through these operations along. Through the bride's words, the divine nature prophesies in advance the gift of the Gospel. 339.6

The vast sea represents contemplation of the divine words. 341.16

Having thus traversed the open sea by contemplation, we might traffic in the wealth of knowledge if by your prayers the Holy Spirit strikes our sails. 342.6

The contemplation of God's face is a never ending journey toward him accomplished by following right behind the Word. 356.14

There if no reason for jealousy should anyone obtain a better understanding of the text from him who reveals the hidden mysteries. 368.6

instead of a veil, the lintel was removed so that Isaiah's contemplation may not be hindered. 369.5

Contemplation by itself cannot perfect the soul unless accompanied by actions which direct a morally good life, nor can an active way of life suffice unless guided by true piety. 394.2

The other is the spiritual, immaterial way of life set forth by his teaching and by the contemplation of the spiritual realm which mortifies the world, that is, the life of flesh and blood. 404.9

An example from the human body helps us to comprehend better these words of the Song. 412.11

We come to know the usefulness of the divinely inspired Scriptures through spiritual contemplation. 436.2

### Commentary on the Incriptions of the Psalms

The advantage obtained from our first observations of the [psalm] inscriptions will, in due time, become clearer by considering what we examined earlier. 25.9

We will now systematically consider the banquet of the virtues in scripture as mentioned earlier. 34.19

These two manifestations [body's sense perceptions and virtue delighting the soul] thus present a true, clear idea of each property. 34.28

Keeping himself alone for the Alone, he [Moses] gazed at unseen realities through silent, concentrated contemplation. 44.3

The fifth section [psalter] then leads us to the loftiest peak and degree of contemplation if we are capable to reach such a height and to fly with strong wings beyond the weavings of this life's webs. 52.3

We must first systematically treat a few inscriptions to get an idea of the psalms for clearly realizing the aim of their divinely inspired teachings, namely, to lead our mind to true blessedness. 69.11

The purpose of considering each inscription is to direct a person to the good, even though something historical seems to be manifested either by the words of by the mere name of a person or a place. 72.3

it [scripture] also gives a teaching on virtuous living once we have obtained a loftier understanding of these historical considerations. 72.10

They pertain now to the end of a life of virtue and arrange the praise of God according to our purified understanding of the preceding sections of the psalter. 91.5

By your training in earlier victories, you are now worthy to sing "for the secrets of the son" [Ps 9] through a fitting, suitable contemplation. 123.17

We may not then be a source of confusion for him by our consideration of every word and a prolonged contemplation of each point. 144.13

I think we should briefly consider its contents by first explaining the divinely inspired words. 154.23

This is not the end of the upward journey for persons advancing through virtue, for the next psalm [fifty-seven] transcends the one before it by the magnificence of its contemplation. 166.16

The book of Ecclesiastes is offered for our examination because it is especially useful and valuable for contemplation. 277.4

If a toilsome, arduous meditation of Proverbs prepares us for these lessons, how much more laborious and difficult must it be to now examine such sublime matters proposed for our contemplation! 278.5

We must first consider the inscription of this book, "The words of Ecclesiastes, son of David, king of Israel in Jerusalem." 279.5

Since vanity exists apart from the senses and the mind contemplating unseen realities attempts to explain what it comprehends, we need to exert ourselves strenuously in the task of interpretation even though we cannot clearly express that which is inexpressible. 293.4

The sight of visible reality cannot behold what pertains to the soul; rather, we who are always looking see nothing while we ignorantly receive sense perceptions. 294.6

It is time now to examine Ecclesiastes' words in their context: "I spoke in my heart saying, 'Behold, I am increased.'" 307.18

By making comparisons we obtain better insight into mens' pursuits. 355.5

On the other hand, how many are those who are concerned with heavenly blessings and the contemplation of true reality! 359.10

Everything has a time [chronos] and season [kairos] under the sun, words which form a type of prologue for what we are now considering. 373.2

If you look at the profound sense of the text, you will find a comprehensive philosophy which is both contemplative and practical in nature. 373.20

Material life means bodily existence but contemplation of the good is hidden from persons who live according to their senses. 374.10

It would be opportune to present Ecclesiastes' divinely inspired words for our consideration. 378.7

I mean the honor bestowed upon the angels, our confidence in God's presence, contemplation of transcendent blessings and the incorruptible beauty of [God's] blessed nature which adorns us and is manifested by the soul's beauty in its resplendent divine image. 386.20

Let us continue further because for me a contemplation of the text is appropriate due to its loftier philosophy. 409.3

The contemplation of beings is restricted by a certain notion of temporal interval which cannot be transgressed. 412.8

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## First Appendix

In the following two sections, keep in mind those references pertaining to the special use of kairos as sacred time or opportunity, that is, in contrast to our customary perception of time, chronos:

### Old Testament<sup>(36)</sup>:

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years." Gen 1.14

But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year. Gen 17.21

Then Abraham...circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. Gen 17.23

The Lord said, "I will surely return to you in the [season of] spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." Gen 18.10

At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son. Gen 18.14

And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Gen 21.2

At the time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do." Gen 21.22

Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons. Gen 29.34

Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons." Gen 30.20

It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. Gen 38.1

But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go. Ex 8.32

And the Lord set a time saying, "Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land." Ex 9.5

For this time I will send all my plagues upon your heart, and upon your servants and your people that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. Ex 9.14

You shall therefore keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year. Ex 13.10

Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. Ex 23.14

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt. Ex 34.18

If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity...all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. Lev 15.25

These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. Lev 23.4

If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season. Lev 26.3-4

On the fourteenth day of this month, in the evening, you shall keep it at its appointed time. Num 9.3

But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, yet refrains from keeping the passover, that person shall be cut off from the people because he did not offer the Lord's offering at its appointed time. Num 9.13

Now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, "what has God wrought!" Num 23.23

At that time I said to you, "I am not able alone to bear you; the Lord God has multiplied you." Dt 1.9

And we captured all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed every city, men, women and children. Dt 2.34

And I commanded you at that time, saying, "The Lord your God has given you this land to possess." Dt 3.18

And I commanded Joshua at that time, "Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings." Dt 3.21

And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess. Dt 4.14

while I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord. Dt 5.5

For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure which the Lord bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened to me that time also. Dt 9.19

At that time the Lord said to me, "Hew two tables of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood." Dt 10.1

And I stayed on the mountain as at the first time, forty days and forty nights, and the Lord

hearkened to me that time also. Dt 10.10

there you shall offer the passover sacrifice in the evening at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. Dt 16.6

The Lord will open to you his good treasury the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. Dt 28.12

At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the people of Israel again the second time." Jos 5.2

And Joshua came at that time and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country. Jos 11.21

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. Jud 4.4

His father and mother did not know that it was from the Lord; for he [Samson] was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Jud 14.4

And the people of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family. Jud 21.24

and in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel. 1Sam 1.20

Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. 1Sam 9.16

And Jonathan said to David, "The Lord, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded my father about this time tomorrow." 1Sam 20.12

So Amasa went to summon Judah; but he delayed beyond the set time which had been appointed him. 2Sam 20.5

For my house is not so with the Mighty One, for he has made an everlasting covenant with me, ready, guarded at every time. 2Sam 23.5

And it came to pass in the time of the old age of Solomon that his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God. 1Kg 11.4

And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation. 1Kg 18.29

But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her. 2Kg 4.17

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 2Kg 24.10

And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord at that time because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. 2Chron 7.2

At that time Solomon held the feast for seven days, and all Israel with him. 2Chron 7.8  
as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses. 2Chron 8.13  
In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in. 2Chron 15.5  
At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah. 2Chron 16.7  
for they could not keep it in its time because the priests had not sanctified themselves in  
sufficient number. 2Chron 30.3  
And the people of Israel who were present kept the passover at that time. 2Chron 35.17  
You shall come to your grave in ripe old age, as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing  
floor in its season. Job 5.26  
Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season? Job 38.32  
and do you know the time when they [hinds] bring forth? Job 39.1  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season. Ps 1.3  
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Ps 10.1  
You will make them as a blazing oven on the day when you appear. Ps 21.9  
Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time of distress. Ps 32.6  
I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. Ps 34.1  
they are not put to shame in evil times, in the days of famine they have abundance. Ps 37.19  
At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me. Ps 69.13  
Do not cast me off in the time of old age. Ps 71.9  
Those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. Ps 81.15  
You will arise and have pity of Zion; it is the time to favor her. Ps 102.13  
You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. Ps 104.19  
Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! Ps 106.3  
My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances at all times. Ps 119.20  
It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken. Ps 119.126

For the lips of a loose woman drip honey who for a season pleases your palate. Prov 5.3

Let her affection fill you at all times with delight. Prov 5.19

I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him daily. Prov 8.30

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Prov 17.17

(references from Ecclesiastes are omitted since they are located elsewhere in this document)

The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come. Sg 2.12

and they will be thrust into thick darkness for a time. Is 8.22

At that time gifts will be brought to the Lord of hosts from a people tall and smooth. Is 18.7

that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. Is 30.8

Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble. Is 33.2

At that time Merodach-bal-adan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah. Is 39.1

I am the Lord; in its time I will hasten it. Is 60.22

and remember not iniquity for a season. Is 64.9

But in the time of their trouble they say, "Arise and save us!" Jer 2.27

At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it. Jer 3.17

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, "A hot wind from the bare heights in the desert toward the daughter of my people." Jer 4.11

They do not say in their hearts, "Let us fear the Lord our God who gives the rain in its season." Jer 5.24

at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord. Jer 6.15

At that time, says the Lord, the bones of the kings of Judah, its princes, prophets and inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs. Jer 8.1

We looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of healing, but behold, terror. Jer 8.15

at the time of their punishment they shall perish. Jer 10.15

but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble. Jer 11.12

I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. Jer 11.14

O, hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble. Jer 14.8

We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror. Jer 14.19

Therefore, behold, I will make them know at this time my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the Lord. Jer 16.21

deal with them in the time of your anger. Jer 18.23

They are vain works, objects of scorn; in the time of their visitation they shall perish. Jer 28.18 (LXX)

our end drew near; our days were numbered, for our time had come. Lam 4.18

The vision that he sees is for many days hence, and he prophesies of times far off. Ezk 12.27

When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love. Ezk 16.8

whose day has come, the time of their final punishment. Ezk 21.29

and you have brought your day near, the appointed time of your years to come. Ezk 22.4

The king answered, "I know that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is sure." Dan 2.8

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets them up. Dan 2.21

Daniel...got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God. Dan 6.10

He shall think to change the times and the law. Dan 7.25

Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end. Dan 8.17

In those times many shall rise against the king of the south. Dan 11.14

for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. Dan 11.27

and to make them white until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed. Dan 11.35

At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him. Dan 11.40

But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Dan 12.4

Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season. Hos 2.9

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem. Jl 3.1

Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time. Amos 5.13

he will hide his face from them at that time because they have made their deeds evil. Mic 3.4

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth. Mic 5.3

For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end. Hab 2.3

Thus says the Lord of hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord. Hag 1.2

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In this section, be aware of the dependency of the New Testament's use of kairos as developed in the Old but with the added dimension of the person of Jesus Christ, especially as pertaining to the future which the authors perceived as seminally present in the here and now.

#### New Testament

Have you come here to torment us before the time? Mt 8.29

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise." Mt 11.25

and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned." Mt 13.30

You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. Mt 16.3

Who then is the faithful and wise servant...to give them their food at the proper time? Mt 24.45

My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at your house with my disciples. Mt 26.18

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. Mk 1.15

who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time. Mk 10.30

Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come. Mk 13.33

because you did not believe my [angel Gabriel] words which will be fulfilled in their time. Lk 1.20

And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. Lk 4.13

but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Lk 8.13

because you did not know the time of your visitation. Lk 19.44

Take heed that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name saying, "The time is at hand!" Lk 21.8

and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Lk 21.24

But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man. Lk 21.36

for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water. Jn 5.(4)

My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. Jn 7.6

for my time has not yet full come. Jn 7.8

It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. Acts 1.7

whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Acts 3.21

And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation. Acts 17.26

it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies himwho has faith in Jesus. Rom 3.26

While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Rom 5.6

Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time. 1Cor 4.5

Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season. 1Cor 7.5

I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short. 1Cor 7.29

Behold, now is the acceptable time. 2Cor 6.2

And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Gal 6.9

as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. Eph 1.10

remember that you were at that time separated from Christ. Eph 2.12

Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. Eph 6.18

But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. 1Ths 5.1

And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. 2Ths 2.6

who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time. 1Tm 2.6

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith. 1Tm 4.1

and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings. 1Tm 6.15

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. 2Tm 3.1

the time of my departure has come. 2Tm 4.6

and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God our Savior. Tit 1.3

If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had the opportunity to return. Heb 11.15

who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1Pt 1.5

For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God. 1Pt 4.17

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. 1Pt 5.6

Blessed...who keep what is written therein; for the time is near. Rev 1.3

The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged. Rev 11.18

But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! Rev 12.12

But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time. Rev 12.14

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Second Appendix(a select list of references to diastema from Gregory of Nyssa's Against Eunomius)

Against Eunomius, I

Then he must tell us on what grounds he has measured out more length of life to the Father, while no distinctions of time whatever have been previously conceived of in the personality of the Son. 78.2 (52)

Every measure of distance that we could discover is beneath the divine nature: so no ground is left for those who attempt to divide this pre-temporal and incomprehensible being by distinctions of superior & inferior. 79.5 (52)

Again; only in the case of the creation is it true to speak of "priority." The sequence of works was there displayed in the order of the days; and the heavens may be said to have preceded by so much the making of man, and that interval may be measured by the interval of days. But in the divine nature, which transcends all idea of time and surpasses all reach of thought, to talk of a "prior" and a "latter" in the honors of time is a privilege only of this new-fangled philosophy. 128.13 (67)

What exposes still further the untenableness of this view is, that, besides positing a beginning in time of the Son's existence, it does not, when followed out, spare the Father even, but proves that he also had his beginning in time. 129.2 (67)

When he pronounces that the life of the Father is prior to that of the Son, he places a certain interval between the two; now, he must mean, either that this interval is infinite, or that it is included within fixed limits. 129.15 (67)

When we say that man was made the fifth day after the heavens, we tacitly imply that before those same days the heavens did not exist either; a subsequent event goes to define, by means of the interval which precedes it, the occurrence also of a previous event. 129.27 (67)

Our adversaries conceive of the existences of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as involving elder and younger, respectively. Well then, if at the bidding of this heresy, we journey up beyond the generation of the Son, and approach that intervening duration which the mere fancy of these dogmatists supposes between the Father and the Son, and then reach that other and supreme point of time by which they close that duration, then we find the life of the Father fixed as it were upon an apex; and thence we must necessarily conclude that before it the Father is not to be believed to have existed always. 130.17 & 30 (68)

So, if there is, as our adversaries say, an excess of some kind in the Father's life as compared with the Son's, it must needs consist in some definite interval of duration: and they will allow that this interval of excess cannot be in the future, for that Both are imperishable, even the foes of the truth will grant. No; they conceive of third difference as in the past, and instead of equalizing the life of the Father and the Son there, they extend the conception of the Father by an interval of living. But every interval must be founded by two ends: and so for this interval which they have devised we must grasp the two points by which the ends are denoted. The one portion takes its beginning, in their view, from the Son's generation; and the other portion must end in some other point, from which the interval starts, and by which it limits itself...It admits not of a doubt, then, that they will not be able to find at all the other portion, corresponding to the first portion of their fancied interval, except they were to suppose some beginning of their Ungenerate, whence the middle, that connects with the generation of the Son, may be conceived of as starting...Let it suffice on the ground of causation only to conceive of the Father as before the Son; and let not the Father's life be thought of as a separate and peculiar one before the generation of the Son, lest we should have to admit the idea inevitably associated with this of an interval

before the appearance of the Son which measure the life of him who begot him, and then the necessary consequence of this, that a beginning of the Father's life also must be supposed by virtue of which their fancied interval may be stayed in its upward advance so as to set a limit and a beginning to this previous life of the Fr as well: let it suffice for us when we confess the "coming from him," to admit also, bold as it may seem, the "living along with him;" for we are led by the written oracles to such a belief. 131.8, 13, 14, 20, 25; 132 3, 5, 20, 23 (68)

One therefore of two things must follow. Either the Creation is everlasting; or, it must be boldly admitted, the Son is later in time (than the Father). The conception of an interval in time will lead to monstrous conclusions, even when measured from the Creation up to the Creator. 133.15 (68)

If he could point to anything above Creation which as its origin marked by any interval of time, and it were acknowledged possible by all to think of any time-interval as existing before Creation, he might have occasion for endeavoring to destroy by such attracts that everlastingness of the Son which we have proved above. 133.21, 23 (69)

But seeing that by all the suffrages of the faithful it is agreed that, of all things that are, and that the divine nature is to be believed uncreated (although within it, as our faith teaches, there is a cause, and there is a subsistence produced, but without separation, from the cause), while the creation is to be viewed in an extension of distances,—all order and sequence of time in events can be perceived only in the ages (of this creation)...But the world above creation, being removed from all conception of distance, eludes all sequence of time: it has no commencement of that sort: it has no end in which to cease its advance, according to any discoverable method of order. 134.3, 10, 14 (69)

It is clear, even with a moderate insight into the nature of things, that there is nothing by which we can measure the divine and blessed Life. It is not in time, but time flows from it; whereas the creation, starting from a manifest beginning, journeys onward to its proper end through spaces of time...But the supreme and blessed life has no time-extension accompanying its course, and therefore no span nor measure. 135.4, 9 (69)

Well, then, if in this uncreate existence those wondrous realities, with their wondrous names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are to be in our thoughts, how can we imagine, of that pretemporal world, that which our busy, restless minds perceive in things here below by comparing one of them with another and giving it precedence by an interval of time? 138.3 (79)

...as the Only-begotten Light, and having shone forth in that very Light, being divisible neither by duration nor by an alien nature from the Father or from the Only-begotten. 138.14 (70)

There are no intervals in that pre-temporal world; and difference on the score of being there is none. 138.16 (70)

The generation of the Son does not fall within time, any more than the creation was before time: so that it can in no kind of way be right to partition the indivisible, and to insert, by declaring that there was a time when the Author of all existence was not. 138.29 (70)

...and that, if any interval were to be imagined dividing the two [Son's birth and Father's ungeneracy], that same interval would fix a beginning for the life of the Almighty. 139.4 (70)

Then again, we see yet another such Light after the same fashion, sundered by no interval of time from that offspring Light, and while shining forth by means of It yet tracing the source of its being to the Primal Light. 180.28 (85)

You cannot take one of these [Fatherhood and Ungeneracy plus other divine attributes] and separate it in thought from the rest by any interval of time, as if it preceded or followed something else; no sublime or adorable attribute in Him can be discovered, which is not simultaneously expressed in His everlastingness. 196.12 (90)

I for my part cannot see what there is to think of in connection with the Father, by himself, that is parted by any interval so as to precede our apprehension of the Son. 197.21 (90)

When there is no intermediate matter, or idea, or interval of time, to separate the being of the Son from the Father, no symbol can be thought of, either, by which the Only-begotten can be unlinked from the Father's life and shown to proceed from some special source of his own. 210.7 (94)

Those who draw a circular figure in plane geometry from a center to the distance of the line of circumference tell us there is no definite beginning to their figure; and that the line is interrupted by no ascertained end any more than by any visible commencement. 218.1, 4 (97)

On the other hand, because the existence of the Son is not marked by any intervals of time, and the infinitude of his life flows back before the ages and onward beyond them in an all-pervading tide, he is properly addressed with the title of Eternal. 224.13 (100)

#### Against Eunomius, II

But when all such material, temporal and local existence is excluded from the sense of the term "Son," community of nature alone is left, and for this reason by the title "Son" is declared, concerning the Only-begotten, the close affinity and genuineness of relationship which mark his manifestation from the Father. 37 (114)

The latter is confined within its own boundaries according to the pleasure of its Maker. The former is bounded only by infinity. The latter stretches itself out within certain degrees of extension, limited by time and space; the former transcends all notion of degree, baffling curiosity from every point of view. In this life we can apprehend the beginning and the end of all things that exist, but the beatitude that is above the creature admits neither end nor beginning, but is above all that is connoted by either, being ever the same, self-dependent, not traveling on by degrees from one point to another in its life. 246.19, 21, 27 (257)

For you cannot apply the same definition to "light" and "day", but light is what we understand by the opposite of darkness, and day is the extent of the measure of the interval of light. 309.7 (279)

What is this vain flourish of baseless expressions, seeing that our Master simply says that whatever in the Divine essence transcends the measurable distances of the ages in either direction is called by certain distinctive names. 359.24 (296)

For seeing that human life, moving from stage to stage, advances in its progress from a beginning to an end, and our life here is divided between that which is past and that which is expected, so that the one is the subject of hope, the other of memory; on this account, as, in relation to ourselves, we apprehend a past and a future in this measurable extent, so also we apply the thought, though incorrectly, to the transcendent nature of God; not of course that God in his own existence leaves any interval behind, or passes on afresh to something that lies before, but because our intellect can only conceive things according to our nature, and measures the eternal by a past and a future, where neither the past precludes the march of thought to the illimitable and infinite, nor the future tells us of any pause or limit of his endless life. 360.16 (296)

...and Moses, speaking of the kingdom of God as "extending beyond all ages," so that we are taught by both [reference to David] that every duration conceivable is environed by the Divine nature, bounded on all sides by the infinity of him who holds the universe in his embrace. 361.10 (296)

"His transcending," he continues, "every limit of the ages, and every distance in temporal extension, whether we consider the previous or the subsequent, this absence of limit or circumscription on either hand in the Eternal Life we mark in the one case with the name of imperishability, and in the other case with the name of ungeneracy." 380.19

For, as beginning means one thing, and end means another, by virtue of an intervening extension, if anyone allow the privation of the first of these to be essence, he must suppose his life to be only half subsisting in this being without beginning, and not to extend further, by virtue of his nature, to the being without end, if ungeneracy be regarded as itself his nature. 381.13 (303)

All that actually comes within our comprehension is such that it must be of one of these four kinds: either contemplated as existing in an extension of distance... 395.5 (308)

### Against Eunomius, III

...in the notion of a human father there is included not only all that the flesh suggests to our thoughts, but a certain notion of interval is also undoubtedly conceived with the idea of human fatherhood, it would be well, in the case of the divine generation, to reject, together with bodily pollution, the notion of interval also, that so what properly belongs to matter may be completely purged away. 31.15 (144)

...since we too confess the close connection and relation of the Son with the Father, so that there is nothing inserted between them which is found to intervene in the connection of the Son with the Father, no conception of interval, not even that minute and indivisible one, which, when time is divided into past, present and future, is conceived indivisibly by itself as the present... 91.14 (166)

Neither does this immediate conjunction exclude the "willing" of the Father, in the sense that he has a Son without choice, by some necessity of his nature, nor does the "willing" separate the Son from the Father, coming in between them as a kind of interval. 191.19 (202)

Now every such conception of matter and interval being excluded from the sense of the word "Son," nature alone remains and hereby in the word "Son" is declared concerning the Only-begotten the close and true character of his manifestation from the Father. 199.4 (205)

...but this only, as we have said, is manifested by this particular mode of generation, that he is conceived to be of him and also with him, no intermediate interval existing between the Father that Son who is of him. 200.2 (205)

For there is nothing else by which we can mark the beginning of things that have been made, if time does not define by its own interval the beginnings and the endings of the things that come into being. 207.24 (208)

For if the interval of the ages has preceded existing things, it is proper to employ the temporal adverb, and to say "He then willed" and "He then made": but since the age was not, since no conception of interval is present to our minds in regard to that divine nature which is not measured by quantity or by interval, the force of temporal expressions must surely be void...but to regard the divine nature itself as being in a kind of extension measured by intervals, belongs only to those who have been trained in the new wisdom. 217.3 (211)

And what is this that is inserted as intervening between the life of the Father and that of the Son, that is not time nor space, nor any idea of extension, nor any like thing? 219.22 (212)

That the divine generation, therefore, may be clear of every idea connected with passion, we shall avoid conceiving with regard to it even that extension which is measured by intervals. Now that which begins and ends is surely regarded as being in a kind of extension, & all extension is measured by time, and as time (by which we mark both the end of birth and its beginning) is excluded, it would be vain, in the case of the uninterrupted generation, to entertain the idea of end or beginning, since no idea can be formed to mark either the point at which such generation begins or that at which it ceases. 225.13 (215)

For it is only as being circumscribed in some quantitative way that things can be said either to begin or to cease on arriving at a limit, and the measure expressed by time (having its extension concomitant

with the quantity of that which is produced) differentiates the beginning from the end by the interval between them. But how can any one measure or treat as extended that which is without quantity and without extension?...Now the divine nature is without extension, and, being without extension, it has no limit; and that which is limitless is infinite, and is spoken of accordingly. 226.22 (215)

For any of the things that do not exist is no more in a state of "not being" now than if it were non-existent before, but the idea of "not being" is one applied to that which "is not" at any distance of time. 232.11 (217)

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### Third Appendix

#### APATHEIA references from the Song Commentary

You who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ with his holy robe and have been transformed with him into a state which is free from passion and more divine, listen to the mysteries of the Song of Songs. 15.1

By clinging to the Lord he might become one spirit through a union with what is pure and free from passion and have a pure mind instead of burdened with the flesh's weight. 23.5

Let him ascend to paradise through detachment, having become like God through purity. 25.8

The soul must transform passion into passionlessness so that when every corporeal affection has been quenched, our mind may seethe with passion for the spirit alone. 27.12

What could be more paradoxical than to make nature purify itself of its own passions and teach detachment in words normally suggesting passion? 29.6

It shows that we are no longer to be men with a nature of flesh and blood; rather, it points to the life we hope for at the resurrection of the saints, an angelic life free from all passion. 30.8

Immortality is the vineyard, a state free from passion, likeness to God and estrangement from evil. 60.4

For the rays of that true, divine virtue shine forth in a pure life by the outflow of detachment and make the invisible visible to us and the inaccessible comprehensible by depicting the sun in the mirror of our souls. 90.14

God's will is done "on earth as it is in heaven" [Mt 6.10] when the detachment of the angels is effected in us. 135.6

by devoting his life to virtue, he has rejected passion, he becomes a child undisturbed by passion; for the state of infancy is not subject to passion. 198.16

For a state free from passion illumines the bride as well as the angels; it gives her kinship and sisterhood with the spiritual powers. 254.1

She is our sister because she lacks passion and a bride because she is united with the Word. 254.4  
The garment of your virtues, my bride, imitates the divine blessedness and resembles the transcendent divine nature by your purity and freedom from passion. 272.19

being fragrant through purity and detachment, he [Paul] ground into wheat the living plants of the garden for the Lord. 307.12

Pleasure has two aspects: one is effected in the soul by freedom from passion and another by passion in the body. 313.18

his bed us free from passion, and his marriage is incorruptibility. 388.12

Even though he was born of a slave and a concubine, he received a royal dignity and the Spirit's glory by detachment and purity. 468.1

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#### Kairos references from the Song Commentary

If God, who dispenses us life, should grant enough life and a time of peace, perhaps we will pursue the rest of our task, for our investigation has proceeded up to the halfway point of the Song of Songs. 13.15

Not all periods of life according to the flesh are capable of every natural operation; nor do our lives advance in the same way at different periods. 18.3

Now the time has come to begin our interpretation of the divine words of the Song of Songs. 27.17

In the day of judgment he becomes a goat instead of a sheep. 66.15

Therefore, always watch over yourself, and do not be deceived by the flock of goats. Then you will not be singled out as a goat instead of a sheep in the time of judgment or excluded from the right hand of the throne. 69.14

It [vine] is not yet ripe for wine, but it awaits the fulness of time. 97.1

The person who has his will in harmony with God's law...yielding its fruit in due season[cf. Mt 21.41]. 97.17

You always remain what you are. You do not blossom for a season and then lose your flower. Throughout the eternity of your life your beauty lasts. 107.2

"The time of pruning has arrived" [Sg 2.12]. 136.9

The virtues are the flowers in our life, now blossoming and bearing fruit in their own season. 153.16

This is the season in which to pluck these flowers and plait them into crowns and to adorn yourself with them. 154.4

This process is repeated over and over until the tree puts forth pure, nourishing fruit at the proper time, having been cleansed of every undesirable quality. 155.6

The Song describes the spiritual spring to the bride, a season between the gloom of winter and the joyful fruits of summer. 155.15

This is the sense of the bride's words, but it is time to first recall the divinely inspired text and then adapt to it what we had previously examined [cf. Sg 3.1-4]. 175.2

to gather beautiful flowers ready to be cut at the time of full blossom. 178.13

the bride calls "bed" this more perfect participation in the good and calls "night" the time of darkness. 181.4

They [swords for senses] defend us against the shock and panic of our dark enemies, since night and darkness is the time when plots are hatched against our souls. 196.10

When the great Apostle Paul gave an account to the Corinthians of his lofty vision, he doubted his human nature, that is, whether at the time he was in the body or in the spirit. 245.13

Once the pomegranate ripens in its own good time, and once the rind is peeled off and the inside

revealed, it is sweet and appealing to the sight much like honey to the taste. 282.16

Once the time arrives to enjoy this pomegranate, we are offered other kinds of fruit for our delight from different trees. 283.7

rather, honey is changed into solid food when at the proper time, the fruit of virtue sweetens the soul's senses. 307.2

the harmony of the stars' course and the yearly cycle with its four seasons. 335.5

The bride is inflamed by a more vehement longing and makes known her heart's affliction through the daughters of Jerusalem at the time she received God's chosen arrow within her. 370.10

Then we will bring forth fruit in due season [cf. Ps 1.3]. 398.5

By a good confession at their time of witness, they were drenched with myrrh in their struggle on behalf of their religion. 405.21

Such is the case when one's mouth opens to speak and then closes, with each activity occurring at its proper time. 454.16

for her beauty which is neither immature nor untimely is manifested at the time of its vigor. 455.9

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Since the book of Ecclesiastes deals with "a time for...," it's only appropriate to list both the chronos and kairos refs. from Gregory's Ecclesiastes Commentary, beginning with chronos:

What value does the Church see in reflecting upon wars, rulers of peoples, founders of cities, settlers, kingdoms which have succeeded each other in time, weddings, births which have been diligently recorded and other things taught by scripture? 279.16

This demonstrates that everything is subject to an interval of a temporal nature, for nothing changes to a newer condition. 286.7

The time of your struggle is short. Do not be more inanimate than the earth nor more foolish than [beasts] which lack feeling, for you are endowed with reason and the capacity to administer. 288.18

God who fashioned the human body and will show the resurrection at the proper time, for that which comes after the resurrection was indeed fashioned first. 296.14

Thus this temporal name [son] does not refer to [Christ's] eternal essence but to a birth through the flesh in time (chronos) for man's salvation. 296.14

Ecclesiastes sets forth the order in his narrative when during the time of his youth he first had leisure for personal training, for attention to such labors does not indicate laxity. 307.6

But inasmuch as we perceive the good in pleasure, any delight sets desire aflame, for pleasure is united to desire and is always attractive to each time and stage of our growth. 313.17

What enhances your nature? It is neither time, beauty, honor nor virtue. 338.2

he [David] compared a person to a tree rooted by flowing waters, always green in good works and one who gathers at appropriate times the fruit of his own life. 354.8

Everything has a time and season (kairos). 372.21

the prologue has made a promise by saying that there is a place and time for everything under the sun. 373.16

We regard time as measurement coextensive with creation. 374.19

If measure or opportunity (kairos) is not present within time, the present is quite useless; however, due proportion befits time, and opportunity (kairos) is useful for measure. In this way we understand time instead of measure since we define it as the measure of both due proportion and opportunity (kairos). 376.23

Time is the measure of conception, the growth of corn, fruit, the measure of sailing, walking, the periods of life which are infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, early manhood, the prime of life, middle age, fullness of maturity, middle age, old age and senility. Time is not restricted by one measure...while everything subject to measure has the same, all-encompassing time. 377.10

In this way Ecclesiastes defines time [cf. 3.1], and in each stage of life he removes the evil in both which results from a lack of measure, thereby holding in dishonor anything which exceeds its time and dismissing any deficiency. 378.3

After we have cast stones at the appropriate time, we learn to gather them again. 392.12

The time of the action is considered apart from the nature of the person who committed the deed. What shares a common interval (diastema) of time with an action we freely committed? 392.13

Since an evil of this kind always transpires in time, indeed no harmful action would be becoming with respect to time. 393.11

Do you wish to learn the opportune time (kairos) for seeking the Lord? Let me briefly state that your entire life is the only time to carry this out. Seeking the Lord is not defined by limit or time; rather, the truly opportune time (kairos) for this consists in ever putting an end to our search. 401.6

Similarly, the time to seek is not limited to a fixed occasion (kairos); instead, one's entire life should be an opportunity (kairos) for seeking that good. 405.2

Our mind functions by using intervals within time (diastematikos), so how can it grasp [God's] nature which is not subject to temporal extension (adiastatos)? Through the medium of time the inquisitive [mind] always leaves behind any thought older than what it just discovered. 412.20

To me, this example pertains to the soul's passage through intervals of time (diastatemikos) in its search for [God's] nature which exists before eternity and is not subject to time (adiastatos). His nature cannot be grasped because it lacks space, time, measure and anything else we can apprehend. 414.3

A list of references from the Commentary on Ecclesiastes containing the word kairos:

Thus this temporal (chronikos) name does not refer to [Christ's] eternal essence but to a birth through the flesh in time for man's salvation. 299.17

It is time to examine what Ecclesiastes now teaches us. 314.13

Everything has a time (chronos) and season. 372.21

there is a place and time for everything under the sun. 373.16

Excess in harmful activity and deficiency in time and measure also apply to healing. 376.4

The good has no bounds nor is untimely (akairos); rather, the qualities of beauty and its uniqueness make it perfect. 376.9

due proportion befits time, and opportunity is useful for measure. In this way we understand time instead of measure since we define it as the measure of both due proportion and opportunity. 376.20

It would be opportune to present Ecclesiastes' divinely inspired words for our consideration. 378.6

"There is a time to be born and a time to die" [Eccl 3.2]. 378.7

I have a time to be born, and a time will come for me to die. 378.23

Would that my birth be timely and my death opportune (eukairos)! 379.14

Thus any person testifying to an untimely (akairos) birth begets his own ruin and has death for a midwife. 380.19

In my judgment this opportune (eukairos) death truly procured a holy passing. 381.19

There is a time to plant temperance and a time to uproot intemperance. 383.4

"There is a time to kill and a time to heal" [Eccl 3.3]. 383.14

"There is a time to pull down and a time to build up" [Eccl 3.3]. 384.16

"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh" [Eccl 3.4]. 385.20

"A time to mourn and a time to dance" [Eccl 3.4]. 388.15

"There is a time to cast stones and a time to gather stones" [Ecc 3.5]. 390.2

"There is a time to seek and a time to lose" [Ecc 3.6]. 400.10

Do you wish to learn the opportune time for seeking the Lord? Let me briefly state that your entire life

is the only time to carry this out. 400.16

Seeking the Lord is not defined by limit or time; rather, the truly opportune time for this consists in never putting an end to our search. 401.3

"There is a time to keep and a time to cast away" [Eccl 3.6]. 404.1

Similarly, the time to seek is not limited to a fixed occasion; instead, one's entire life should be an opportunity for seeking that good. 405.4

When it comes to words about God and searching his essence there is a time for silence, but when it concerns some good operation of which we have knowledge, it is time to speak of God's power. 415.18

"There is a time to love and a time to hate" [Eccl 3.8]. 416.12

Ecclesiastes cries out against this time of youth and presents us with another time for having a pure love which neither harms nor degrades the soul. 421.4

Therefore the time to love God is one's whole life, and the time to be alienated from evil is also one's entire life. 425.16

Thus we have a time to love continence and to hate pleasure that we may refrain from licentious behavior and be devout. 427.10

"There is a time for peace and a time for war" [Eccl 3.8]. 429.1

We who had once been God's adversaries have learned to accomplish all things in time in order to establish peace with ourselves and with him. 436.10

God made all things exceedingly beautiful in its time, and for all eternity he put in mens' hearts the fact that they might never discover what God has done from the beginning right to the end. 438.2

Ecclesiastes claims to know that God's actions are good if we use them at the proper time, but our deviation from right judgment leads us to do evil. 439.12

"He has made everything beautiful in its time, and he has put eternity in mens' hearts" [Eccl 3.11]. 440.2

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1. For Gregory's interpretation of the etymological relationship between *theoria* and *theos* (God) within the context of "seeing," refer to *Against Eunomius*: "Even the word God (*theos*) we understand to have come into usage from the activity of His seeing; for our faith tells us that the Deity is everywhere, and sees (*theathai*) all things, and penetrates all things, and then we stamp this thought with this name (*theos*) guided to it by the Holy Voice." J.397 i; PN.309
2. This is the real goal of Gregory's view of the Christian life as expressed through *apatheia*, a theme essential to his *Treatise on Virginity*.
3. Gregory does borrow heavily from the Stoic tradition in his treatment of *taxis* and *akolouthia*, two terms originally associated with cosmological overtones, a fact noted by many scholars.
4. Note below in this document are numerous references to Gregory's use of *theoria* in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, *Commentary on the Inscriptions of the Psalms* and *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. Also, refer to the separate document on this Home Page with further references to *theoria*.
5. Consider, for example, his treatise *On Fate*.
6. This impersonal outlook is not as foreign as it seems. For example, consider the experience of being alone in the woods or when both our mental and physical faculties are quiet. Gradually the thoughts and anxieties which are our constant companions are stilled in favor of a larger picture where we instinctively feel secure in a vague, though very present im-personal, i.e., "not person-al," awareness.
7. I already observed that *apatheia* and *arete* transcend *taxis* and *akolouthia*. While true, both retain their own method and fall under the non-temporal domain of *kairos*.
8. Although the theme of image and likeness is found in many places throughout Gregory's writings, refer to Chapter Sixteen in *On the Making of Man* for a detailed discussion.
9. *Platonisme et Theologie Mystique* (Paris, 1944), pp. 17-26.
10. "Les Proverbes enseignent la vertu, l'Ecclesiaste le meprise des realites de ce monde et le chemin qui, par la connaissance des realites visibles, eleve le regard jusque'aux invisibles. Le Cantique, enfin, est la voie des ascensions de l'ame vers Dieu. Les trois livres bibliques correspondent aussi a trois ages: l'enfance, la jeunesse et la maturite." Mariette Canevet, *Gregoire de Nysse et l'Hermeneutique Biblique* (Paris, 1983), p.123. Thus Gregory's order: virtue, vanity, ascension towards God.
11. Note that Gregory's order is the same as that in the Bible. In brief, we may abstract this *taxis* or order in terms of its *akolouthia* or sequence: wisdom, vanity, kiss.
12. Refer to the considerable amount of Old and New Testament references below.
13. These three features are also characteristic of Ecclesiastes' "vanity."
14. Also cf. references to *diastema* in the Second Appendix below. We may parallel this beginning, middle and end with Gregory's *taxis* of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs.
15. *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Leiden, 1974), p.110.
16. *L'Etre et le Temps chez Gregoire de Nysse* (Leiden, 1970). This book is perhaps the most comprehensive study available on *taxis* and *akolouthia*.
17. Danielou's *Platonisme et Theologie Mystique*, p. 302, & Volker's *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker* (no page reference given), Wiesbaden, 1955.
18. *Cosmic Man: The Divine Presence* (New York, 1988), pp. 48-9.
19. *Diastema*: a word Gregory uses for the spacial-temporal realm. Refer to a file on this term within the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page; compare it with *adiastatos*. Cf. Gregorios' remarks, "Akolouthia, or 'following' thus becomes both intellectual and voluntative in the same act. We follow the order of reality intellectually in order that we may follow it in terms of our life and action and therefore ontologically." p.52
20. *Tagma*: the only reference in the New Testament.
21. *Ibid*, p.61.
22. *Diastema* is fuller in the sense that it implies extension within space as well as time.
23. At the beginning of his book, *L'Etre et Le Temps* (p. 1), Danielou says of *theoria*, "Le premier est

celui de la connaissance scientifique: il concerne un aspect souvent meconnu de Gregoire, son interet pour la science et sa curiosite d'esprit. Le second est celui de la methode exegetique: comment situer la theoria de Gregoire par rapport a celle d'Antioche et a celle d'Alexandrie. Le troisieme sens enfin est celui ou theoria designe la contemplation mystique. Entre ces divers domaines, il y a communication." Note that I have italicised the last sentence which is significant for Gregory's integrated use of theoria, a fact which can be of significance today when various branches of human endeavors are compartmentalized.

24. Cf. the definition as found in *Against Eunomius*.

25. For the moment I am distinguishing between *apatheia-theoria* as becoming aware and *apatheia-arete* as the insertion of this awareness within our (moral) lives.

26. We may now understand theoria as the exercise of pure awareness in the sense already presented.

27. I originally translated this treatise along with an Introduction, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 28 #1, (Brookline, Ma), 1983. The verse in question: "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone."

28. In his scheme of advancement in the spiritual life, Gregory of Nyssa uses the three biblical books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs: "The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to teach, while that of Ecclesiastes is to preach. The philosophy of the Song of Songs transcends both by its loftier doctrine" (*Song Commentary*, p.18). Thus we can refine the process: teach, preach, transcend.

29. Cf. *The Concept of Information and Mirror of Eternity*, two texts on the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page. Also, in the First Appendix in the current document, refer to those citations from the Old and New Testaments related to *kairos*.

30. Again, keep in mind Gregory's definition of God as seeing, of doing theoria.

31. It is interesting to observe in the Old Testament how privileged people to whom God revealed himself establish a memorial of the event. With the passage of time, such a physical testimony becomes a holy place, that is, a *kairos* event (suspension of time) is established within time's companion, space.

32. Note how in the Old Testament when God reveals himself, the person receiving the revelation almost immediately establishes a type of memorial for the (*kairos*) event, for example, the call of Abraham: "He went to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Aion on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord" [Gen 12.8].

33. Ancient cultures make use of sacred times and places. Often when persons enter a sacred space, their awareness of time is altered, a fact well documented by many anthropologists.

34. References are made according to *Patrologia Graecae*, #44.

35. References are according to Werner Jaeger's critical text.

36. Both Old and New Testament references are according to the Revised Standard Version.