LOGIC AND THE TRINITY: INTRODUCING TEXT AND CONTEXT OF GREGORY OF NYSSA'S *AD GRAECOS*

JOHAN LEEMANS

1. Introduction

Among Gregory's writings, the *Ad Graecos ex communibus notionibus* is not the one with the clearest possible title and the same judgment as to lack of clarity could be passed on some aspects of its contents. But it also is a fascinating treatise and one that surely deserves the still relatively modest increase of scholarly attention it has been receiving over the past 20 years. In order to facilitate a better understanding of this work, the aim of this introductory contribution is to provide a survey of the main lines the research on this writing has developed. These will mainly deal with the Greek text of *Ad Graecos* and its transmission as well as with the context in which the writing originated. Thus, I hope this article may serve as a background for the other papers in this volume that touch upon *Ad Graecos*.

2. Editions and Translations

The standard edition is that by Friedrich Müller, published 50 years ago in volume III/1 of the GNO-series.¹ Scholarship on *Ad Graecos* has been facilitated by the translations that have been made of the Müller-text. To the best of my knowledge there are five texts: a French one in the 1986 Strasbourg doctoral dissertation of Thierry Ziegler,² a German one by Hermann J. Vogt in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* of 1991,³ an Italian one by Claudio Moreschini⁴ and two English ones: the one

¹ *Gregorii Nysseni Opera dogmatica minora*. Vol. 1, edidit Fridericus Mueller. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* III/1 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 19–33.

² Thierry Ziegler: *Les petits traités trinitaires de Grégoire de Nysse: Témoins d'un itinéraire théologique* (379–383), (Diss. Strasbourg, 1987), 2–19.

³ Hermann J. Vogt: "Die Schrift 'Ex communibus notionibus' des Gregor von Nyssa," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 171 (1991), 204–218.

⁴ In *Opere di Gregorio di Nissa*, a cura di Claudio Moreschini. *Classici delle religioni* 4 (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1992).

by Daniel Stramara in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* of 1996⁵ and the one by Brian Duvick which was made available electronically to the participants in the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa. With exception of the one by Moreschini I have consulted all these translations. In my opinion all are in general reliable, though that of Stramara is in some respects to be used with caution.

3. Textual transmission of *Ad Graecos*

The edition by Müller made obsolete the one printed in volume 45 (columns 176–185) of the *Patrologia Graeca* (a reprint of the edition by Morellus of 1638). Preparing his German translation, H.J. Vogt carefully compared both editions. This revealed that in the GNO-edition a significant number of lines of text, sentences and parts of sentences have been added in comparison to the text in the *Patrologia Graeca*. Given that the PG-edition was based on only one manuscript and the GNO-edition on seven more, this feature as such, already described by Müller, hardly comes as a surprise. Yet, Vogt also discovered that the manuscript J on which the edition in the *Patrologia Graeca* was based, in all likelihood represents a deliberately shortened text. In other words: the text of *Ad Graecos* as we find it in the *Patrologia Graeca* would document a deliberate intervention into the textual transmission. All of this may remind us that the text we are trying to understand is the outcome of a dynamic process of transmission.

Moreover, recent research cast doubt on the “definitive” character of the text in the Müller-edition. Indeed, while Müller based his 1958 edition on eight manuscripts, since then five more manuscripts containing the text of *Ad Graecos* have come to light,⁶ which still must be collated and assessed to see whether they make a new edition necessary or not. In a recent article on one of these manuscripts, the Codex Vatican, Bibliotheca Vaticana gr. 402 (sigel M),⁷ A. Capone⁸ shows

⁵ Daniel F. Stramara: “Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos* ‘How It Is That We Say There Are Three Persons In The Divinity But Do Not Say There Are Three Gods’ (To The Greeks: Concerning the Commonality of Concepts),” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 41 (1996), 375–391.

⁶ Cf. the pinakes-database accessible through the website of the IRHT.

⁷ The text of *Adversus Graecos* is on the fol. 154v–161v. This witness was already signalled in Robert Devreesse: *Codices Vaticani Graeci*. Vol. 2: Codices 330–603 (Rome: Bibliotheca Vaticana, 1937), but apparently this was not picked up by Müller.

⁸ Alessandro Capone: “Un nuovo testimone dell’*Ad Graecos* di Gregorio di Nissa,” *Rudiae* 16–17 (2004–2005), 145–170. The article contains a detailed description of the

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that surprises are certainly not to be ruled out. Not only invites his collation of M a new assessment of the complete textual tradition of the writing but it also results in the following suggestions for corrections to the GNO-text:⁹

1) *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 22,18–21 Müller):

Εἰ γὰρ ἐπὶ Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου καὶ Βαρνάβα τρεῖς οὐσίας οὗ φαμεν διὰ τὸ μιᾶς αὐτοὺς εἶναι, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ἐπὶ πατρός καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος τοῦτο δικαίως οὐ ποιήσομεν.

M reads: τὸ μιᾶς οὐσίας αὐτοὺς εἶναι.

Capone proposes to retain the M-reading because in all the instances in which μία is used in conjunction with οὐσία the substantive is always explicitly added.¹⁰

2) *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 27,22f. Müller):

[...] τὸν θεὸν εἶναι καὶ πανταχοῦ, ἔνθα τις πορευθεῖ, παρεῖναι τὸ ἁπλοῦν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι καὶ πανταχοῦ, ἔνθα τις πορευθεῖ, παρεῖναι τὸ ἁπλοῦν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπερίγραφον.

M reads: ἀπερίγραφτον

The word ἀπερίγραφον is a Gregorian hapax whereas its synonym ἀπερίγραφτον, which is also retained in the manuscript Λ (Codex London, British Museum Old Royal XVI D I), occurs frequently in his writings.¹¹ Therefore Capone proposes to retain the M-reading.

3) *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 30,11–15 Müller):

Τῷ γὰρ λέγειν οὐσίαν τοιάνδε οὐδὲν ἕτερον λέγομεν ἢ ὑπαρξιν ζωῆς μετέχουσαν πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολὴν τῆς μὴ τοιαύτης, ὑπαρξιν λογικεύεσθαι πεφυκυῖαν πρὸς διάκρισιν ἀλογίᾳ διαφερούσης, ὑπαρξιν τὸ χρεμετιστικὸν ἔχουσαν χαρακτηριστικόν, καὶ εἴ τι τοιοῦτον.

M reads: πρὸς διάκρισιν τῆς ἀλογίᾳ διαφερούσης.

This M-reading is to be preferred because of the parallelism with πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολὴν τῆς μὴ τοιαύτης of the preceding clause. Similar

content of the manuscript, a complete list of all variae lectiones vis à vis the GNO-text and the suggestions for changes to the GNO-text.

⁹ Capone: "Un nuovo testimone dell'Ad Graecos di Gregorio di Nissa," (see note 8), 165–169.

¹⁰ Especially *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 19,3–5 Müller) is instructive in this regard. Other instances: *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 20,27f.; 21,5f.; 21,14f.; 22,13f.; 23,18f.; 28,17–19; 32,17f. Müller).

¹¹ Cf. *Lexicon Gregorianum*. Vol. 1, bearbeitet von Friedhelm Mann (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 452, s.v. ἀπερίγραφτος.

instances can be found in *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 30,17 Müller) and *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 31,14f. Müller).

4) *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 31,5–7 Müller):

Λέγων δὲ εἶδος, τουτέστιν οὐσίαν, πρὸς τὸ γινῶναι δηλονότι, ζῶον λογικόν, θνητόν, νοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμης δεκτικόν, ζῶον ἄλογον, θνητόν, χρεμετιστικὸν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα.

M reads: καὶ εἴ τι τοιοῦτον. According to Capone this reading is to be preferred because the construction with εἴ τι is much more natural than the one retained in the GNO-text. This is corroborated by many parallels.¹²

5) *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 20,6–13 Müller):

Τὸ δὲ θεὸς ὄνομα ἀπολύτως καὶ ὡσαύτως κατηγορεῖται ἐκάστου τῶν προσώπων ἄνευ τοῦ καὶ συνδέσμου, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς λέγειν θεὸν καὶ θεὸν καὶ θεόν, ἀλλὰ νοεῖν τὸ ὄνομα <δεύτερον καὶ> τρίτον μὲν λεγόμενον τῇ φωνῇ διὰ τὰ ὑποκείμενα πρόσωπα, προ<σ>βαλλόμενον δὲ τῇ δευτερώσει καὶ τῇ τριτώσει ἄνευ τοῦ καὶ συνδέσμου διὰ τὸ μὴ ἕτερον καὶ ἕτερον εἶναι θεόν.

Just like all other manuscripts, M does not support Müller's insertion δεύτερον καὶ in the text. The editor probably made this addition to create a parallelism with τῇ δευτερώσει καὶ τῇ τριτώσει below in the text, but Capone, following Vogt, points out that τρίτον may mean "three times" and thus perfectly fits into the sentence without the insertion proposed by Müller.

In sum: while the GNO-text of *Ad Graecos* will for the time being remain the widely-used authoritative standard-text, for the immediate future it will be worthwhile to take into account these changes proposed by Capone. In the longer run a collation of the five "new" manuscripts and, possibly, a new text-edition may be inevitable.

4. The title and nature of the work

The title of the *Ad Graecos* is most likely post-Gregorian and suggests that to later readers of *Ad Graecos* it was not always unequivocally clear what exactly the writing was about. It consists of two parts. The

¹² *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 30,10f.; 30,14f.; 30,23f.; 31,4f. Müller) are just a few examples chosen at random.

first part runs as follows: Πῶς τρία πρόσωπα λέγοντες ἐν τῇ θεότητι οὐ φαμεν τρεῖς θεοὺς ("How it is that when we say there are three persons in the Divinity we do not say there are three Gods"). This title neatly sums up what the argument that is made in the writing boils down to. The second title (πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλληνας ἀπὸ τῶν κοινῶν ἐννοιῶν) seems to identify, however vaguely, the addressees of the work ("the Greeks") as well as the basis of the argumentation: the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, generally accepted opinions. This second part of the title leaves some questions unanswered. First of all it is not clear who "the Greeks" are. Because this is a text about Trinitarian doctrine, the Hellenes referred to may be best seen as contemporaries trained in Greek philosophy who had difficulties to think God as tri-une.¹³ Secondly, the mention of the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι stands in great contrast to its surprising absence in the text of the treatise. Surprising absence, because the term κοινὰ ἔννοιαι as such was widespread in ancient philosophy as a means to establish a commonly accepted ground before moving on with developing an argument. The term occurs, with a similar meaning, a few times more in the oeuvre of Gregory, most notably in the first book of the *Contra Eunomium*.¹⁴ Similarly, in *Adversus Eunomium* I 12,8 Basil of Caesarea writes that the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι tell us that God exists, not what he is. Given the sophisticated degree of *Ad Graecos*, especially with regard to the integration of philosophical ideas, one would have expected this technical term to be present more strongly in the text, too. Moreover, Gregory is clearly applying the rules of Aristotelian logic in this treatise but at the same time he happily departs from these rules. In this regard, too, κοινὰ ἔννοιαι is not easy to reconcile with the treatise's content. Finally, even as a philosophical concept the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι do not seem identical with the scientific reasoning (κατὰ γὰρ τὸν ἐπιστημονικὸν λόγον) or the precise methodology of rational scientific discourse (πρὸς τὸν ἀκριβῆ κανόνα τῆς λογικῆς ἐπιστήμης) the author endorses in the end of the treatise. At first sight they seem more parallel with the common language, the ἡ κοινὴ χρῆσις which he does reject.¹⁵ Maybe it is best to consider, with Turcescu, the common

¹³ Lucian Turcescu: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69.

¹⁴ Cf. *Lexicon Gregorianum*. Vol. 5, bearbeitet von Friedhelm Mann (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 385, s.v. κοινός.

¹⁵ *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 31,29–32,7 Müller).

notions of the title as a "container-term," in which, as opposed to revelation, all tools of philosophy and logic are subsumed.¹⁶

To conclude: the first part of the title makes perfect sense in relation to its content, the second invites some questions and seems less apposite. Yet, they are present in the most important manuscripts Müller based his edition on (except the manuscript J)¹⁷ and hence are best retained.

After the title, the work opens as follows:

If the name "God" were indicative of the Person, then we would, saying three Persons, necessarily also saying three gods; but if the name "God" is indicative of the οὐσία, then, confessing one οὐσία of the holy Trinity, we consequently teach one God since "God" is the one name of the one οὐσία; when we confess the one οὐσία of the Holy Trinity we rightly teach as doctrine that there is one God since the term "God" refers to one οὐσία. Therefore it follows that God is one both according to essence and terminology, not three.¹⁸

This opening is surprisingly abrupt. It immediately puts the reader in medias res. There is no proper introduction, no rhetorically stylised *prooemium* as it can be found in some of the other Opera Minora, such as *Ad Eustathium*. In *Ad Graecos* there is no time for the reader to come gradually home in the theme of the work. Instead, he is immediately plunged into the heart of the matter. I think, Hübner may be right with his hypothesis that the work that came down to us is incomplete.¹⁹ This is a pity because it is exactly in a *prooemium* that we might get a glimpse of the work's context, e.g. by identifying Gregory's opponents or of its intended readership and "Sitz im Leben." As we

¹⁶ Turcescu: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (see note 13), 69.

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¹⁸ *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 19,1-5 Müller): Εἰ τὸ θεὸς ὄνομα προσώπου δηλωτικὸν ὑπῆρχεν, τρία πρόσωπα λέγοντες ἐξ ἀνάγκης τρεῖς ἂν ἐλέγομεν θεούς· εἰ δὲ τὸ θεὸς ὄνομα οὐσίας σημαντικὸν ἐστίν, μίαν οὐσίαν ὁμολογοῦντες τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος ἓνα θεὸν εἰκότως δογματίζομεν, ἐπειδὴ μιᾶς οὐσίας ἐν ὀνόματι τὸ θεὸς ἐστίν. διὸ καὶ ἀκολουθῶς τῇ τε οὐσίᾳ καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι εἰς ἐστὶ θεὸς καὶ οὐ τρεῖς. English translation taken from Johannes Zachhuber: *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 109.

¹⁹ Reinhard M. Hübner: "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra," in: *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22-26 septembre 1969)*, ed. by Marguerite Harl (Leiden: Brill, 1971), (199-230) 208f.

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will see later on, much ink has been spilt on attempts of clarifying exactly these issues.

The opening sentences of *Ad Graecos* also reveal something about the nature of the work. They are a classic example of disjunctive syllogistic reasoning:

- (1) If the name God is indicative of "person" that would be tantamount to tritheism for our saying that there are three persons would in that case be necessarily tantamount to saying there are three Gods.
- (2) If the name God signifies essence that is right doctrine because confessing one essence then corresponds to one God.
- (3) Conclusion: God is one in both essence and terminology (τῇ τε οὐσίᾳ καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι).

This kind of logical-argumentative way of proceeding (in this particular case not to say circular reasoning!) is present in the entire text. In *Ad Graecos* we do not find a pious, careful, Scriptural approach to the mystery of the Trinity such as in the *Ad Eustathium*.²⁰ It certainly is not the mystic Gregory we meet here, nor the speculative theologian who is trying to understand something of the mystery of the Trinity. Instead we meet Gregory as a self-assured "logical theologian". He has so to speak already made up his mind: God is one and three at the same time in that He is one οὐσία in three πρόσωπα. Yet, apparently, there were people who argued that this expression gravely endangered the unity of God and in fact amounted to tritheism. Thus, in this writing Gregory is exclusively concerned with demonstrating that the expression one οὐσία in three πρόσωπα—or ὑποστάσεις for that matter—should and must be understood as he does and not as tritheism. It is to make the point that he is using the weapon of argumentative logic.

The logic he is employing is, of course, the logic of his day. The philosophical background of Gregory's writings is a longstanding topic in scholarship. With regard to the notions of "person" and "the individual" in general, Turcescu traces alongside Aristotelian influences

²⁰ Ziegler: *Les petits traités trinitaires de Grégoire de Nysse* (see note 2), 141.

also Stoic and Neoplatonic ones.²¹ With regard to *Ad Graecos* in particular the influence of Aristotle's *Categoriae* is most evident, though the commentators agree that it was most probably not direct but mediated through Porphyry's *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium* or his *Isagoge*.²² An excellent case-study is delivered in Turcescu's commentary on Gregory's reflection about species, their nature and their accidental features.²³ To develop this point, Gregory is using the examples of rationality, neighing, and barking as characteristic features of the human, horse and dog species respectively. A very similar line of inquiry is being developed in the *Isagoge*, but the illustration of the neighing horse also occurs in lesser-known philosophical writings from the second and third centuries AD (Ps.-Plutarch, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Sextus Empiricus) as well as in Clement of Alexandria.²⁴ Turcescu's analysis makes one wish to have more available. The scarcity of such detailed case-studies indicate that more fruitful work on Gregory's philosophical background as evidenced by *Ad Graecos* can still be done.

Given its specific nature as a "logical writing" it doesn't come as a surprise that there are surprisingly few Scriptural borrowings in *Ad Graecos*. Yet, it is remarkably seeing Gregory's drawing on the Scriptures precisely in a crucial part of his argumentation in the second part of his treatise, to support a point that according to the standards of logic had already been made.²⁵

Having shown in the first part (till *Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 23,3 Müller]) through—taken on its own premises—rather convincing logic that God is one οὐσία and three πρόσωπα do not necessarily amount to tritheism, he turns in the second part of the treatise to a much more complicated issue. A clear distinction between οὐσία and πρόσωπον does not suffice when the relationship between the universal and the particular has not been solved, a difficulty that immediately comes to

²¹ Turcescu: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (see note 13), 25–45.

²² Zachhuber: *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (see note 18), 111; Turcescu: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (see note 13), 76.

²³ *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 30,7–31,20 Müller).

²⁴ Turcescu: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (see note 13), 76–78.

²⁵ Hence I would say J. Zachhuber is a bit too severe in stating (with reference to the section of *Ad Graecos* in question) that "es wird ohne irgendwelche Bezugnahmen auf Schriftstellen argumentiert" (Johannes Zachhuber: "Gregor von Nyssa und das Schisma von Antiochien," *Theologie und Philosophie* 72 [1997], [481–496] 481).

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light when applying human analogy (Peter, Paul, Barnabas) to clarify the Trinity. These difficulties are presented in the form of hypothetical questions: "Somebody could say..." or "What must be said to somebody who says..."²⁶ Having briefly addressed and, under conditions, having not excluded the possibility of saying that Peter, Paul and Barnabas are μερικάί or ἰδικαί οὐσίαι (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 23,4–13 Müller]), Gregory rejects the possibility to say that Peter, Paul and Barnabas are ἄνθρωποι (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 23,13f. Müller]). Gregory says: this is often done in common language out of a certain necessity, but fundamentally it is wrong and the logic behind it should certainly never be applied to the holy Trinity (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 23,21–25 Müller]). Then three reasons follow why this difference between the human level and the level of the Trinity should be kept: (1) The "definition of man" (ὅρος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) is not always present in the same individuals or persons (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 24,3–26 Müller]); (2) Contrary to the Persons of the Trinity, not all human individuals (τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πρόσωπα πάντα) have their origin from the same πρόσωπον (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 24,26–25,8 Müller]); (3) With the exception that the Father is Father, the Son is the Son and the Spirit is the Spirit, there is no difference whatsoever between the three persons of the Trinity; not in space, time, will, energy or emotions. All of this is completely different with human beings (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 25,8–17 Müller]). The argument can then be brought to a close: all human individuals are different and on that particular level there can be no question that this would even come close to an analogy with the Trinity. The analogy has to be sought a level higher, on the level of what one can call "the human οὐσία," the human *fusus*, the entire collection of all human beings of past, present and future.²⁷ This is why it is common usage but at the same time simply wrong to say that Peter, Paul and Barnabas are three ἄνθρωποι: thus they are "classified" on the level of the universal instead of on the level of the individual. It is common usage and in so far acceptable to do this for human beings, but for the Trinity it is simply unacceptable (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 25,18–26,4 Müller]).

Here "the logical theologian" Gregory of Nyssa, could have left it and moved on to his next point. Yet, apparently the Scriptures are never

²⁶ *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 23,4; 23,13; 26,6 Müller).

²⁷ Zachhuber: *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (see note 18), 112.

far away, even when arguing on a logical level. This brings him to the next question: if it is common usage but essentially false to speak about three ἄνθρωποι, as in the example of Peter, Paul and Barnabas, why is it then that the Scriptures in several passages do speak about three men (τρεις ἄνδρες)? Gregory does not specify which texts he is referring to, but the passage of Gen 18:2 (visit to Abraham) comes in mind here. In this relatively long section of the work (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 26,6–28,8 Müller]) the tone changes somewhat. One senses that Gregory is really in his own and he phrases an eloquent and convincing answer. Firstly, the Scriptures nowhere support tritheism but in fact state very often that Father, Son and Spirit are God as well as that God is One. Hence, his position is founded in the Bible, not that of his opponents. Secondly, the Scriptures also often do employ the collective noun ἄνθρωπος, as in Ps 102:15 LXX: ἄνθρωπος, ὥσεί χόρτος αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτοῦ (man, as grass are his days). This indicates that they are well aware of the common nature of human beings. If so, why then do they also speak in plural about ἄνδρες or ἄνθρωποι when they seemingly do know fully well that this is false? Gregory says that the Scriptures here demonstrate a συνκατάβασις, a pedagogical movement of condescension, in order that also the less-gifted understand. Gregory here also introduces the comparison to the woman who feeds babies and small children: she will also adjust the food she gives to what the baby can digest. And she will speak so that the little one understands her, even if this means she is not always using correct and precise language. In this context Gregory also quotes from Eph 4:13.²⁸ In the end he summarizes the argument: in Ps 102:15 LXX, the Bible uses the correct expression; in passages such as Gen 18:2 where she speaks about men (plural), this is because of pedagogical reasons.

A final feature that deserves to be highlighted is that *Ad Graecos* was not finished, meaning that it never got a final revision and polishing. There is the already mentioned lack of a prooemium but on top of that there are also some inconsistencies in the argumentations. Turcescu points to the following two examples. Firstly, in the first part of the work, Gregory is in great pains to explain οὐσία and πρόσωπον and stresses that the one οὐσία is certainly not to be divided in three parts over the πρόσωπα. Yet, in the next step of his argumentation he

²⁸ Not mentioned in the GNO-apparatus, but recognised by Vogt: "Die Schrift 'Ex communibus notionibus' des Gregor von Nyssa," (see note 3), 208.

introduces exactly this in the concept of μερικὴ οὐσία, partial essence, albeit here not applied to the Trinity but to human persons. Secondly, in reading the work one also has the idea that the terminology is not always consistently used, should have been clarified, and made more consistent. The most notorious passage in that regard comes at the end, when Gregory unequivocally makes ὑπόστασις a species for πρόσωπον; words he frequently uses as synonyms thus are now used to represent a more concrete and a more abstract level of reality.²⁹

Such inconsistencies could be explained by assuming Gregory didn't find the time to take *Ad Graecos* through a final redaction, to give it a last polishing. Yet it would seem that this doesn't go far enough as an explanation for the many unresolved tensions the writing contains. More enticing is the possibility to consider the document as some sort of work in progress. This ties in nicely with the idea advocated by some scholars that *Ad Graecos* was a working paper for the dialogue between Old-Nicenes and Neo-Nicenes. This brings us to the date and a possible "Sitz im Leben" of the writing, an issue that provoked a lot of scholarly discussion.

5. Date and Context

Because clear indications are often absent, most of Gregory's writings are extremely difficult to date, and the *Ad Graecos* is no exception to that rule. Jean Daniélou and Gerhard May have both defended a very late date for both *Ad Graecos* and *Ad Ablabium*. Daniélou places both writings in 388 AD because they reflect a period of his life that Gregory was much more a spiritual writer whose interest had shifted away from dogmatic controversies which he only addressed on request of his friends. May made a similar argument: an early date is not possible because in both writings there are no clear references to the doctrinal struggles of the years before and after Constantinople. Moreover, May sees clear parallels with Gregory of Nazianze's *Epistula* 202, written in 387. Finally there also is the argument that *Ad Ablabium* 37,8 mentions Gregory's old age.³⁰ It should be admitted that all these arguments are rather tenuous.

²⁹ Turcescu: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (see note 13), 69f.

³⁰ Jean Daniélou: Review of *Gregorii Nysseni Opera dogmatica minora*. Vol. 1, ed. Fridericus Müller. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* III/2 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), *Gnomon* 31

Vogt: "Die Schrift 'Ex 208.

In the same period as Daniélou's and May's contributions, a different view emerged, defending a much earlier date for *Ad Graecos*. In the wake of Reinhard Hübner,³¹ several scholars have established a connection between *Ad Graecos* and the Christian community at Antioch, possibly even the synod of Antioch of the year 379, which tried to bring about a reconciliation between the Old-Nicenes of Paulinus and the Neo-Nicenes of Meletius. The writing would have been an attempt to win over the Old-Nicenes for the Neo-Nicene position, something surely congruent with Gregory's interventions in church politics. *Ad Graecos* would then have to be read as an attempt to demonstrate that the Old-Nicene and the Neo-Nicene positions were not that different at all since the Neo-Nicene position as embodied by Gregory did not necessarily imply a tritheistic theology.³² Ziegler made the interesting observation that the perspective of Arianism or Sabellianism, as doctrinal extremes usually always lurking at the background of many writings and exchanges, are completely absent here. This fits with the idea that these extremes were not relevant here because there was enough common ground between Gregory and his addressees to leave them out.³³

It can be said that in general this Antiochene "Sitz im Leben" for *Ad Graecos* has been accepted by the scholarly community. In my opinion such a context for the genesis of *Ad Graecos* can be defended, but the arguments in favour of it are less weighty than generally thought. Hence, a brief review of scholarship on this topic is not superfluous.

Building on the work of Karl Holl (early 20th century), Reinhard Hübner was the first to bring forward this hypothesis. In his article about Gregory of Nyssa and Marcellus of Ancyra,³⁴ he shows a considerable number of striking similarities between writings of Marcellus of Ancyra and Gregory of Nyssa, similarities both on the level of the ter-

(1959), (612–615) 614f. Later, in his survey in "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse," *Studia Patristica* 7 (1966), 159–169 he did not include a discussion of *Ad Graecos*; Gerhard May: "Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa," in: *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, ed. by Harl (see note 19), (51–67) 58f.

³¹ Hübner: "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra" (see note 19), 199–229.

³² Hübner: "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra" (see note 19), 206: "Die Hypothese lautet: Gregor von Nyssa hat seinen Traktat, der unter dem Titel *ex communibus notionibus* umläuft [...] für das Konzil unter Meletius 379 geschrieben, um die Verständigung mit den Markellianern (und Paulinianern) zu erleichtern."

³³ Ziegler: *Les petits traités trinitaires de Grégoire de Nysse* (see note 2), 141.

³⁴ Hübner: "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra" (see note 19), *passim*.

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minology used and on the level of theological ideas. Moreover, a creed stemming from the Marcellian community and dated by Martin Tetz in 371 documents the willingness of this community to enter into conversation again with the mainstream Church.³⁵ Gregory, for his part, did entertain quite some sympathy for Marcellus and his followers which he played out on the political level of the church. In 372 he tried to convene a synod at Ancyra but met with the opposition of Basil of Caesarea (see Basil's *Epistula* 100), who recognised solely Meletius as Antiochene bishop and refused to acknowledge the Old-Nicene Paulinus, something Gregory saw clearly differently. Similar contacts are also hinted at in Gregory's *Epistula* 5,2. Thus, Gregory's contacts with Marcellians clearly went back already quite some time before he succeeded in bringing them around the table with the Neo-Nicenes on the occasion of the synod convened by Meletius in the autumn of 379. In Hübner's opinion, *Ad Graecos* would constitute a third—albeit hypothetical—piece of evidence for Gregory's involvement with the Marcellians in general and the 379 synod, which in general is ill-documented, in particular. His arguments are the following:

1. In the beginning of *Ad Graecos* (GNO III/1, 21,10 Müller), Gregory is using the term *μονάς*, a typically Marcellian term to speak about the Trinity. Gregory's use of this specific term would indicate his eagerness to overcome the distance with the Marcellians, to approach them as far as possible.
2. The defense in *Ad Graecos* (cf. especially in the beginning and end) that the one *οὐσία* and the three *πρόσωπα* go together and do not need to imply tritheism nicely fits the fact that Old-Nicenes and Marcellians had often contended that an insufficient stress on the oneness of God runs indeed the risk of falling into tritheism. This would fit the context of the 370's in which Gregory was trying to bring both parties together.
3. There is also a more intricate argument. In the treatise of Petrus Callinicus *Contra Damianum*, two Syriac text fragments are preserved, which show (most clearly in the Greek retroversion by

³⁵ Martin Tetz: "Markellianer und Athanasios von Alexandrien: Die markellianische Expositio fidei ad Athanasium des Diakons Eugenius von Ankyra," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 64 (1973), (74–121) 119–121.

Eduard Schwartz!)³⁶ in content and terminology a remarkable parallelism with passages in *Ad Graecos*. In the text of Petrus Callinicus these fragments are ascribed to a *Contra Photinum* by Eustathius of Antioch. Petrus was patriarch of Antioch at the end of the sixth century and had found the text in the library of the Antiochene Christian community. Hübner goes a step further: he thinks the work was originally Gregory's, but was later ascribed to Eustathius which would bear testimony to the great success of the writing as a conciliatory effort. Moreover, the Antiochene context in which the fragments were preserved adds weight to the hypothesis that also the original context in which *Ad Graecos* was composed must have been an Antiochene one, the synod of 379 being a possibly fitting context.

Here are some thoughts concerning Hübner's three arguments:

1. Firstly, Gregory's use of the term *μονάς* in *Ad Graecos* is striking indeed. He does so in the first part of the treatise:

Thus, inasmuch as the Father is different from the Son and from the Holy Spirit, we profess the three Persons of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, because the Father does not differ from the Son and the Holy Spirit according to essence, we say that there is one essence of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. For since there is a distinction, there is a Trinity according to distinction, and since there is an identity, there is a Unity (*μονάς*) on account of the identity. Therefore, there is an identity of the Persons according to essence, and a Unity proper to Them on account of the essence. If according to essence there is a Unity of the Holy Trinity, it is clear that there is also a Unity according to the term 'God'.³⁷

³⁶ Eduard Schwartz: *Der s.g. Sermo maior de fide des Athanasius*. Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Philologische und Historische Klasse 1924/6 (1925).

³⁷ *Graec.* (GNO III/1, 21,10–20 Müller): "Ὡςπερ γὰρ <διὰ> τὸ διαφέρειν τὸν πατέρα τοῦ τε υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος τρία φαμέν πρόσωπα πατὴρ καὶ υἱὸς καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος, οὕτως, ἐπειδὴ μὴ διαφέρει πατὴρ υἱὸς τε καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, μίαν εἶναι λέγομεν τὴν οὐσίαν πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος. εἰ γάρ, ἔνθα διαφορά, πατὴρ καὶ υἱὸς καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος. εἰ γάρ, ἔνθα ταυτότης, μονὰς διὰ τὴν ταυτότητα· ἔστι δὲ ταυτότης τῶν προσώπων κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν· μονὰς ἄρα αὐτῶν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν. εἰ δὲ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν μονὰς τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος, δηλὸν ὅτι καὶ κατὰ τὸ θεὸς ὄνομα.

The term μονάς here clearly functions as a technical term indicating the unity of the Trinity. Moreover the threefold use in many assigns lends it an additional accent and intensity. At first sight, this would seem to plea in favour of Hübner's position. Yet one should be beware of searching too much behind this passage. The *Lexicon Gregorianum* lists two more instances where the term μονάς is used in a similar way.³⁸ Thus, in *Ad Ablabium* the term also underlines the unity of the Trinity. "While the persons may differ in that they have peculiar attributes, their nature is one, at union in itself, and an absolutely indivisible unit (μονάς), not capable of increase by addition or of diminution by subtraction".³⁹ Moreover, in the third chapter of the *Oratio catechetica* Gregory states the doctrine of God's nature as an example of the ineffable mystery that can only be apprehended in an imperfect way: "As, for instance, how the same thing is capable of being numbered and yet rejects numeration, how it is observed with distinctions yet is apprehended as a monad (ἐν μονάδι καταλαμβάνεται), how it is separate as to ὑπόστασις yet is not divided as to in what it is grounded (οὐ διώριστα τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ)".⁴⁰ Finally, to these two passages could, in sensu lato, also be added a few other passages from the *Ad Ablabium* in which Gregory is using the adjective μοναδικός (or its adverb) to underline the unity of the Trinity.⁴¹ Because both the *Ad Ablabium* and the *Oratio catechetica* can hardly be construed as "Werbeschriften für die Markellianer",⁴² I think it is fair to say that these texts from *Ad Ablabium* and the *Oratio catechetica* considerably diminish the force of Hübner's first argument.

2. With Hübner's idea of Gregory playing an important role in the conciliatory attempts between Old-Nicenes and Neo-Nicenes, what role may have played *Ad Graecos* in this process? This idea has met

³⁸ *Lexicon Gregorianum*. Vol. 6, bearbeitet von Friedhelm Mann unter Mitarbeit von Volker H. Drecoll (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 449, s.v. μονάς.

³⁹ *Abl.* (GNO III/1, 40,24–41,7 Müller): Ἄλλ' ὁ μὲν τῶν ὑποστάσεων λόγος διὰ τὰς ἐνθεωρουμένας ιδιότητας ἐκάστω τὸν διαμερισμὸν ἐπιδέχεται καὶ κατὰ σύνθεσιν ἐν ἀριθμῷ θεωρεῖται· ἡ δὲ φύσις μία ἐστίν, αὐτὴ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἡνωμένη καὶ ἀδιάτμητος ἀκριβῶς μονάς, οὐκ αὐξανόμενη διὰ προσθήκης, οὐ μειουμένη δι' ὑφαιρέσεως, ἀλλ' ὅπου ἐστὶν ἐν οὐσα καὶ ἐν διαμένουσα κἂν ἐν πλήθει φαίνεται, ἄσχιτος καὶ συνεχὴς καὶ ὁλόκληρος καὶ τοῖς μετέχουσιν αὐτῆς τοῖς καθ' ἕκαστον οὐ συνδιαιρουμένη.

⁴⁰ *Or. cat.* (GNO III/4, 13,17–20 Mühlenberg): Πῶς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἀριθμητὸν ἐστὶ καὶ διαφεύγει τὴν ἐξαριθμῆσιν καὶ διηρημένως ὁράται καὶ ἐν μονάδι καταλαμβάνεται καὶ διακρίνεται τῇ ὑποστάσει καὶ οὐ διώριστα τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ;

⁴¹ *Abl.* (GNO III/1, 39,18; 47,8; 57,13 Müller).

⁴² Hübner: "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra" (see note 19), 209.

and meets with wide acceptance and seems to have become the *communis opinio*. Here, one can refer to Ziegler, Zachhuber, Maraval, Duvick, Silvas.⁴³ It is important to note that this position rests altogether on the fragmentary evidence for Gregory's contacts with the Marcellians as described above, but on the other hand can stand independent of the Callinicus-fragments.

Before turning to these, a dissenting voice might be mentioned as well. In his doctoral dissertation presented at the University of St. Louis in 1996, Daniel Stramara made an exhaustive analysis of all the uses by Gregory of the term *πρόσωπον*. In his view the frequent use of this term in *Ad Graecos* fits best the situation immediately after the Council of Constantinople, when Gregory had been named as one of the guarantors of orthodoxy. As Gregory's opponent Stramara identifies the Eunomians. Exactly against these people the arguments based on logic and linguistics were apposite weapons.⁴⁴ There are several problems with his proposal. Firstly, the supposed preponderance of *πρόσωπον* in *Ad Graecos* is only true for the first part of the writing; in the other parts *ὑπόστασις* is more strongly present. Secondly, if Gregory chooses logic as a weapon against his Eunomian opponents, which are nowhere mentioned *expressis verbis*, it is hard to see why he is doing so to a much lesser extent in his other anti-Eunomian writings. Finally, the self-assured tone of *Ad Graecos* would fit well with a situation after Constantinople, when matters had been settled, but how then explain the inconsistencies in the writing and the fact that *Ad Graecos* does not contain any hint at all to the decisions of the Council? A fortiori since Gregory was among the bishops who were to act as guarantors of these decisions? All in all it seems that Stramara's

⁴³ Ziegler: *Les petits traités trinitaires de Grégoire de Nysse* (see note 2), 142; Zachhuber: *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (see note 18), 109; *Grégoire de Nysse, Lettres*, introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes et index par Pierre Maraval. Sources Chrétiennes 363 (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 24; Brian Duvick: "The Trinitarian Tracts of Gregory of Nyssa," in: *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the beatitudes: An English version with commentary and supporting studies: Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998)*, ed. by Hubertus R. Drobner and Albert Viciano. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), (581–592) 583–585 and *passim*; *Gregory of Nyssa, The Letters*, introduction, translation and commentary by Anna M. Silvas. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 41f.

⁴⁴ Daniel F. Stramara: *Unmasking the meaning of ΠΡΟΣΩΠION: Prosopon as person in the works of Gregory of Nyssa* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of St. Louis, 1996), chapter 6 and, more succinctly, in his "Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*" (see note 5), 377f.

position, however enticing an alternative it may be, provokes more questions than it answers.

3. The connection Hübner established with an Antiochene context through the fragments preserved by Petrus Callinicus is much more debated. The problem is partially caused by the fact that one has to compare the Syriac fragments from the *Contra Photinum* with the Greek from Gregory's *Ad Graecos*. Moreover, the authorship of the *Contra Photinum* is a second crux, though of secondary importance. A major step forward was set by Rudolf Lorenz.⁴⁵ The German scholar studied the unedited text of Petrus Callinicus and discovered that the two fragments known to Hübner are in fact part of a longer passus, to which he also offers a German translation. He explains the parallelisms between the texts by assuming that Gregory had read the *Contra Photinum* and that this influence explains the similarities. Moreover, he denied Eustathius the authorship of the text, a judgment in which he is followed by Zachhuber in a 1998 article⁴⁶ and, more recently, by José Declerck in the introduction to his edition of Eustathius of Antiochia's *opera omnia*. The two latter authors have made the most thorough discussions of the subject during the last decade. Since they come to very different conclusions, it is well worth going into their positions for a moment.

I start with Declerck who devotes more than 20 pages of the introduction to his Eustathius-edition to the problem at hand.⁴⁷ In this extensive "Forschungsbericht" he presents a long list of scholars, mostly historians of doctrine, who take a position on Eustathius' authorship of the fragments in question on the basis of their content, theological ideas and terminology. Also the year of death of Eustathius—in itself a matter of conjecture—is often brought into play as a secondary argument. Declerck himself does not accept the Eustathian authorship of the fragments and especially here his evaluation of the comparison with *Ad Graecos* plays a crucial role. The Belgian scholar is well aware

⁴⁵ Rudolf Lorenz: "Die Eustathius von Antiochien zugeschriebene Schrift gegen Photin," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 71 (1980), 109–128.

⁴⁶ Zachhuber: "Gregor von Nyssa und das Schisma von Antiochien" (see note 25); repeated briefly in: idem, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (see note 18), 108f.

⁴⁷ *Eustathii Antiocheni, patris Nicaeni, opera quae supersunt omnia*, edidit José Declerck. Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 51 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), cclxxxiii–cccv.

of the studies of Hübner and Lorenz, but is very critical of them.⁴⁸ In his view Lorenz jumps too quickly to general conclusions on too fragmentary evidence. He juxtaposes the texts of *Contra Photinum* and *Ad Graecos* and concludes that (1) literary parallelisms do often occur but only as piecemeal and not for relatively large quantities of texts; (2) the fragment printed by Lorenz corresponds to only a small part of the entire texts of *Ad Graecos*, both in size and literary parallels; (3) in some instances the ideas and terminology in the fragment do not only closely resemble passages from *Ad Graecos* but also from the *Ad Ablabium*; (4) throughout his text he also mentions differences between the authentic Eustathiana and the fragments.

In the face of this evidence Declerck holds Lorenz' analysis for inconclusive and instead, rather surprisingly, proposes the opposite solution: it was not Gregory who had used the Eustathian fragments, but a later, anonymous author used fragments from Gregory's *Ad Graecos* and published them under Eustathius' name. This then would have ensured their inclusion in the *Contra Damianum* through which they were preserved until today. This is an ingenuous solution which does justice to the evidence but remains a hypothesis in the end.

Johannes Zachhuber follows Rudolf Lorenz in accepting the authenticity of the fragments, but correctly underlines that when it comes to determining the interdependence between these fragments and *Ad Graecos* the question of authorship is only of secondary importance. He is particularly struck by the undeniable parallelisms between the fragments and *Ad Graecos* and the explanation it calls for as to why Gregory composed *Ad Graecos* in this odd way? Why did the bishop of Nyssa compose a writing that at least in some sections is not much more than a paraphrase of a treatise that was composed in the Antiochene Eustathian community half a century before? Should one want to connect *Ad Graecos* with the synod of Antioch, then the question becomes even more difficult: why would a bishop whose star is rising do such a thing? Even when we admit that the importance late antique authors attached to originality was radically different from ours and that a similar kind of composition by Gregory may be preserved as *De instituto Christiano*, it remains a penetrating question.

⁴⁸ On p. ccxciii Declerck writes: "A notre avis, Lorenz a mal défini, mal agencé et mal interprété les accords entre les deux textes."

Zachhuber divides *Ad Graecos* in three sections which each exhibit a different content and style. In section I (till *Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 23,3 Müller]), Gregory is formulating his own position on the subject at hand. It is by no means a coincidence that this section contains by far the most borrowings from the Eustathian fragments for they seem to have a well-defined function. On the one hand, Gregory does not seem to agree with their content, but on the other hand they are not simply being quoted to be rejected afterwards. It seems as if Gregory thinks they are all in all correct but in need of some correction on a few particular points. Gregory then deliberately would have given this first part of the treatise a strong "Eustathian" character by inserting these quotations. In doing so he created a middle ground, a common basis from which to work further.

Section II (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 23,4–28,8 Müller]) contains, as we have already seen, three questions that were raised against his exposition (all of them clearly indicated by introductory statements). Zachhuber thinks that these are corrections and improvements of the essentially Eustathian or Old-Nicene position formulated in section I. The parallels this section contains with the Eustathian fragment should, according to Zachhuber, be explained in dependence on common or similar sources.

Section III (*Ad Graecos* [GNO III/1, 28,9–29,3 Müller]), finally, is a concluding part that begins with a quotation of a counterargument that has every characteristic of a quotation.⁴⁹

In the opinion of Johannes Zachhuber, *Ad Graecos* is very much an imperfect writing, a writing that didn't receive a final review. As such it resembles the compromise text Gregory composed for use within the dialogue with the Marcellians. The merit of Zachhuber's contribution is twofold: on the one hand he offers a dynamic and coherent reading of the text, on the other he makes it plausible that a writing that originated within the context of theological dialogue and exchange, inevitably bears the marks of this, including inconsistencies on the level of argumentation and terminology.

My conclusion of this review of Hübner's hypothesis and the subsequent scholarship on this issue would be the following: Gregory's involvement in the dialogue with the Marcellian community seems

⁴⁹ Zachhuber: "Gregor von Nyssa und das Schisma von Antiochien," (see note 25), 487.

well-attested enough and when following Zachhubers' explanation of the genesis of *Ad Graecos* a convincing picture emerges. Yet, one should not forget that Declerck's observations with regard to Hübner's third argument and our own regarding the use of $\mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ calls for some prudence. It seems wise not to follow all too uncritically the emerging communis opinio regarding this issue and not to forget that the link between *Ad Graecos* and Antioch 379 remains hypothetical and that alternative explanations could be thought of.

6. General conclusions

In the painstakingly detailed *Bibliographie zu Gregor von Nyssa*⁵⁰ the entry on *Ad Graecos* did not contain too many references to modern secondary literature. This will surely be different in the new edition. The past two decades witnessed a considerable increase in the accessibility of the work through translations with introductions and commentary in notes. Some more work with regard to the text itself and its transmission remains to be done. Progress was made with regard to our knowledge of the philosophical background of the writing, its contents and its links with Gregory's other writings (most notably *Ad Ablabium*, *Ad Eustathium* and "Basil's" *Epistula* 38). Attempts to determine the context of the work tested scholarly ingenuity to its limits although considerable progress has been made in this regard too, it has, in my opinion, not yet led to a completely satisfactory solution. Together with the contributions to these proceedings, there is a solid basis to pursue further work on this fascinating treatise.

⁵⁰ Margarethe Altenburger and Friedhelm Mann: *Bibliographie zu Gregor von Nyssa: Editionen, Übersetzungen, Literatur* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).