

# ‘EVEN THE ENEMY HIMSELF WOULD NOT DISPUTE THAT THE ACTION WAS JUST’: DISGUISE AND SELF-DECEPTION IN GREGORY OF NYSSA

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To begin with, I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery or deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtedly evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God. — René Descartes<sup>2</sup>

For in a way it was a fraud and deception for God, when he placed himself in the power of the enemy who was our master, not to show his naked divinity, but to conceal it in our nature, and so escape recognition. — Gregory of Nyssa<sup>3</sup>

Despite increasing interest in Christus Victor, particularly as a non-violent atonement theory, Gregory of Nyssa has remained uniquely confined to a kind of theological penalty box. The role of deception in his soteriological narrative — confined as it is to the *Catechetical Oration* — repulses many modern theologians, for whom the idea that God would stoop to trickery besmirches the good moral name of the divinity. And yet, not only does this reading of Gregory fail utterly to account for the ubiquity and broad acceptability of deception in the ancient world, it also prevents modern thinkers from discerning in Gregory elements that might prove crucial to a modern understanding of salvation. We will argue in the following that Satan deceives himself every bit as much as he is deceived by God, and indeed it is impossible for God not to deceive Satan, precisely because Satan insists on being deceived. In this respect, our essay might be understood as an effort to rescue Gregory’s soteriology from a misreading, or, really, two misreadings. One reduces deception to a metaphor and safely excludes it from accounts of Gregory’s theology of atonement. The other, even if it does not reduce Gregory’s soteriology to deception, nevertheless excludes the deceptive element on account of its moral repugnance. Both lead to the same result: a failure to fully think through the theological implications of divine deception in Nyssen’s understanding of salvation, either in terms of the ways it might fit with his broader theology or in terms of contributions it might make to current debates about atonement. If, on the other hand, we recognize Satan’s deception as primarily self-deception, then we see the mechanisms of salvation in an entirely different light. No longer does it appear to be a fairly straightforward and problematic claim that the ends justify the means. Instead, we find that Satan must be confronted with a truth that will only become clear to him when his self-deception is exposed for what it truly is, and this can only happen if God allows Satan to pursue his delusion all the way to its end.

With respect to Satan himself, Gregory only provides us tantalizing glimpses of the adversary’s motivations and psychological states. Much more is implied about the devil than Gregory seems willing to say explicitly. Nevertheless, he does tell a coherent story, and we believe his

descriptions and narrations of Satan's fall and potential redemption serve as coordinates by which to map a more fully realized Satanic psychology. We also aim in the present essay, then, to provide a plausible interpretation of Satan and Satanic behavior in the *Catechetical Oration*. Speculative as this reading necessarily is, when we set it into Gregory's larger theological framework, Nyssen's account of human (and diabolical) salvation finally appears as a strikingly modern way of thinking about sin and salvation, not in that it might eschew references to Satan, the supernatural, ransoms, and the like, but rather in the sense that its psychological underpinnings are worthy of mention in the same breath as Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky. Moreover, the basic structure of Irenaean recapitulation remains in place, within which we can productively re-read the economics of both deception and ransom as providing potentially helpful theological alternatives to satisfaction or penal substitution atonement theories.

Thus, a consideration of divine deception and Satanic self-deception specifically in the context of Gregory's soteriology opens up a way of thinking about salvation in general that not only fits with Gregory's broader theology, but even highlights aspects of human sinfulness and salvation in just the way one might expect a more 'prismatic' approach like Nyssen's to result in. Likewise, the Christus Victor model fully realizes its potential as a way of understanding salvation as overcoming evil rather than appeasing a wrathful deity.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, Gregory's theology itself lends crucial perspective to the reading of Satan we propose, not only for its importance in interpreting Gregory, but also in reckoning the implications for current efforts to rejuvenate the Christus Victor model of atonement.

#### CHRISTUS VICTOR, RECAPITULATION, AND JUSTICE

While some recent revivals of Christus Victor have not shied away from Gregory of Nyssa, and even from deception and ransom, in general he has been reviled in an almost *pro forma* way, to the point that expressing disgust about his soteriology has become, as Nicholas Constatas notes, 'an established topos within contemporary scholarship.'<sup>5</sup> It is unclear to what extent deception and ransom are stalking horses for Gregory's commitment to *apokatastasis* and Satan's ultimate salvation, or at least of certain readings of those doctrines,<sup>6</sup> but the former in any event provide convenient excuses for dismissing what is in many ways a very suggestive understanding of salvation built on as solid and orthodox a foundation as one could want.

Gregory adopts at a fundamental level the Christus Victor framework elaborated most famously (and perhaps most effectively) by Irenaeus of Lyon. According to Irenaeus, the incarnation of Christ redeems humanity by recapitulating human existence from birth to death, and transforming it by coming back to life, thereby conquering sin and death. Christ is a new Adam, born sinless, and in his divinity impervious to sin. Central to the Irenaean understanding of salvation is a commitment to a just redemption of humanity. Thus, God does not employ violence, but 'persuasion.'

[The Word,] redeeming us by His own blood in a manner consonant to reason, gave Himself as a redemption for those who had been led into captivity. And since the apostasy [apostasia] tyrannized over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples, the Word of God, powerful in all things, and not defective with regard to His own justice, did righteously turn against that apostasy, and redeem from it His own property, not by violent means, as the [apostasy] had obtained dominion over us at the beginning, when it insatiably snatched away what was not its own, but by means of persuasion [secundum suadellam], as became a God of counsel [Deum suadentem], who does not use violent means to obtain what He desires; so that neither

should justice be infringed upon, nor the ancient handiwork of God go to destruction. Since the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit, and, on the other hand, attaching man to God by His own incarnation, and bestowing upon us at His coming immortality durably and truly, by means of communion with God,—[on this account,] all the doctrines of the heretics fall to ruin.<sup>7</sup>

Note that Irenaeus already at least implies a ransom ('redemption' frees 'those who had been led into captivity'), at the same time that the devil (or sin, understood here as turning away from God) 'tyrannized over us unjustly' (rather than justly), and humanity became apostasy's 'disciples' against its nature. So whatever redemption God offers in exchange for humanity is not that offered to someone with legal rights, but is instead offered in spite of the injustice by which Satan rules, in order that 'justice [not] be infringed upon.' Irenaeus then seems not to hold to the idea of poetic justice outlined in Plato's *Republic*. Instead, he takes Socrates' line in the *Apology* and especially the *Crito*, that one does not behave unjustly even in response to injustice.<sup>8</sup> Finally, note the recapitulational move at the end of the passage, where the incarnation 'attach[es] man to God,' and thereby, with the crucifixion and resurrection, 'bestow[s . . . ] immortality.' These are all hallmarks of the Christus Victor model of atonement. We must not fail to notice, however, that Irenaeus himself opens the door on ransom, and weighs in on what will later become a key aspect of the ransom dispute, that human beings are not held in bondage justly, even in a state of sin.

Irenaeus's soteriology exerts tremendous influence in the patristic period, being the ultimate foundation for the claim of Athanasius that God 'became human in order that humans might become divine,'<sup>9</sup> or as Gregory himself says, 'he united himself with our nature, in order that by its union with the Divine it become divine, being rescued from death and freed from the tyranny of the adversary. For with *his* return from death, our mortal race began *its* return to immortal life.'<sup>10</sup> But the issue of justice, 'persuasion,' is every bit as important as the recapitulation and transformation of humanity. For Irenaeus, it is clear that 'justice' means a renunciation of brute force (which apparently is unjust *ipso facto*), including redemption by fiat: even though Satan unjustly holds sinners in the prison of death, on account of sin, simply 'forgiving' sinners and removing them from Satan's dominion would be unjust. It would not be 'freeing' them so much as 'stealing' them (or 'snatch[ing them] away,' as the adversary himself did, but with the advent of Christ, can no longer do). Of course, if Satan is understood to hold sinners justly, then it is even more obvious that simply liberating them against the wishes of their captor would be morally wrong. The puzzle for patristic theologians, then, is how to justly redeem humanity, when justice precludes both the exercise of force and God simply choosing to pardon human beings and restore them to paradise.

Gregory takes great pains not only to demonstrate the justice of God's act of redemption, but also to clarify that redemption itself expresses the unity of key divine virtues: justice, goodness, wisdom, and power. And, again like Irenaeus, Gregory believes that violence is unjust. 'Power, too,' he says, 'if it is separated from justice and wisdom, cannot be classed as virtue. Rather it is a brutal and tyrannical form of power.'<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, God's justice is to be found '[i]n His not exercising an arbitrary authority over him who held us in bondage. Also, in His not wresting us from him who held us, by His superior power, and so leaving him who had enslaved man through pleasure, with a just cause of complaint.'<sup>12</sup> Gregory goes on to develop a conceit in which human beings legally sold themselves into slavery, and so it would be wrong for God to simply take them, but 'no law stands in the way' of God *purchasing* human freedom.<sup>13</sup> While

Gregory the Great and Augustine receive most of the credit for developing legal theories of atonement, Gregory of Nyssa already frames his ‘ransom’ theory in significantly legal terms.<sup>14</sup> Satan’s ‘just complaint’ would be a legal complaint that God broke the rules, according to which one who sold himself into servitude must be redeemed by some form of compensation. Had Satan broken the rules, then it would seem that for Gregory, God would have had a complaint. Here we also recognize a significant, if subtle, shift from Irenaeus: for Gregory, Satan justly rules over sinful human beings, who freely chose to disobey God at Satan’s deceptive instigation, while for Irenaeus, the injustice of Satan’s rule in no way relieves God of the responsibility to treat Satan justly in the redemption of humanity. It seems to matter to Gregory that Satan reigns over sinful human beings justly in some significant *legal* way.<sup>15</sup>

So justice for Gregory requires that Satan be offered compensation. Gregory goes further and notes that the redeemer ‘must give the master the chance to take whatever he wants to as the price of the slave.’<sup>16</sup> Finally at this point deception becomes critical to Gregory’s understanding of the story of salvation. He again shifts somewhat from Irenaeus, in the direction of Origen. Christ comes to earth clothed in humanity, so that Satan might not be frightened by him, and performs miracles, in order to appear desirable.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in the end, Satan ‘swallow[s] the God-head like a fishhook along with the flesh, which was the bait.’<sup>18</sup>

#### JUSTICE, DECEPTION, AND SELF-DECEPTION

It is not immediately obvious how this arrangement fulfills the requirements of justice. Gregory recognizes this problem, and provides several ways of thinking about it. First, he adopts a poetic version of justice (seemingly rejected by Irenaeus) that ‘returns like for like.’<sup>19</sup> Specifically, Satan brought about the Fall of humanity through trickery: ‘this deception [apátē] [of the advocate and contriver of wickedness would not] have succeeded, had not the fishhook of evil been furnished with an outward appearance of good, as with a bait.’<sup>20</sup> The symmetry here is irresistible to Gregory, and so he says ‘he who first deceived [proapatésas] man by the bait of pleasure is himself deceived [apatātai] by the camouflage of human nature.’<sup>21</sup>

Gregory’s second defense of God’s deception of Satan is that the ends justify the means, although Gregory also puts it the other way around, ‘the mode of healing in no way vitiates the kindly intention.’<sup>22</sup> Unlike the deception whereby Satan brought humanity low, God’s goal of redeeming humanity ‘changes [the deception] into something good.’<sup>23</sup> Again, on its face, arguing to the justice of the deed from the justice of the objective doesn’t get very far unless we are already inclined to think that Satan ‘deserves’ to be deceived (per Gregory’s first defense). But at this point Gregory introduces a wrinkle in the story that makes the whole process much more interesting — and much more complicated — than it would otherwise be. He tells us that God’s deception of the devil not only benefits humanity, but also Satan himself. For Gregory this is surely part of the cleverness of God’s strategy — that he can with the very same actions restore both humanity and Satan to proper relations with him.<sup>24</sup> If God’s deceitful behavior needs ‘redemption,’ it will be found in the goal of saving Satan, not of saving humanity.

But before we get to our central argument, we should note a third way of understanding the deception and ransom, namely the overstepping of boundaries. While Satan justly holds sinners in the prison of death, Christ — being sinless — did not deserve to die. When Satan chose Christ, he extended himself beyond his just limits and is rightly punished with the loss of even those to whom he has (or had) a legal right. Eugene Teselle prefers this ‘abuse of power’ solution from among the three classic versions of the ransom theory, in a sort of ‘Goldilocks’ fashion: less literal than ‘metaphor of ransom,’ and less spiritual (or ‘demythologized,’ in Teselle’s

terms) than the ‘overcoming of death’ versions of those like Athanasius.<sup>25</sup> But on its own, ‘abuse of power’ does not avoid the more ‘folkloric’ aspects of the ransom motif, as Satan must still be led into overstepping his limits, rather like instigating a neighboring country into ‘attacking’ so that one can swoop in and conquer them. In any event, it is worth noting that Gregory deploys elements of all three of Teselle’s classic types of the ransom motif. We discussed the ransom metaphor above. Gregory also hints at Satan stretching himself too far when he notes that the devil thought to ‘get the better of the bargain.’<sup>26</sup> And finally, Satan having swallowed the bait and the hook, Gregory tells us that ‘life came to dwell with death and light shone upon darkness, [that] their contraries might vanish away. For it is not in the nature of darkness to endure the presence of light, nor can death exist where life is active.’<sup>27</sup> Thus Gregory clearly marshals a wide range of vocabulary, imagery, and theological concepts, not all of it obviously compatible, behind the one front of ransom and deception.

If we suppose that Gregory thinks his theology in the *Catechetical Oration* makes some kind of sense (which Gregory himself clearly does), then there are several questions we have to ask. How and why was it possible for Satan to overstep such boundaries? Why and how did he make such a mistake? Indeed, how is it possible for Satan to be ‘deceived’ as to Christ’s true nature in the first place? While we acknowledge that Gregory is not a ‘systematic’ theologian so much as a ‘prismatic’ one, we nevertheless believe that a closer look at deception may uncover in Gregory’s story an answer to all of these questions.<sup>28</sup> But it requires taking seriously not only the nature of God’s deception, but also the response of Satan as narratively and even psychologically plausible, as well as the saving of the devil as a genuine goal of God’s plan. Doing so leads to a much more interesting understanding of deception. Gregory himself never explicitly states that the devil deceives himself, as he does that God deceives Satan. Nevertheless, all the pieces are in place in the *Catechetical Oration* for a reading on which God’s ‘deception’ should be referred to in quotation marks, because the delusion is entirely on Satan’s part. Viewed this way, Gregory’s soteriology takes on a strikingly modern cast, in which the story of a cosmic battle between God and Satan for the souls of human beings is also, at the very same time, the story of each individual creature to come to terms with its limitations and reconcile itself with a loving God.

There is a significant body of ancient literature around Christ’s deception of Satan. Constanas briefly surveys this tradition, noting that for many ancient theologians, it was important to preserve God’s honor in the face of mockery. Specifically, Jesus’s cries and suffering violated the Stoic virtue of *apatheia*, freedom from passion.<sup>29</sup> So ancient Christians recast episodes like Gethsemane or the temptations in the desert as ruses by which Christ tricked Satan. That being said, another theologian who made use of the fishhook metaphor, Gregory the Great, says outright that ‘[t]he Behemoth [i.e., Satan] had known, indeed, that the Son of God was incarnated, but he did not know how the redemption was to be accomplished. He knew that for our salvation the Son of God was made flesh, but by no means did he know that the same Redeemer would transfix him by dying.’<sup>30</sup> The deception in this case is not really in Christ himself, but in how Christ’s death would undo Satan’s power. In any event, however unusual it might be in the fourth century to imply that Satan recognized Christ’s true nature, Gregory would be in good company. If anything, the context might explain what appears to be some hedging on Nyssen’s part as to whether Satan recognized Christ as divine or not.

Gregory’s account of Satan’s fall from heaven sets the stage for the devil’s seeming obliviousness to the nature of Christ.<sup>31</sup> This very fall is itself already a self-deception, or a prelude to a life of delusion. Nyssen describes Satan freely choosing envy over remaining in goodness, writing that the devil, ‘by the movement of [his] own free will[, . . .] closed [his] eyes to the good and the generous; and just as one only sees darkness when one closes the eyelids in

sunlight, so that power by its unwillingness to acknowledge the good contrived its opposite. This is how envy arose.<sup>32</sup> Satan at his own 'fall' chooses to close his eyes, even with truth shining openly before him. Thereafter, he is subject to his passions, particularly envy and pride, his reason having been effectively exiled. This of course is the very state into which he drew humanity in the Fall, and *apatheia* is once again key to understanding the story of deception and salvation, but from the other direction than that outlined by Constat. Gregory tells us in his treatise *On the Soul and Resurrection* that *apatheia* is 'that freedom from emotions [that] makes us more similar to God.'<sup>33</sup> He goes on to use the classic Platonic image: 'if reason should let go of the reins and like some charioteer entangled in the chariot should be dragged behind it [...] then the impulses are turned into passions.'<sup>34</sup> Thus, in the *Catechetical Oration*, Nyssen explains that Satan 'envied man his happiness and closed his eyes to the good,' and that having 'begot[ten]' this wickedness in himself, it became 'the mother of all other wickedness,' so that the devil is 'sickened with the love of power.'<sup>35</sup> Satan, then, was once able to respond to impulses in the light of reason, but chose to subject himself to them, and they have become the passions that rule his behavior in the place of reason. It is not clear that having made this choice once means he must do so forever more, but it does point to the power and willingness of Satan, as of human beings, to close his eyes to the truth, as well as to the insidiously self-destructive momentum generated by the passions when given free rein. Gregory's account of Satan's fall into self-delusion and self-aggrandizement (in effect, the same thing) also implies that the most serious obstacle to reconciliation with God may in fact be stubborn refusal to acknowledge the truth, rather than God's righteous anger. For Gregory, this power to refuse is part of what it means for a creature to have free will. He defends God's decision not to compel belief on the grounds of free will.<sup>36</sup> This freedom makes it possible, for example, for human beings to continue in sin after baptism, even while convincing themselves that they have changed: 'It is a point which many of those who approach its grace neglect, deluding themselves and being born in appearance only and not in reality.'<sup>37</sup> Such people, Gregory says, 'should attend to what Paul says: "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."' <sup>38</sup> Surely there could hardly be a better description of Satan than this? And self-deception and 'delusion' will express themselves in pride, envy, and the love of power, the vices Gregory most associates with Satan.

From the moment of Christ's birth, the devil had opportunities to acknowledge the savior's true nature.<sup>39</sup> Gregory begins a catalog of such miracles with Christ's conception and birth, and eventually gives up, as if it would be ridiculous to list them all. And yet, as we saw above, '[w]hen [Satan] saw this power softly reflected more and more through the miracles, he reckoned that what he saw was to be desired rather than feared.'<sup>40</sup> But these miracles are the very signs by which Christ convinces human beings to believe in his divinity, to the point that Gregory claims to have 'proved that he who was revealed in the flesh was God, since he disclosed his nature by the miracles he did[. . .] His very miracles have convinced us of his deity.'<sup>41</sup> Satan is not stupid, and in truth hasn't even really been deceived, on two counts. First, Christ *must* come to earth 'cloaked,' as no creature can see God as he is. In this respect, while we may speak of Christ 'disguising' himself in flesh to deceive Satan, it is nevertheless true that it is only through such 'deceptions' that God can reveal himself.<sup>42</sup> In this respect, Satan is no different from human beings: the very same signs were available to him as to human creatures, indeed more, if we count the temptations in the desert. The devil's encounter with the truth of Christ thus mirrors the human reception or rejection of the Word. Second, Satan wants to possess Christ rather than fearing him. Fear would be the rational response. Instead, lacking *apatheia*, Satan's decisions are driven by passion instead of reason. Pride, envy, and the love of

power overwhelm reason, even self-preservation, closing the devil's eyes to his own powerlessness, to the hopelessness of his hopes of 'getting the better of the bargain.' Satan deludes himself into believing that he can trick God into giving him more than he is owed.

Satan's delusion arises not from any sense that he can succeed, but rather, he believes he can succeed because he believes he *deserves* that which he is not *owed*. Envy issues forth in the love of power precisely because the possession and exercise of power demonstrates one's moral superiority to those one envies. Instead, then, of recognizing that Christ will undermine his power, Satan imagines how possessing Christ will underline his own power, and thereby confirm that human beings were unjustly elevated above him. Satan, in short, does not want to know the truth. In his pride and envy, he suffers from a vain hope that he can contain Christ. Because he wants it so badly, he will ignore all the evidence telling him that he cannot possibly succeed. Satan acknowledges that he cannot overpower God: in tempting humanity, he knew that he 'could not fulfill his purpose by force or violence, for the power of God's blessing was superior to such force.'<sup>43</sup> But he resorts to 'intrigue' thinking that he can defeat God with subtlety and cunning. Already this strategy requires delusion on Satan's part. Likewise, Satan can only agree to the ransom by, in Paul's words, 'thinking he is something when he is nothing,' by imagining that he can get the better of the deal when the simple exercise of reason would show him that he was making a losing bet. Just as he closed his eyes to truth when he fell from heaven, he once again closes his eyes to the truth when he observes Christ, preferring to imagine himself as more than he truly is.

#### HEALING THE AUTHOR OF EVIL

Why then does God indulge, even perhaps encourage, Satan in his misguided hopes, as we might now read Gregory's account? We could argue that it would be impossible for God to do otherwise. Perhaps only an outright refusal to make the bargain could have avoided deception altogether. But this strategy is no strategy at all. It would only leave Satan to stew in his sin, and to hold others captive as a result, which seems a much worse outcome for everyone. It appears that Satan needs an intervention, both medical and, we will argue, psychological (if these are different).

Origen and Gregory make use of several metaphors for just deception and for the healing it accomplishes in the case of Christ's death and resurrection. As we saw with Gregory, so also does Origen express reservations about God participating in deception, 'God—deceives? I do not know how I can explain this.'<sup>44</sup> He feels the need to justify God's deceptive activity, which he does at length, concluding:

He [Jeremiah] even said to God: deceive me, if this is helpful. For being deceived by God is not the same thing as being deceived by the serpent. [ . . . ] But the deception practiced on the prophet gave him such a high gift of prophecy that its power in him was increased, he was brought to perfection, and became able to obey, without fear of other men, the will of the Word of God [ . . . ] We deceive children who have childish fears, so that they may grow out of the uneducated state. [ . . . ] We are all children with respect to God and we need the education of children.<sup>45</sup>

There are times when it might be necessary to deceive children for their own good, ultimately for their protection, although Origen also indicates that the parent should avoid being taken advantage of (and so the father conceals his affection beneath a steely exterior). Presumably central to this analogy is the underdeveloped rational faculty in children. The analogy between

God and humans, then, would run the same way, that human beings in sin — never mind Satan, the author of sin — exercise reason more like children than like adults, and so there are times when it might be necessary to deceive them, or to play along with their self-deceptions, while they learn what they can and cannot do in the world. One is even inclined in this context to think of the myth of the cave, and the inability of people living in darkness to recognize the truth coming from outside the cave, an idea mirrored in the Gospel of John, when the truth of Christ's words is perceived as 'lies' and 'deception' in certain quarters.

Gregory again follows Origen in adopting a medical metaphor. Origen remarks that 'the physician sometimes conceals the healing steel beneath the soft and delicate sponge.'<sup>46</sup> While Gregory uses his physician metaphors in the context of deceit, he emphasizes not the deceit as such, but the pain caused by the operation. The process hurts, but like the cured patient, even Satan will have to admit that it was just:

In the same way, when death, corruption, darkness, and the other offshoots of vice have attached themselves to the author of evil, contact with the divine power acts like fire and effects the disappearance of what is contrary to nature. In this way the nature is purified and benefited, even though the process of separation is a painful one. Hence not even the adversary himself can question that what occurred was just and salutary — *if, that is, he comes to recognize it himself*. In this present life patients whose cure involves surgery and cautery grow incensed at their physicians when they smart under the pain of the incision. But if by these means they are restored to health and the pain of the cautery passes off, they will be grateful to those who effected their cure. [ . . . God thus] freed man from evil, and healed the very author of evil himself.<sup>47</sup> [emphasis added]

Satan has to turn away from turning away. Extending and applying Origen's metaphor, the resurrection is the scalpel with which God operates on the devil. Satan being saved by this deception means more than that the ends justify the means. Rather, this 'deception' — in fact, a confrontation with truth — becomes the very mechanism of Satan's salvation, every bit as much as it brings about the salvation of human beings. The parent-child metaphor teaches us that the Devil's powers are limited in just the ways that he both fears they are and hopes they are not — or rather, wants them not to be. On Origen's physician metaphor, the sponge is Christ's death and the scalpel is his resurrection, that is, the knife that cuts Satan is the fact of God's imperviousness to either his wit or his power, that there is no way, either just or unjust, that Satan will win, and that God will defeat him without behaving unjustly toward him. This painful cut excises a cancer of (self-imposed) ignorance and irrationality, and ultimately of self-hatred and self-destruction. Likewise Gregory's image of burning away impurities may be understood as the burning away of prideful delusion.

God has many ways of undermining the pride of the proud, both human and Satanic. Augustine's treatment of divine deception and its relation to pride adds a crucial dimension to our understanding of God's salutary ways of misleading his creatures. Like Gregory and Irenaeus, Augustine insists on justice in salvation, and opposes justice to 'power.'<sup>48</sup> Like Gregory, Augustine maintains that Satan holds human sinners justly, being allowed by God to do so. Also, as with Gregory and Origen, deception finds a powerful place in Augustine's soteriology. Augustine's mousetrap metaphor is surprisingly less well known than Gregory's fishhook, but its meaning is exactly the same, and it would be difficult to judge less 'grotesque.'

[Christ] had to come disguised [occultum], you see, in order to be judged. But *he will come openly* [manifestus], in order to judge. [ . . . ] The devil was exultant when Christ died, and by that very death of Christ was the devil conquered; it's as though he took the bait in a



mousetrap. The mousetrap for the devil was the cross of the Lord; the bait he would be caught by, the death of the Lord. And our Lord Jesus Christ rose again. Where now is the death that hung on the cross? [ . . . ] In fact, he did more than they in their mockery required of him; there's more, after all, to rising from a tomb, than to coming down from a tree.<sup>49</sup>

This passage exemplifies Constat's argument that deception theories served to reinforce Christ's mockery of Satan (as opposed to pagan philosophers mocking Christ for his inability to suffer with *decorum*). In *On the Trinity*, Augustine also deploys a familiar ransom logic, the 'abuse of power' type, but quite differently from Gregory: 'The blood of Christ was as it were the price given for us (but the devil upon receiving it was not enriched but bound).'<sup>50</sup> Whereas for Gregory, God's deception of Satan redeems (ultimately) Satan himself, for Augustine it achieves exactly the opposite effect: binding him, so that the Lord can take the 'spoils,' namely the souls in the devil's possession.

But Satan is not the only creature subject to divine deception, according to Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine* includes a substantial consideration of deception in scriptural interpretation. He distinguishes between those people whose mistaken readings are nevertheless 'useful to the building of charity' and those who 'do not understand it at all.'<sup>51</sup> Of the former, we may say that 'he has not been deceived [fallitur], nor is he lying [mentitur] in any way.'<sup>52</sup> And yet, at the same time, 'anyone who understands in the Scriptures something other than that intended by them is deceived [fallitur], although they do not lie [non mentientibus].'<sup>53</sup> Augustine seems to be making three important distinctions here, one between deceiving and lying, one between misunderstanding scripture and being deceived, and one between a level at which misunderstanding scripture is being deceived and a level at which it is not. That reader of scripture who does not fathom the particulars of a given passage is deceived in the sense that she thinks she has read the passage accurately, but she is not deceived in the sense that even her misunderstanding will contribute to the true end of God's teaching in the Bible, which is to lead human beings to love of God and neighbor. Moreover, this misreader may be deceived even without having been lied to (by the scriptures, in other words). At this point it is unclear how much of the deception arises from within the reader and how much from scripture, but since the misreading leads to charity, it is unlikely to find its root in pride, and so unlikely to be the result of something sinful on the part of the reader. Likewise, if the misreading arises somehow from scripture, it is implied that the 'deception' need not be thought a lie (more on this in a moment). In any event, such a person, even though she speaks falsely in one respect, should not be considered a liar — perhaps because she does not intend to lie, but also perhaps because the charitable nature of her interpretation renders her speech in a significant respect true.

Augustine seems to take care in distinguishing deceit from lying. He doesn't condemn deceit, but he leaves no room for doubt about the evil of lying.

Everyone who lies commits iniquity [iniquitatem facit]; and if any one thinks a lie may sometimes be useful, he must think that iniquity is sometimes useful also. [ . . . But e]ither iniquity is sometimes useful, which is impossible, or a lie is always useless.<sup>54</sup>

What then is the difference between deceit and lying? Surely God's use of the mousetrap to catch the devil and free human beings would count as 'deceit' for Augustine, but not as lying. But why not? On what basis can he maintain this distinction? Augustine provides a useful analogy in his discussion of scriptural interpretation further on in *On Christian Doctrine*.

But many and varied obscurities and ambiguities deceive [decipiuntur] those who read casually, understanding one thing instead of another; indeed, in certain places they do not find

anything to interpret erroneously, so obscurely are certain sayings covered with a most dense mist. I do not doubt that this situation was provided by God to conquer pride [superbiam] by work and to combat disdain in our minds, to which those things which are easily discovered seem frequently to become so worthless.<sup>55</sup>

The scriptures themselves ‘deceive’ their readers, an act of providence to tame human pride. The scriptures of course do not lie. But apparently they may deceive without lying. The deception seems to lie, as it were, in the obscurity. Deceit is acceptable for reasons similar to the ways in which someone misreading scripture may be ‘deceived’ but is not lying — it is ‘useful to the building of charity’ insofar as it breaks down pride and arrogance, and encourages a proper and loving respect for the scriptures and the truth they convey, most especially the truth of love.

Finally, Augustine also notes that those ‘who desire evil things are subjected to illusion and deception [illudendi et decipiendi] as a reward for their desires, being mocked and deceived by those lying angels [praevaricatoribus angelis] to whom, according to the most beautiful ordering of things, the lowest part of this world is subject.’<sup>56</sup> Thus deception seems to be intimately bound up with sin, evil desires, pride, envy, and so forth. Indeed, deception on this understanding is nothing other than a misunderstanding or misapprehension driven by sinful desires, and especially by pride.

God allows creatures’ evil desires to lead them further and further into lives of delusion, wherein they become increasingly trapped in and by their own cleverness. Only humility and charity can free one from this web, whether of divinatory artifice or hermeneutical arrogance.

#### GIVING THE DEVIL HIS DUE

Divine deception as a tool for tempering pride aligns easily with the ‘abuse of power’ species of Christus Victor identified by Teselle, but our discussion of Augustine leaves us with two models according to which we might approach God’s deception of Satan specifically. In the first, Satan resembles the deceived astrologers, whose delusions only draw them deeper into their own iniquity. Thus, the devil taking the bait leads to his being bound and his kingdom plundered. In the second, Satan stands in the position of the prideful reader of scripture, who imagines in it what she wants to see, but whose pride is eventually conquered and who may go on to charitable and saving readings. Moreover, both models allow, if indeed they do not encourage, us to understand the deception wrought by scriptures or by the demons ruling this world as significantly self-deception, illusions which are only illusory in the sinful minds of the deceived. The astrologer finds true predictions compelling because he is already determined to believe ‘the lying angels.’ Likewise, the deceived reader of scripture is really only deceived to the extent that she believes her own misguided interpretation; when she acknowledges that she does not understand the passage, she learns humility and expends more effort in coming to a true reading.

Gregory’s Satan surely fits the second model better than the first, insofar as his ‘deception’ ultimately redounds to his benefit. Gregory only hints in the *Catechetical Oration* at a deeper understanding of Satan, his fall, and his redemption. Those clues, however, suggest very strongly that a coherent and even quite clear picture lay behind them. We have endeavored in the present essay to tease that story out and to grasp its contribution to Gregory’s understanding of God’s plan for the redemption of creation. What we find is that Satan’s sinful desire to conquer Christ produces his ‘misreading’ of Christ as something he might successfully possess and rule over in place of the sinners already in his control. Satan has deceived himself into believing that he can outwit God, and God participates in Satan’s self-delusion as a means not only of

rescuing humanity from Satan (that is to say, from evil and death), but also of leading the devil himself out of his prideful sin and into a loving relationship with God. In the end, Satan's salvation depends on his deception: only his taking the bait will produce the necessary confrontation with truth.

Gregory does not elaborate on the specific means by which God 'healed the very author of evil himself,' but he does provide clues in the metaphors of incision and cautery. He also tells us that the devil must 'come to recognize [that what occurred was just and salutary].'<sup>57</sup> So, on the one hand, the crucifixion and resurrection comprise a surgical maneuver on God's part. But on the other hand, perhaps the cautery consists precisely in Satan's recognition of the just and salutary effects of the surgery. Christ's recapitulation of human existence might even be thought to recapitulate Satan's own experience of the Fall in a similarly transformative way. While the devil successfully tempted and conquered Adam and Eve in the garden, the new Adam proves impervious to the his wiles. This almost-re-enactment of the drama of the garden presents Satan with a uniquely powerful encouragement to open his eyes. If Satan's pride and envy condition his delusion, only by letting go of his pride can he see the loving and salvific 'trick' for the confrontation with truth that it really was. Satan was already living a lie, reigning over a world in which he was king, imagining himself winning a war of stealth against God by holding his earthly creatures captive. God's deceit in fact exposed this lie for what it was, and Satan then stands face to face with the truth.

Satan's restoration, his coming to 'be all in all' with God, can only happen when he acknowledges his own limits, when he opens his eyes to the truth, both of divine love and of his own hateful and destructive behavior. Gregory's understanding of Satan's salvation presumes, therefore, a remarkable psychological depth in Satan, and the possibility of the devil's regaining the state of *apatheia* in which he abided before he turned away from God. As a portrait of evil, Gregory's Satan stands a very long way from the grotesque caricature to which Satan is often reduced. On the contrary, the very same metaphors Gregory uses to describe human salvation — the taking of medicine, the performing of surgery, the burning away of evil — he uses to describe Satan's redemption. Out of the pages of the *Catechetical Oration*, Satan finally comes across as very human.

Far from being peripheral to Gregory's soteriology, then, ransom in fact occupies a crucial place. The ransom provides the framework within which God's 'deception' can bring about the restoration of the devil. Even the much-maligned fishhook image takes on new meaning when viewed in the light of Satan's salvation. The divine hook disguised by human bait comes to resemble Origen's example of a bitter pill disguised by honey, a way of delivering a distasteful and even painful medicine. When we also consider that Gregory describes the Fall of humanity as the swallowing of a poison coated with honey,<sup>58</sup> we note yet another symmetry to go along with that of the deceiver being deceived — Satan's salvation brought about by his swallowing medicine coated with honey. We could go further still and see in the fishhook and bait an image of the Eucharist. Certainly the devil's 'consuming' Christ represents the possibility of a saving transformation in Satan as much as the Eucharist does in human beings.<sup>59</sup>

Thus Christ also remains at the center of Nyssen's soteriology even when it comes to the devil and *apokatastasis*. The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection provide the occasion not only for human redemption in their recapitulation of human existence, but also for that clash of light with darkness in which, as Gregory puts it, 'life came to dwell with death, and light shone in upon darkness, that their contraries might vanish away.' In this sense, the literal ransom falls by the wayside, since it is not the ransom as such that saves humanity or the devil, but the overcoming of evil by good, and the transformation of hatred, spite, and envy by love.

## Notes

1 The authors wish to thank Mel Vance for valuable comments on this project, and Carroll University for research funding without which the article might never have been written.

2 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Fourth Meditation, from J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, trans., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 37.

3 Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations* 26, trans. Cyril J. Richardson, *Address on Religious Instruction*, p. 302 in Edward R. Hardy (ed.), *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), p. 302. This text and translation hereafter referred to as *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, p. 302. The Greek text is to be found in Ekkehardus Mühlberg (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* Vol III/4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

4 On this, Teselle is very much to the point: ‘When patristic writers treat the cross as a ransoming of sinful humanity from captivity to Satan, it suggests that the chief problem concerning sin is not the wrath of God but bondage to evil. The two problems are not totally isolated—it is separation from God, after all, that leads to bondage to evil. But the ransom model assumes that the latter has a power of its own even when the former is being overcome,’ p. 147. We shall return to this at the end of the essay.

5 Nicholas Conostas, ‘The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative,’ *Harvard Theological Review* 97:2 (April 2004), p. 146. See his catalog of scholarly disdain for Gregory: ‘Hastings Rashdall called Gregory’s theory “childish and immoral.” J. A. MacCullough deemed it “perverted and repulsive.” Gustav Aulén found it “highly objectionable, disgusting and grotesque.” George Florovsky characterized it as “self-contradictory, inconclusive and inappropriate.” Reinhold Niebuhr found it “unimportant and implausible.” Cyril Richardson confessed that it was “repellent,” while Frances Young has twice characterized it as a “crude and distasteful trick,” pp. 145-146. Much in Conostas’s essay deserves follow-up and expansion, particularly from the point of view of apophaticism. For recent revivals of Christus Victor, see Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor*, trans. A. G. Herbert (New York: MacMillan, 1969), but most recently J Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), and the engaging discussion in John Sanders (ed.), *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006). Eugene Teselle, ‘The Cross as Ransom,’ *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4:2 (1996), pp. 147-170, and Ben Pugh, ‘Kicking the Day-lights out of the Devil’: The Victory Motif in Some Recent Atonement Theology,’ *European Journal of Theology* 23:1 (2014), pp. 32-42, provide helpful summaries and taxonomies of Christus Victor. Only Kathleen Darby Ray, *Deceiving the Devil* (Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1988), and *Incarnation and Imagination: A Christian Ethic of Ingenuity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), seems really open to rethinking deception and ransom, although even she views them primarily as ‘metaphors.’ We agree of course that they are metaphors, but while it is true that Gregory was not a systematic theologian, we think it hasty to use their metaphorical status to foreclose any consideration of their theological import (whether positive or negative).

6 Giulio Maspero, ‘*apokatastasis*’ in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (eds.), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010), pp. 55-64, argues for a relatively limited understanding of *apokatastasis*, rather than universal salvation. See also, however, the article on ‘Eschatology’ by Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco in the same volume, pp. 274-288, which discusses the devil’s redemption as an important part of Gregory’s notion of *apokatastasis*. The same author’s article on the ‘Devil,’ pp. 223-226, views Gregory’s tale of ransom and deception as ‘purely speculative’ (p. 225), but nevertheless recognizes the significant psychological aspects of the theory, pointing in the direction of our own argument in the present essay. See also Morwenna Ludlow’s interesting comparative treatment of universal restoration in *Universal Salvation: Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

7 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V.1. in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, Alexander Robertson and James Donaldson (eds. and trans.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol.I. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 527. Latin from PG VII:2 1121.

8 Teselle suggests that Irenaeus was ‘the inventor of the dictum that what the devil did “unjustly” is overcome “justly” by Christ,’ p. 159.

9 Slightly modified from Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, Archibald Robertson (trans.), in Edward R. Hardy (ed.), *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), p. 107. Athanasius also makes use of the idea of disguise, but as a way that God made himself accessible to human beings, ‘men’s mind having fallen to things of sense, the Word disguised himself by appearing in a body, that he might, as man, transfer men to himself, and center their senses on himself, and, men seeing him thenceforth

as man, persuade them by the works that he did that he is not man only, but also God, and the Word and wisdom of the true God,' *Ibid.*, p. 70.

10 *Or. Cat.* 25; Hardy, p. 302. Emphases in original.

11 *Or. Cat.* 20; Hardy, p. 296.

12 *Or. Cat.* 22; Hardy, pp. 298-299.

13 *Or. Cat.* 22; Hardy, p. 299.

14 See Pugh, p. 32, who references S. Finlan, *Problems with Atonement* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), pp. 67-69. Teselle also notes legal aspects in the curse soteriology of Athanasius, pp. 152-153.

15 See Hans Boersma's fascinating essay on Gregory's views on the manumission of slaves: "This is the Day which the Lord Has Made": Scripture, Manumission, and the Heavenly Future in Saint Gregory of Nyssa,' *Modern Theology* 28:4 (Oct 2012), 657-672. One is forced to wonder how the case here relates to the case there.

16 *Or. Cat.* 22; Hardy, p. 299.

17 See *Or. Cat.* 23; Hardy, p. 300: '[Satan] saw this power softly reflected more and more through the miracles, he reckoned that what he saw was to be desired rather than feared.'

18 *Or. Cat.* 24; Hardy, p. 301.

19 *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, p. 303.

20 *Or. Cat.* 21; Hardy, p. 298.

21 *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, p. 303. It is difficult not to think that Gregory insisted on deception precisely to bring the atonement into typological line with the Fall, but if we stop with this observation, we will miss almost everything that is interesting about Gregory's soteriology.

22 *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, p. 303.

23 *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, p. 303.

24 Despite our efforts to bring Gregory in certain respects up to date, we cannot forget that even key terms like 'wisdom' (*sophia*) mean very different things than the modern ear hears. Wisdom clearly for Gregory includes cunning and guile, to the point that he can refer to Satan as 'the wise one' [*sophos*], which clearly means 'the clever or effective one' in *On the Three-Day Period between the Death and Resurrection of Christ* (See Constatas, p. 144). Any effort to 'retrieve' Nyssenian soteriology has to at least acknowledge that for Gregory, cleverness and cunning are virtues, and so of course are assigned to God. This will also account for Gregory's seeming use of Plato's discussion of Odysseus in the *Hippias Minor* (see below, note 46). Indeed, we are even inclined to see in the fishhook/ransom conceit an elegant allusion to the Trojan Horse, but it is difficult to demonstrate. In any event, we note the issue here because it underlines the extent to which God's wisdom would be demonstrated in a single maneuver that accomplished the redemption of both humankind and the devil.

25 Teselle, pp. 160-161.

26 *Or. Cat.* 22; Hardy, p. 299.

27 *Or. Cat.* 24; Hardy, p. 301.

28 The contrast between systematic and prismatic is drawn by Rowan A. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 46. Greer's elaboration of this observation, however, is instructive: 'What I mean is that he clearly has a relatively coherent view of the Christian story and its theological meaning. And this view is articulated by a profound knowledge of Scripture as well as a sophisticated understanding of the philosophical themes that were part of the lingua franca of Christian Platonism, the dominant theology of the period. But in his writings he tends to treat a single theme in all its many aspects in such a way that it reflects the other central themes in his thought. [ . . . ] As a result, I must warn that the order in which I shall describe Nyssa's thought is artificial and interpretive.' Rejecting systematicity does not jettison either coherence or inter-relationship. Instead, 'prismatic' implies that pieces mutually illumine each other rather than fitting together like the pieces of a puzzle. Thus we want to be clear that we take the ransom 'theory' and the fishhook imagery as ways of looking at the story of salvation more than as the articulation of a 'theory' of salvation. Nevertheless, we believe that Gregory means for it to shed light on the nature and processes of salvation. The question we ask in this essay is, what light does it shed? The arguments we have just described, in which Gregory provides justification for God's deception, suggest that he expected his readers to wonder how such behavior on God's part could be justified. Deception and ransom also arise in the context of Gregory's determination to demonstrate that God's saving activity exemplified the unity of the key divine attributes — justice, goodness, power, and wisdom — in 'what happened' (*Or. Cat.* 20; Hardy p. 297; see also *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, p. 303). Thus, while it is true that these themes only appear in the *Catechetical Oration*, it is equally true that they occupy an integral role in the soteriology Gregory outlines there.

29 Constas, 140.

30 Quoted and translated in Daniel J. Saunders, SJ, 'The Devil and the Divinity of Christ.' *Theological Studies* 9:4 (1948), p. 542. PL LXXVI 680, Book 33.vii.14. Interestingly, in Saunders' extensive and instructive survey of opinions about whether or not Satan knew Christ's true nature, he does not consider Gregory of Nyssa at all.

31 Gregory introduces his account of Satan's fall thusly: 'It is irrelevant to our present purpose to explain in detail how one who was created for no evil end by Him who framed the universe in goodness fell into the passion of envy. Yet we may offer a brief explanation to those who care to hear it' (*Or. Cat.* 6; Hardy, p. 279). He spends the next five paragraphs on this 'irrelevant' side story, in which he first uses the image of closing one's eyes to the good. He then refers back to that account in *Or. Cat.* 23 (Hardy, p. 299), saying, '[w]e argued at the beginning [ . . . ] that he closed his eyes to the good.' It appears, then, that the 'irrelevant' account occupies a clear place in his thinking, and plays a role in his overall argument. Gregory also uses the image of closing one's eyes to describe human sin (*Or. Cat.* 7, Hardy, p. 282), underlining the parallel between Satan's fall and our own ongoing fall(s), from which both the devil and we need rescuing.

32 *Or. Cat.* 6; Hardy, p. 280. Like us, Mateo-Seco, 'Devil,' pp. 223-224, recognizes a profound psychological analysis at work here that matters to Gregory's understanding of sin and salvation, the freedom of *apatheia* and slavery to the passions: '[Satan's fall] elicits a serious question in Gregory: How could a hypercosmic creature fall into the passion of envy? [ . . . ] How could a creature that is so perfect choose evil instead of choosing the good? His response: Because he closed his eyes before the good, that is, he pulled himself away from the contemplation of the good. The same thing happened to him as happens to a human being who closes his eyes before the light. He sees nothing other than darkness.'

33 Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, trans. Catharine Roth (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 19. Hereafter *On the Soul*. See also *Or. Cat.* 6; Hardy, p. 280: 'Just as freedom from passion, then, is the beginning and foundation of a life of virtue, so inclination to evil, arising through envy, paves the way for all the evils which are seen to follow it,' and *Or. Cat.* 35; Hardy, p. 317: 'Now purity is closely related to freedom from passion, and it is not to be doubted that blessedness consists in this freedom from passion.'

34 *On the Soul*, p. 57.

35 In *Or. Cat.* 23; Hardy, p. 299.

36 Gregory describes Peter preaching and many disbelievers remaining unchanged, but they don't blame it on Peter, since it was available to them. Gregory's opponents, however, do blame God: God 'could have compelled those who were stubborn.' But '[w]hat freedom of choice would they then have had?' *Or. Cat.* 31; Hardy, p. 309. The same is true here of Satan.

37 *Or. Cat.* 40; Hardy, p. 323.

38 *Or. Cat.* 40; Hardy, p. 324.

39 'Among those whom history records from the beginning, [Satan] was aware of none who was connected with such circumstances as he saw in His appearance,' *Or. Cat.* 23, Hardy, p. 299.

40 *Or. Cat.* 23, Hardy p. 300.

41 *Or. Cat.* 34, Hardy pp. 313-4. See also, for example, *Or. Cat.* 12 and 13, Hardy 289.

42 Here we might engage the apophatic tradition more directly, and especially as it appears in Gregory's *Life of Moses*. Constas already addresses this adequately, apart from a much more sustained investigation than we can pursue in the present essay. See also note 9, above.

43 *Or. Cat.* 6; Hardy, p. 280.

44 Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Jeremiah in Spirit and Fire*. Hans Urs von Balthasar (ed.). Robert J. Daly, S.J. (trans.) (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1984), p. 345.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 347-8

46 Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*, p. 347. See also Constas, p. 142. It is worth noting that Plato's Hippias Minor is apparently much-misread in this context. Plato does not 'weave the crown of victory for Odysseus,' as Constas puts it (p. 143). The dialogue is instead aporetic. Socrates does indeed argue that the liar understands truth better than the one who errs. But he concludes:

'Soc. Then he who voluntarily errs and does disgraceful and unjust acts, Hippias, if there be such a man, would be no other than the good man.

'Hipp. I cannot agree with you, Socrates.

'Soc. Nor I with myself, Hippias; but that appears at the moment to be the inevitable result of our argument.'

See Plato, *Cratylus*, *Parmenides*, *Greater Hippias*, *Lesser Hippias*, trans. H.N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 192), p. 475. The discussion in the *Hippias Minor* is interesting here not just for its attempt to get at the root of deception, honesty, and virtue, but because, like Gregory of Nyssa, Plato is

wrestling with the unity of power, knowledge, and justice. Curiously, Socrates happens to note that Hippias 'will be doing me much more good if you cure my soul of ignorance than if you cure my body of disease' (p. 461). Given the convergence of themes and images, it is hard to believe that Gregory would not be thinking of this dialogue in the *Catechetical Oration*. Given also his apparent willingness to adopt the 'poetic' version of justice Socrates so clearly rejects in the *Republic*, it is quite possible that we could imagine Gregory either misunderstanding Plato in these cases, or possibly disagreeing and adapting the material to his own purposes.

47 *Or. Cat.* 26; Hardy, pp. 303-304.

48 'It pleased God that for the sake of rescuing men from the power of the devil, the devil should be overcome not by power but by justice.' Augustine, *On the Trinity*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Vol. III, ed. Philip Schaff, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 122.

49 Augustine, *Sermon 263* in *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*. Ed. Edmund Hill and Trans. John E. Rotelle, (New York: New City Press: 1993), pp. 219-220. Augustine also uses the mousetrap image in sermons 130 and 134.

50 *On the Trinity*, p. 126.

51 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1958), p. 30.

52 *Ibid.* Interestingly, what follows is a discussion parallel to that of the *Hippias Minor* (see note 46, above), concluding otherwise than Plato that 'a man who is deceived is better than a man who lies, because it is better to suffer iniquity than to perform it,' pp. 30-31.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*, p. 37. Augustine continues, 'What is sought with difficulty is discovered with more pleasure. those who do not find what they seek directly stated labor in hunger.'

56 *Ibid.*, p. 58. Augustine is discussing astrology in this passage.

57 See above, n. 40.

58 *Or. Cat.* 8; Hardy, p. 282: 'It was by a movement of free will that we became associated with evil. To indulge some pleasure we mingled evil with our nature, like some deadly drug sweetened with honey. By this means we fell from that blessed state we think of as freedom from passion, and were changed into evil.'

59 See *Or. Cat.* 37; Hardy, p. 318f: '[T]he immortal body, by entering the one who receives it, transforms his entire being into its own nature.'