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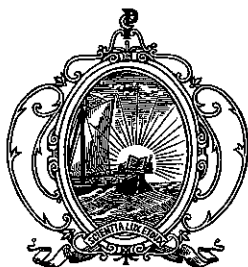
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Clement, Origen, Athanasius
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Is Gregory of Nazianzus the Author of an Unedited Text on the Plagues of Egypt?

Guillaume BADA, Lyon

At the end of 1995, Jean Bernardi and André Tuilier asked me to help them in their great project of a new critical edition of the *Poems* of Gregory of Nazianzus for the Collection des Universités de France¹. Recently, while I was working on a description of every manuscript's content, I got stuck in identifying one piece of verse I found in the *Londiniensis add.* 32643. This is the text I would like to lay out for you here, before I discuss the problem of its authenticity.

1. Presentation of the Text

a) *Presentation of the Manuscript*

The manuscript² is a small vellum codex; in its present shape, it comprises 195 folios and measures 135x110mm. It is mostly made of trinions, with occasional quaternions and quinions. The last quires from folio 168 were added later, since the lections from the Gospels they contain show a writing that can be dated to the fourteenth century, whereas the first part of the codex is written in a small, brown elegant writing of the early twelfth century. Uncials (like A, E, H, K, N) are mixed with minuscules, square breathings are noted as well as round ones, and every accent is indicated; abbreviations are not infrequent.

The manuscript contains a selection of short texts, like quotations from John of Damascus (f. 1) and the Council of Nicaea (f. 26v), an anonymous presentation of the prophets (f. 31v) and of the odes of the Old Testament

¹ The first volume, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Œuvres poétiques, tome I, 1ère partie, Poèmes personnels, II, 1, 1-11*, was published in 2004 in the Collection des Universités de France, Série grecque 433 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004). A. Tuilier and I prepared the critical text and J. Bernardi translated it with a full introduction.

² See the short description of it in the *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years MDCCCLXXXII-MDCCCLXXXVII* (London, 1889), p. 169; see also M. Richard, *Inventaire des manuscrits grecs du British Museum*, Publications de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes 3 (Paris, 1952), p. 55.

(f. 44), a so-called dialogue between Basil and Gregory the Theologian (f. 46), a letter (*ep.* 80, f. 49v) and several poems of Gregory (entitled Γρηγορίου τοῦ θεολόγου πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτὴν ψυχὴν ἡμιάμβια, f. 51) – among them the text I am discussing – and then various texts from Anastasius of Sinai (f. 69), John Chrysostom (f. 87), Hesychius of Jerusalem (f. 105), Christophoros of Alexandria (f. 118v), and fragments from the Gospels (f. 185v).

Our text is written in one column on f. 53rv. The ruling type is Leroy 20A1. The letters mostly hang under the horizontal ruling lines; each one of the ten lines of text starts with a number, from A to I, placed on the left margin line and followed by the initial of every line a little bit to the left of the text ruling line. The end of each stich is marked by a double dot followed by a dash.

The disposition in stichs and the presence of the text among Gregory's verse seem to give a clue. But it is too early to say anything.

b) Text and translation

Now here is the text itself. The only critical note to mention is that the article τῆ in line 7 is written *supra lineam* by the same hand.

Αἱ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις ὑπὸ θεοῦ μάστιγες διὰ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπενεχθεῖσαι εἰσι αὗται·
 Α Τοῦ ὕδαρ τοῦ ποταμοῦ εἰς αἷμα μετεβλήθη·
 Β Ὀλεθρίους βατράχους ἀνέδωκεν ἡ γῆ·
 Γ Οἱ σκνίπες τὸν ἀέρα καὶ τὴν γῆν ἐκάλυψαν·
 Δ Ἡ κυνάμια ἐπῆλθεν ἰοβόλος·
 Ε Τοῖς κτήνεσι θάνατος ἐφόρμησε·
 ς Φλυκτίδες τοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνεφύησαν σώμασιν·
 Ζ Ἐβρεξε χαλάζα, καὶ πῦρ φλογίζον ἐν τῇ χαλάζῃ·
 Η Ἄκρις καὶ βροῦχος ἅπαν χλωρὸν καὶ ξύλον κάρπιμον ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ κατήδετο· |^{53v}
 Θ Σκότος ψηλαφητὸν πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐκάλυπεν Αἰγύπτου·
 Ι Πᾶν πρωτότοκον ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπου ἕως κτήνους ὠλοθρεύθη τῶν Αἰγυπτίων.

Here is our translation:

The plagues inflicted by God upon the Egyptians are the following:
 the water of the river was turned into blood;
 the earth sent up deadly frogs;
 the gnats covered the air and the earth;
 the venomous dog-fly came up;
 death attacked the livestock;
 boils grew on the bodies of men;
 hail fell and fire burning in the hail;
 locust and larva devoured every plant and fruit-bearing tree in Egypt;
 a darkness that can be felt covered the whole land of Egypt;
 every firstborn, from man to livestock, perished among the Egyptians.

2. Discussion about the authenticity

a) External evidence

In the manuscript the text is not explicitly attributed to any author. The location of the text among Gregory's poems cannot at any rate be conclusive, for two fragments from other authors have been inserted among them as well, the first placed immediately after our text on f. 53v and allegedly taken from Basil and Gregory of Nyssa (though it cannot literally be found in any of the known works of either of the two brothers)³, the second taken from Basil's *In sanctam Christi generationem*⁴ (PG 31, 1460C-1461A), on f. 62v-63r.

The actual sequence of f. 51-68v, then, is the following (numbers follow Migne's order):

Π.1.88 – text on the plagues of Egypt – Βασιλείου καὶ Γρηγορίου Νύσσης [*sic*]· πῶς ἐπιγινώσκει ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα – Π.1.78 – Π.1.26 – Π.1.80 – Π.1.64 – I.2.11 – Π.1.86 – Π.1.77a – I.2.35 – I.2.37 – *epitaphium* 2 – Π.1.45 (vv. 1-31) – I.1.15 (Ἡ τοῦ Μουσέως δεκάλογος) – I.2.33 – Basil's *In sanctam Christi generationem* – I.1.16 (Εἰς τὰ θαύματα Ἡλίου τοῦ προφήτου καὶ Ἑλισαίου) – Π.1.14 – *epitaphia* 119, 22, 23, and 24 – Π.1.91 – Π.1.90 – *epitaphia* 120 and 121 – Π.1.46

This selection of Gregory's poems diverges from any other in Gregory's manuscripts; it does not seem to follow any specific order nor any precise aim, except that of being instructive; death is the major topic, together with asceticism; from that perspective, the selected epitaphia are among the best.

More generally, as one can see, the codex seems simply to be an anthology meant for teaching and spiritual reading, picking up passages from different authors without any visible link between them. Under those circumstances, the text on the plagues of Egypt might well have been written by a writer other than Gregory.

Besides, the *Londiniensis* is the only extant manuscript of the text; since it is by far neither the oldest nor the most complete manuscript among those of Gregory's poems, it becomes clear that, in terms of external evidence, the text cannot be attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus: *testis unus, testis nullus*, as the saying goes.

³ Βασιλείου καὶ Γρηγορίου Νύσσης· πῶς ἐπιγινώσκει ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα: - Ὅσπερ σφραγὶς ἐν κηρῷ· διαμένει γὰρ τῷ μνημονικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα τοῦ σώματος· καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀλλόγοις τοῦτο ἴδοις· ὁ γὰρ νεογνὸς ἀρνὸς πολλὰς παρατρέχει πηγὰς πρὸς τὴν μητρῶαν θήλην· τρέχει μὴτε τῷ ὁμοχρῶν ὁμόφρονι δελεαζόμενος.

⁴ Title: Τοῦ ἁγίου Βασιλείου ἐκ τοῦ εἰς τὰ γενέθλια λόγου. *Incipit*: Τίνα τρόπον, φησὶν, ἐν σαρκὶ ἡ θεότης; *desinit*: οὐ τῆ θεότητι τῆς οικείας μετέδωκεν ἀσθενείας.

b) *Internal evidence*

Some internal evidence might mitigate this judgement. As a matter of fact, there are many similarities with Gregory's poem on the Plagues of Egypt (I.1.14, in PG 37, 475-476). It should be noted here that there are more than a few doublets (of sentences or verses) in Gregory's works. Now here is Gregory's text (words similar to the *Londiniensis* text are in italics):

Μάστιγας Αιγύπτιοιο κακόφρονος αἰὲν ἀρίθμει,
 Ὡς κεν ὑποτρομέης κάρτεϊ τῷ μεγάλῳ.
 Αἷματι μὲν πρῶτιστον ὕδωρ ἐρυθθαίνετο γαίης,
 Δεύτερον αὖ βατράχους ἔβρασεν οὐλομένους.
 Τὸ τρίτον αὖ, σκνίπεσσι *ἀήρ καὶ γαῖα* καλύφθη.
 Καὶ κυνόμυια φάνη τέτρατον ἐξαπίνης.
 Πέμπτον, τετραπόδεσσι ἐπέχραε λυγρὸς ὄλεθρος.
 Φλυκτίδες *ἀνθρώπων σώμασιν*, ἕκτον ἄχος.
 Ἔβδομον, ὅσε *χάλαζα* μέση πυρὸς, ὄμβρος ἄμικτος.
 Ὅγδοον, ἐξ ἀκρίδος ὄλετο *χλωρὸν ἅπαν*.
 Εἵνατον, Αἰγύπτιοιο πέδον κατὰ νῆξ ἐκάλυψε
 Πρωτοτόκων δὲ μόρος ἡ δεκάτη βάσανος.

The two texts have sixteen words in common. But this might not be relevant, for if you look at the biblical text of Exodus 7:17 to 11:5, you will find the actual origin of the text's vocabulary: τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ and μεταβαλεῖ εἰς αἷμα occur in 7:17; βατράχους and ἐκάλυψεν τὴν γῆν in 8:2; σκνίφες in 8:12 (σκνίπες is an older form); ἡ κυνόμυια in 8:25 (κυνάμυια again is an older form); τῶν κτηνῶν in 9:6; φλυκτίδες and ἀνθρώποις in 9:9; χάλαζα, ἔβρεξεν, and πῦρ φλογίζον ἐν τῇ χαλάζῃ in 9:23-24; ἀκρίς, χλωρὸν and πάντα τὸν καρπὸν τῶν ξύλων in 10:14-15; σκότος ἐπὶ γῆν Αἰγύπτου ψηλαφητόν in 10:21; πᾶν πρωτότοκον and ἀπὸ ... ἕως in 11:5. A proof that the author of the text, or at least the copyist, had an eye on Exodus is that he added *supra lineam* the article τῇ I mentioned above in ἐν τῇ χαλάζῃ to imitate Ex 9:24.

Furthermore, some words and phrases that are not familiar to Gregory seem to be inspired by other biblical passages: ἰοβόλος from Wi 16:10, ἀνεφύησαν from 1 Rg 5:6 (about rats bringing death), βροῦχος from Ps 105:34 or Jl 2:25, ξύλον κάρπιμον from Gn 1:11, πᾶν χλωρὸν from Gn 2:5 (see also Deut 29:22; Is 27:11; Rev 9:4); and δλοθρεύω is a verb used particularly in the bible (see Ex 12:23 for example).

However, three phrases that can be read in our text as well as in Gregory's have no equivalent in any other text, even as variants in biblical manuscripts: I have underlined, then, the mention of 'air and earth' for the third plague, the 'bodies of men' for the sixth, and *ἅπαν χλωρὸν* for the eighth (the form *ἅπαν* instead of *πᾶν* here not being negligible).

As a consequence, our text must have been directly influenced by Gregory's poem. The manuscript's actual content provides evidence of that, for in the series of Gregory's poems you can find two pieces of verse following poem

I.1.14 in the Maurists' order – namely, I.1.15 (on Moses' Decalogue) and 16 (on Elijah's miracles); number 15 actually follows number 14 in the manuscript tradition.

Our text might have been written in the margin of Gregory's poem and then selected by the author of the *Londiniensis* anthology, who obviously had a large library at his disposal, comprising a larger selection of Gregory's verse than the *Londiniensis* shows. It could even be suggested that the text was composed by the author of two other texts in the selection that seem to be similar in their didactic presentation – the one on the prophets (f. 31v) and the one on the odes of the Old Testament (f. 44). That author could even be the one who produced these miscellanea; in that case he must have lived after Christophoros of Alexandria (patriarch from 817 to 848) and after the alleged sub-archetype of the ζ family in Gregory's manuscript tradition, which the *Londiniensis* belongs to – that is to say, not before the tenth century.

In the end, our text cannot really be compared to Gregory's elegiac distichs. For it simply is not a poem: it obeys no prosodic system, not even by counting accents or syllables. One might recognize a grammatical chiasm (line 1/2) and a hyperbaton (line 6), or perceive words sounding like locusts (line 8) and long vowels imitating the widespreading shadow (line 9), but that does not make a ten-line text a true poem.

On the contrary, there are many clues showing that the text is nothing but mere prose. The title is not a formal one, as one would expect for a poem: it consists of a sentence, and, in spite of announcing a literary piece, it simply refers to the plagues themselves. The author avoids poetical forms (compare Αἰγύπτου and Αἰγύπτιοι, σκνῖπες and σκνίπεσσιν, ἐκάλυσαν and καλύφθη), even though the text provides rare forms such as κατήδετο (for κατεδήδετο?) and ὠλοθρεύθη that are not witnessed anywhere else.

c) Negative evidence given by other texts

Last, but not least, I have been fortunate to find three other texts on the plagues of Egypt in various manuscripts. I was unable to read them all, but the available information on them tends to show that they have no link with Gregory's poem or with the *Londiniensis* text. Moreover, the manuscripts do not contain any of Gregory of Nazianzus' works.

The first is in Athens, National Library 2429, of the fourteenth century, f. 71v. I only know its title (Ποῖαι εἰσὶν αἱ πληγαί, ἄσπερ ἐπήγαγεν τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ Ἑβραίων) and *incipit* (Δέκα πληγὰς ὁ Θεὸς τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις) from the catalogue⁵.

⁵ L. Politis, *Κατάλογος χειρογράφων τῆς Ἑθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἀρ. 1857-2500* (Athens, 1991), p. 428.

The second is from Saint Stephen's monastery in the Meteora (*Hagiou Stephanou* 22), of the sixteenth century, f. 277r. It seems to differ widely from the *Londiniensis* text⁶. It is entitled Τὸ κατ' εἶδος τῆς δωδεκαπλήγου τῆς ἐν τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ. The first, second, and twelfth lines, numbered in the left margin, are the following⁷:

α ἡ ῥάβδος τοῦ Μουσέως ἐγένετο δράκων ῥιφεις ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ φαραῶ
 β τὰ ὕδατα μεταστραφέντα εἰς αἷμα
 ιβ ἀπόλοντο ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι πάντες.

The third text is *Marcianus gr. app.* VII 18, of the sixteenth century, f. 227v, which I saw on microfilm at the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes in Paris. Entitled Εἰς τὰς δέκα πληγὰς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, it reads as follows (with numbers in the left margin corresponding to each plague):

Αἰγυπτιακὰς εἰ μαθεῖν πληγὰς θέλεις,
 α μεταβολὴν ὕδατος εἰς αἷμα μάθε·
 β γ πληθὸς βατράχων καὶ σκνιπῶν αὔθις βίαν·
 δ φορᾶν χαλάζης καὶ πυρὸς δεινὸν σέλας·
 ε ς ἀκρίδα συχνόν, ψηλαφητὸν τε σκότος·
 ζ τὰ σαρκὸς ἔλκη φλυκτίδων ἄνθη ξένα·
 η θ τὴν κυνόμυϊαν τὴν φθορὰν τῶν ἀλόγων·
 ι γόνων τε πρώτων ἐξαπίναιον μόνον.

And there is a fourth in Japan. I thank Professor Neil McLynn for letting me know of its existence just after the presentation of this paper; he then examined on the manuscript and checked that it did actually differ from the *Londiniensis* text. I quote his words: 'It is a very loose paraphrase, somewhat similar to your text; moreover, it forms part of a small group of such variations on Gregorian themes.' Interesting as it is, this should be the subject of another study.

Though the information is not exhaustive, it is likely that there are no exact coincidences between these texts. Incomplete and negative as it is, the comparison between them only makes more striking the similarity of the three phrases I noted in Gregory's poem and in the *Londiniensis*.

Finally, this leads us to a double conclusion. On the one hand, the fine ten-line text in *Londiniensis add.* 32643 might have been a school exercise; at least, it belongs to a didactic and mnemonic genre. From that point of view, the plagues of Egypt seem to have raised a peculiar need for a clear numbering throughout the centuries. On the other hand, the *Londiniensis* text was very

⁶ Cf. D.Z. Sophianos, *Les manuscrits des Météores*, vol. III, *Les manuscrits du monastère de Saint-Etienne (Hagios Stephanos)*, (Athens, 1986), p. 62, n° 94.

⁷ The text is followed by an interesting note on the number of plagues (10 or 12): Τινὲς δὲ δεκάπληγον ταῦτα λέγουσιν ὑπερεξεροῦντες τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τὴν τε πρώτην, τῆς περι τῆς ῥάβδου φημί, καὶ τὴν τελευταίαν τὴν περι τοῦ καταποντισμοῦ.

probably inspired by one of Gregory's poems. In as much as Gregory's poem was obviously intended for instruction, it testifies to the Nazianzen's didactic influence in Byzantine times.