



THE ASPECT OF THE BODY IN THE WRITING "ON THE SOUL AND THE RESURRECTION" BY GREGORY OF NYSSA**

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Abstract:

The dialogue entitled *On the Soul and the Resurrection* can be considered as the most important one by Gregory of Nyssa. This work, a dialogue between Gregory himself and his sister Macrina, was modeled on Plato's *Phaedo* and shows quite clearly the debt our author owes to Plato for his literary form, besides the borrowing of ideas. This paper will examine the connection of the body and the soul. The soul is totally unlike the body in essence, still dwells in it and vivifies it while the body is alive. It coalesces with the union of the bodily elements. But when the body is dissolved in death and its elements return to their own, the soul does not perish with it. Due to its intellectual and dimensionless nature, the soul does not dissolve but survives and remains attached to all the elements which were once crafted into its body. Being dimensionless, the soul is neither contracted nor dispersed as are dimensional things. Hence nothing prevents the soul from remaining present with all the natural elements of its former body, regardless of how they are dispersed. So even in death, the soul survives in union with the body's elements. We will examine how Gregory has been influenced by Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas about the body and the soul and what are his views about the Body, the soul and Desire and their connections to gender, sex, and sexuality.

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INTRODUCTION: GREGORY'S OF NYSSA SORROW IN FRONT OF DEATH

Church Fathers do not deny that physical death is a tragic situation, a sobering and scary reality for the relatives of a dead man mainly, but also dead themselves. Death causes sorrow, grief and breaks the heart of people even of the faithful ones. Although Christians have hope and the belief in the resurrection and eternal life,¹ death remains a situation that someone can face up with great difficulty (Jn 11,33).

The Christian teaching accepts that death is a crucial point for man. It is a fact that defines, restricts and exhausts humanity. It is the end of a vital process of any human being. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. Christ with His Passions, the Crucifixion, and His Resurrection abolished ontologically death and enabled man to overtake it. So for a Christian who is a member of the Church and is united with Christ through the sacraments, death is not the end. This belief has shaped Christian thinking ever after the resurrection of Jesus. Although this hope of resurrection and eternal life near God, Christ himself cried and felt sadness about Lazarus' death and at the same time He gave them hope of life with the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11,1-44).

Despite Christ's victory against the death, Gregory of Nyssa sought consolation for the death of his brother Basil the Great in 379. Two decades before, in 356 he had mourned the death of his other brother, ascetic Naucratus, who had died. After these deaths, the embodied passion of grief was extraordinarily powerful for the Holy Father. The recent loss of his elder brother, Basil, brought more sadness to Gregory's heart.² He writes: "ὁ πολὺς ἐν ἀγίοις Βασίλειος. My heart was very sorrowful for grief at so great a loss."³ Of course, Gregory grieves for the loss of his brother and he realizes that soon his sister, Macrina, is going to die, so the sorrow and the grief will become much more in his heart than it is. Gregory doesn't have any reconciliation with the phenomenon of death; the power of sadness has been often overwhelming in the face of death, at least the death of his favourite brothers and sister. He feels despair at the fact of their death.

Macrina, who has deepened in Christian theology, as a teacher who continuously teaches her student, uses her brother's visit to explain to him the Christian theology on the soul and the resurrection. Based on her situation as providing the impetus for death, the soul and the resurrection, she analyses what happens at the moment of death, explains how the soul can recognize the body on the day of resurrection. Moreover, she answers the questions of her brother concerning the origin of the soul, the purification after death, and what kind will be the nature of the resurrection body.⁴

1 In the creed of Nicaea – Constantinople, it is said: "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come".

2 "His treatise from this same period, *On the Soul and Resurrection*, in which an account of Macrina's death also appears, is also a considered philosophical essay dedicated to the memory of his elder brother", McGuckin 2018, 17. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 11, 66.

3 Ibid. PG 46, 12A.

4 Ibid. PG 46, 12A.



GREGORY'S WORK "ON THE SOUL AND THE RESURRECTION"

This dialogue, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, between Macrina and Gregory was modelled on Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo*.⁵ The topic of this Platonic work is set on Socrates' last day and defence of the existence of an immaterial soul. The emphasis here is on the fact that people need to believe in the existence of a soul in order to explain the claim that they possess free will, "ὅπως ἐπήρθη τῷ λόγῳ περὶ τε τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῖν φιλοσοφοῦσα καὶ τῆς διὰ σαρκὸς ζωῆς τὴν αἰτίαν διεξιούσα, καὶ ὅτου χάριν ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὅπως θνητὸς καὶ ὄθεν ὁ θάνατος καὶ τίς ἢ ἀπὸ τούτου πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν πάλιν ἀνάλυσις".⁶

Anna Silvas supports that Gregory was influenced by Plato's work.⁷ Plato wrote the *Apologia* of Socrates which has many details for Socrates' life and then he wrote the dialogue, *Phaedo*, in order the philosophical thoughts about the death and the immortality of the soul to be presented by Socrates. Gregory follows Plato, he writes first the life of Macrina which includes information about his sister and his teacher at the same time. Then he writes the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. In this dialogue there is the Christian teaching for the death, the resurrection of the body and the soul sometimes is presented with the cloak of Platonism and Neo-Platonism.⁸

Thus, in Gregory's of Nyssa this treatise, there is the combination of Christian teaching and Greek philosophy in a very creative way without betraying the author's Christian identity.⁹ So Gregory reveals himself not only as a Platonist but also as a biblical Christian.¹⁰ His philosophy is a form of Christian Platonism. For him, Greek philosophy is not a dead academic discipline separated from a Christian life; it has a strong relationship with it and reveals in obscurity the truth of Christianity.¹¹

In this dialogue, "Macrina is presented as the Christian Socrates, equal to, or even surpassing, that profound intelligence."¹² Macrina has a very detailed knowledge of pagan philosophy, especially Stoic and Epicurean thought. It is said that only some of the ideas about the soul and the resurrection belong to her. Many of them are Gregory's. The latter used his sister as a mouthpiece to espouse his views; an attempt similar to Plato, who consistently maintains Socrates to reveal of his ideas.¹³ The common question that exists in the *Phaedo* and this Gregory's dialogue, is what we should prefer: a life of spirit or that of a body?

Besides the opinion that for this Christian dialogue the base is *Phaedo*, there is another thought that this work has many similarities with Plato's *Symposium*. By this view, Macrina has the role of Diotima, who teaches Socrates about Eros (furious love) in Plato's *Symposium*.¹⁴ Macrina as an emphatically Christian philosopher confirms all her conclusions in light of Scripture, but her proofs for the soul's immortality are rational and not grounded directly in revelation.¹⁵

5 Moutsoulas 1997, 222. Boersma 2014, 49. Vasilescu 2018, 2. Wessel 2010, 373-380.

6 Kagan, 2007, 176. Gregory of Nyssa *The life of Saint Macrina*, PG 46, 977C.

7 Silvas 2008, 155.

8 *Ibid.*, 156.

9 Daniélou 1953², 8.

10 Ojell 2007, 25.

11 Fitzgerald 2005

12 Corrigan 1995, 11.

13 Baghos 2012, 127.

14 Roth 1999, 59-75. Boersma 2013, 110.

15 Adamson, 2020, 38.



Many questions are born in our thoughts about the context of *On the Soul and Resurrection*. Does Gregory believe whatever he supports about the death? Does he employ his sadness for the death of the members of his family to speak about the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of all people according to Christian theology? Is this dialogue an attempt by Gregory to reconcile his Hellenism and his Christian theology? Does Gregory present this way the inaccuracies of Greek philosophers about death? Do the ideas attributed to Macrina belong to the author himself?

We cannot assume with certainty why Gregory plays "the devil's advocate" in this discussion, but, undoubtedly, the ideas attributed to Macrina are those of the Church Father himself. He accepts that the Holy Bible is utterly authoritative in Christian teaching. But as a man who lost his brother and soon he would lose his sister, he wonders about the words and the teaching of the Bible. He tries to find a certain assurance that comes from reasoning out this issue of death thoroughly.¹⁶ In this way, Gregory shows to Christians and non-Christians of all centuries that the search for the truth about God and the path that man has to follow is in the Bible and its study. This reveals the truth of Jeremiah's words:

"Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls".¹⁷

Gregory feels stunning from the death of his beloved brother Basil and the coming death of his sister and he expresses questions about the death as any man does. In this way, the sorrow appears to have a catalytic role to the Church Father's thought. It helps him to develop a deeper, richer and without doubt philosophical and theological view about death in Christian teaching¹⁸ which is characterized as a form of Christian Platonism. Of course, here, we will agree with Zachhuber that we should reject the opinion that this work is essentially Platonic. Zachhuber insists that there are many Platonic elements within Gregory's doctrine about the soul, based on Christian teaching. He rejects the pre-existence of the soul and accepts the resurrection of the dead and confirms the soul as a power of the body of course in a different way from Plato's acceptance.¹⁹ Gregory Nyssa presents all this argument for the soul, the body and the resurrection of the latter are very complex syntactical structures and highly supple vocabulary. He uses Pauline elements to his treatise covered with a Platonic cloak.

Moreover, Ilaria Ramelli supports that this treatise of Gregory is based on Tertullian's works, "On the Soul" and "On the Resurrection" Gregory reedits both of them and creates a composition of these two treatises more philosophically, as a remake of Plato's *Phaedo* on the immortality of the soul. Gregory manages to make a creative and fruitful dialogue for the definition of soul and relation between resurrection and restoration, the teaching of the gospel, of Origen and the Church Fathers, and finally of Plato, Plotinus and Proclus.²⁰

16 Ibid., 27-29.

17 Jerem. 6,16.

18 Abbott 2015, 542.

19 Zachhuber 2014, 234-5. Idem 2018, 149. Ramelli 2018, 111.

20 Ramelli 2018, 111-2.



THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN BODY AND SOUL: THE BOND BETWEEN THEM IN GREGORY'S TEXT

In this treatise, Gregory avoids repeating his anthropological teaching as it is presented mainly in his "On the making of a man".²¹ In this work that we examine, it is underlined that human nature is a microcosm for the universe as a whole. Man is a "little world", a *microcosm* in which the macrocosm, or universe, is reflected. Human nature is composed of three elements, material, physical, and spiritual. This idea of human nature as a microcosm exists from the time of Democritus, Plato, Aristotle and in Stoics. It referred to Socrates and was employed with a great analysis by Neo-Platonists, although Therefore, there has to be an added component to human existence, and that component is the soul.²² Also, the idea of human nature as a microcosm and the analogy with the macrocosm of the universe was developed in patristic teaching to analyze the dual composition of human nature as soul-spirit and body. Church Fathers as Basilus of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa and later Maximus the Confessor used this idea to show that the wisdom of God was present in human beings. The latter has to bring the body and the soul, the sensible and intelligible world into a connection, into a real relationship with God.

In this way, Gregory argues about the format of human nature and especially for the body. He avoids agreeing with Origen's view about the preexistence of the soul and the loss of his spirit after the human's death. Also, Gregory expresses a different opinion of Plato as far as the body and the soul. For Cappadocian Father, the body is not something bad,²³ it is not the jail of the soul as it is Plato, and for this reason, the soul doesn't need any purification and to be released from the body.²⁴

Gregory employs the word flesh – σάρξ more than the word body because flesh involves the whole human nature, body and soul, as Paul, does (Rom. 8,5; Gal. 5,17).²⁵ It has a great importance that Gregory underlines the relationship, the strong bond between body and mind which reveals the spiritual-material nature of man. According to Ladner: "These are the threefold nature of the nature of the soul in its relationship to matter and to the spirit and the temporal and spatial unity of the human soul, in which mind and body exist as unified, notwithstanding the great distance which separates them in the hierarchy of values".²⁶

The characterization of human nature is the continuous development and progress, the *epektasis*, towards God.²⁷ The term *epektasis* based on the Philippians' epistle 3:3: "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philip. 3,3).

21 Gregory of Nyssa, *On the making of man*, PG 44, 124D. Gregory presents his anthropological teaching in many of his works, especially in *On the making of man*, *On the Soul and the Resurrection Apologeticus on Hexaemeron*, and *Catechetical Speech and On infant's Early Deaths*.

22 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 20A-24A.

23 Plato, *Phaedo* 80e.

24 *Phaedo* 81bc.

25 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 85D-88C.

26 Ladner, 1958, 70.

27 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 88A-89A. Vasilescu 2020, 7.



As for the soul for Gregory, it has a threefold classification of souls. Here, the influence of Aristotle on this Christian father's thought is profane. However, Aristotle makes more classifications for the soul than Gregory does.²⁸

There is a sharp and clear distinction between the soul and the body; "The soul is an essence created, and living, and intellectual, transmitting from itself to an organized and sentient body the power of living and of grasping objects of sense, as long as a natural constitution capable of this holds together".²⁹ After death, the soul continues to exist. The natural body is dissolved after the death which is converted into a spiritual body of a just Christian after the resurrection of all people (1 Cor. 15,44).³⁰ The "dead skins" are understood as the "form of our irrational nature which we have put on through our association with passion".³¹ This is the ground for the arising of this question: "if the body as we know it was created by God in foresight of the fall, the final reformation of man's image – likeness to God should include the resurrection of the body" and how this kind of body will be reunited with its appertaining soul?"³²

Gregory tries to answer this question based on the Aristotle and Platonic theory about *eidōs*, on the form. There is a difference in the conception of the idea for something from the real essence of it. For him, the reunion of the soul of the body can be explained with the analogy of an art painter and his painting. The painter knows how he will mix the colours for the best result, by the same way the Creator knows how the souls will be united with the spiritual body again.³³ If the artist creates a painting, then he knows the quantity of a colour that is used is. If he dissolves the painting to its colours, he can create the same painting using the same analogies for each colour. He knows the actual dye of each colour very well. The same happens with the soul and the body after its separation into pieces after the man's death, "So, we assert, does the soul know the natural peculiarities of those atoms whose concourse makes the frame of the body in which it has itself grown, even after the scattering of those atoms. However far from each other their natural propensity and their inherent forces of repulsion urge them and debar each from mingling with its opposite, none the less will the soul be near each by its power of recognition, and will persistently cling to the familiar atoms, until their concourse after this division again takes place in the same way, for that fresh formation of the dissolved body which will properly be, and be called resurrection".³⁴

28 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 60AB. Aristotle *De anima*, II,3, 414a. Menn 2002, 83-139. Sorabji, 1974, 63-89.

29 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 29B.

30 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 20B, 156A.

31 *Ibid.* PG 46, 61D- 62A.

32 *Ibid.* PG 46, 73B. Ladner 1958, 86.

33 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 73AB, transl. by Moore and Wilson: "in the art of painting not only to mix opposite colors, as painters are always doing, to represent a particular tint, but also to separate again this mixture and to restore to each of the colors its natural dye. If then white, or black, or red, or golden color, or any other color that has been mixed to form the given tint, were to be again separated from that union with another and remain by itself, we suppose that our artist will none the less remember the actual nature of that color, and that in no case will he show forgetfulness, either of the red, for instance, or the black, if after having become quite a different color by composition with each other they each return to their natural dye ...Let the soul stand for this Art of the painter ; and let the natural atoms stand for the colors of his art; and let the mixture of that tint compounded of the various dyes, and the return of these to their native state (which we have been allowed to assume), represent respectively the concourse, and the separation of the atoms."

34 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 73B.



The Church Father explains that the soul doesn't unite with one part of the body but with the whole body.³⁵ This bond between the soul and the body remains when the body dies. Somehow, the soul will be always connected with the body's disintegrated members. On this point, Gregory contrasts the simplicity of divine nature with the complexity of human nature. He interprets this contrast underlining that God is the only primitive source for creation. He is beyond place and time. The world and the human being as products of God are though, quite radically different from the divine nature. They are not coeternal with God. They were created in a specific place and time.³⁶

The soul is without material substance and incorporated. It acts and moves according to its nature. The soul is what gives life to the body.³⁷ The soul has a peculiar and distinct nature from corporeal coarseness.³⁸ It is named the cause of life (τό ζωτικόν αἴτιον, ζωοποιόν αἴτιον)³⁹; and the body has termed a compound (σύγκριμα) or concourse of elements (συνδρομή τῶν στοιχείων).⁴⁰

Macrina defines the soul in negative terms⁴¹ which reminds the apophaticism that Gregory uses in his theology.⁴² Although the human soul is thought non-material, imperishable, eternal and incorporated, it is quite different from the Deity. The basic difference is that God always exists beyond time, but the soul is a creature of God in the borders of time. It is simple and without any composition.⁴³ It cannot be dissolved by the death of man, because it is immortal.⁴⁴ So it continues to live after the body's death and decay. In comparison, of the human soul with God, nature, it is said that it is alike God (but not God). It doesn't remain without any change as God's nature is unchangeable. It is important to be clarified that this great difference between the "immortal" human soul which has a beginning but no end with the immortal nature of God, who has no beginning and no end. Gregory argues that neither does the soul exist before the body, nor the body apart from the soul, but there is only a single origin for both of them.⁴⁵

The soul of each man is created with his body from the first moment of man's conception in his mother womb.⁴⁶ Generally, Gregory criticizes with a strict way the idea of the soul's existence before embodiment. He doesn't embrace the teaching of Plato and Origen about the preexistence of souls.⁴⁷ But of course, as we underlined above, he doesn't accept its reincarnation, too.⁴⁸ Not only are the soul and the body created together, but they develop in parallel.⁴⁹

35 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 44B-45B, 72CD.

36 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 121B, 121CD, 124A. Zachhuber 2014,147.

37 Cavarnos 1955, 135. *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 28C: "αὐτήν καθ' ἑαυτήν ἐν ἐξηλλαγμένη τε καὶ ἰδιαζούσῃ φύσει, παρά τὴν σωματικὴν παχυμέρειαν."

38 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 16B, 17B.

39 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 24B.

40 *On the making of man*, PG 44, 237A, 237D: "Ἡ δε νεκρότης κατὰ στέρησιν ψυχῆς γίνεται". *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 29AB: "Ἡ γάρ ὀργανικὴ τοῦ σώματος αὐτῆ διασκευή... ἀκίνητος μένει καὶ ἀνερέργητος, τῆς ψυχικῆς δυνάμεως ἐν αὐτῇ μη οὔσης."

41 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 40C: "It is not anything which is comprehend by perception, neither color, nor shape, nor hardness, nor weight, nor size nor tridimensionality, nor location in a place, nor any at all of the properties which we understand in reference to matter".

42 Steenbuch 2017, 152. Noble 2002, 324, 334, 335.

43 *On the making of man*, PG 46, 232D-234A.

44 Ibid.

45 *On the making of man*, PG 44, 236B.

46 *On the making of man*, PG 44, 236CD.

47 Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles*, PG 11, 111-414.

48 *On the making of man*, PG 44, 237CD.

49 Ibid.



Here, it should be clarified when Gregory says: "the soul must be healed and purified, and if this does not take place during its life on earth it must be accomplished in future lives", he doesn't accept any reincarnation of the soul. He means that purification and salvation come through God's love and philanthropy.

What do God's philanthropy and mercy have to do with the purification of a dead's soul? If a person had entered the stage of repentance before his death and he dies, is there post-mortem repentance? Can the cure of the soul with its purification continue in a dead "in perpetuity", since virtue does not have an end? This, to be sure, does not refer to those who of their own choice remained completely unrepentant and had not entered the stage of repentance. We can explain the aspect of the "future lives" about the soul which Gregory says with the view that someone who dies in the stage of repentance is thought of as a friend of God. So the soul of the friend of God can ask and have forgiveness after death. They will be enlightened under the light of the divine glory, of the sun of righteousness like the wax under the rays of the material sun.⁵⁰ This happens because the love of God doesn't obey any law and if a dead soul tries to find God to be united with Him, the mercy of God can give forgiveness and purify this soul of the dead man in a future life by changing his state for the hell, away from the light of God, to God's Kingdom, near Him.⁵¹

In Orthodox Church, this is the goal of the memorial services. There, the priest asks the mercy of God to forgive the dead and during the holy Liturgy, the priest prays for the salvation of the dead, the alive and for "all who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection to life eternal".⁵² This reveals the ontological relation which exists among dead and living Christians. Based on this relation the dead man asks mercy from God through the prayers of his alive brothers who live in Christ,⁵³ In the funeral service in the Orthodox Church, it is said: "Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your great mercy; we pray You to listen and have mercy. Lord have mercy. Again we pray for the repose of the soul of the servant of God (Name) departed this life; and for the forgiveness of him (her) every transgression, voluntary and involuntary. Lord have mercy. Let the Lord God establish him (her) soul where the just repose; the mercies of God, the Kingdom of the Heavens, and remission of him (her) sins: let us ask of Christ our Immortal King and our God. Lord have mercy. Let us pray to the Lord. ... O God of all spirits and flesh, Who has trodden down death, destroying the power of the devil, bestowing life on Your world. to the soul of Your servant (Name) departed this life, do You, O Lord, give rest in a place of light, in a place of green pasture, in a place of refreshment, from where pain and sorrow and mourning are fled away. Every sin by him (her) committed in thought, word, or deed, do You as our good and loving God forgive, seeing that no man shall live and sin not, for You alone are without sin: Your righteousness and Your law is truth".⁵⁴

50 Matsoukas 1996, 545, 546. John Damascene, *Against Manicheans*, PG 94, 1573AB, 1545D-1548A. Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Theology and the Economy of the Son of God*, PG 90, 1088AB.

51 Matsoukas 1996, 547.

52 The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

53 Funeral Service's text.

54 Ibid.



As far as the human body after the resurrection will be neither a body of an infant, of a young nor an adult, it will be in "light fibres". The form that the resurrection body will be the body, that God gave to men before their original sin. Macrina says to Gregory that "resurrection is the reconstitution of our nature in its original form."⁵⁵ So the resurrection body will be spiritual.

Generally, her opinion of *apokatastasis* based on numerous passages from both the Old⁵⁶ and the New Testament,⁵⁷ which are used to show that the creation and the human beings with their soul were created perfect and they will become perfect again. To sum up, for Gregory of Nyssa and Macrina the resurrection is the reconstitution of human nature in his original situation,⁵⁸ in the state of angels that he was after his creation⁵⁹ His words reflect the passage from Paul's epistle 1 Cor. 15:23, 28, 36-7.⁶⁰ And his teaching about the reconstitution of manhood is based on Origen's eschatological thought.⁶¹ This Pauline passage is the basis for Origen's model for the universal reconciliation, *apokatastasis*, and "the death will be vanquished as the final enemy of God and all things will be made subject to Jesus Christ."⁶² This passage about the passage from Ephesians 4:13 expresses the strong opinion that the *apokatastasis* will be completed when everything is brought together in unity of the faith and recognition of the Son of God: "until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ".

As a conclusion, Gregory uses the word *apokatastasis* in the fourth chapter of his dialogue and ostensibly implies universal salvation. Through Macrina's answer for the place of Hades, there is meaning of the *apokatastasis*: "What then, I said, If the opponent should cite the apostle who says that all rational creation at the restoration (πρός ἀποκαταστάσει) of the universe looks toward the Governor of the whole? Among the rational creation, he mentions certain subterranean beings, saying in his Epistle to the Philippians that to Him every knee shall bend of heavenly, earthly, and subterranean creatures."⁶³

55 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 156D-157A.

56 Gen. 1,26; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 52A. Dan. 9,23; 10,11; 10,19; Num. 25,11; Prov. 9,10; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 57A. Ex. 14,7; 15,4; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 67CD. Jer. 18:3-6; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 77AB. Gen. 2,16-17; Gen. 12,1-4; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 81D, 84C. Sap. 3:6; Prov. 17:3; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 97D, 100A.

57 2 Cor. 7, 10; Math. 10, 28; Luc. 21, 9; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 57A. Math. 13, 24-30; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 64CD. Phil. 2, 10. *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 69CD. Rom. 11,33; Phil. 2,11 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 72AB. Rom. 9,11; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 77AB. Luk. 16,19-31; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 80C. Hebr. 2,8-9; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 84B. Luk. 16,27-31; 2,29; 1 Cor. 15,50; Math. 16,17; Apoc. 2,11; 20,6; 21,8; 2 Tim. 4,7; Jn. 1,13; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 85CD, 88AB. 1 Cor. 13,8 9-10; 13,13 13-14; Hebr. 11:1; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 96BC. 1 Cor. 15, 28; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 104A.

58 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 148A: "The resurrection is the restoration of our [sc. human] nature to its original state."

59 *Ecclesiastes*, PG 44, 633C.

60 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 152C.

61 *Ibid.*

62 1 Cor. 15:23, 26-28. Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 1.120, PG 14, 49C.

63 Phil.2:10. *On the Soul and Resurrection*, 4, PG 46, 69C. Roth, 62-3.



PLATONIC AND NEOPLATONIC INFLUENCE OF GREGORY'S WORK "ON THE SOUL AND THE RESURRECTION"

Besides Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa is thought of as the most Platonic and neo-Platonic Christian theologian.⁶⁴ He had studied many Platonic works and he was influenced mainly by *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus*.⁶⁵ At the same time, the Cappadocian Father had embraced many of the works and the writers of Middle Platonism as Posidonius, Iamblichus, Stoics, Plotinus and generally many other Hellenistic philosophical texts.⁶⁶

Gregory's treatise *On the Soul and the Resurrection* analyses the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, based on *Phaedo* and *Symposium* of Plato, as it is referred to above, but also Platonic elements from *Phaedrus* can be found. Of course, the Platonic philosophical tradition is clothed with the Christian garment of biblical revelation and Christian dogmatic anthropology in Gregory's dialogue with his sister Macrina⁶⁷

Despite the phenomenological similarities of this text of Gregory with the text *Phaedo* of Plato, there are important differences in their teaching about the soul. Plato underlines that the human body is only an outer garment, a cloak which, during our life, prevents the soul from moving freely and from living in conformity to its proper eternal essence. "It imposes upon the soul a law which is not appropriate to it. The soul, confined within the body, belongs to the eternal world. As long as we live, our soul finds itself in a prison, that is, in a body essentially alien to it. Death is the great liberator."⁶⁸

Gregory defines the soul through Macrina's words: "The soul is an essence, which has a beginning; it is a living and intellectual essence which by itself gives to the organic and sensory body the power of life and reception of sense impressions as long as the nature which can receive these maintains its existence".⁶⁹

The Platonic soul consists of three parts, a. the *logos* - λογιστικόν, logical, mind, nous, or reason, b. the *thymos*- θυμοειδές, or *thumetikon*, emotion, spiritedness, or masculine and c. the *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, desire.⁷⁰ On the other hand, Gregory like Plato⁷¹ considers the soul indivisible and uncompounded, and accepts the classical tripartite division of the soul, as far as the way of its existence and not its nature.⁷² So, Gregory follows the teaching of Christian anthropology and accepts that the soul is undivided. On this point, Cavarnos explains that "Though Gregory at times may speak of parts of the soul in discussing its activity in connection with the body, he hastens on appropriate occasions to state that one should not be led to believe that in man the soul is divided into parts or that man consists of a compound of many souls. 'The real and perfect soul (τελεία ψυχή) is one in nature, the spiritual and immaterial, which mingles with the material nature through the senses".⁷³

64 McGuckin 2018, 10. Neoplatonists believed human perfection and happiness were attainable in this world, without awaiting an afterlife. Perfection and happiness—seen as synonymous—could be achieved through philosophical contemplation. All people return to the One, from which they emanated.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Barnes 2019.

68 Cullmann 1965, 13.

69 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 29BC, trans. Roth, 37-8.

70 Jones 2009, 33-5.

71 Plato, *Phaedo* 78c, 80b; Idem, *Timaeus* 41cd.

72 Cullmann 1965, 13-4. *On Making of Man*, PG 44, 144D, 361CD, 353C. *On the Soul and resurrection*, PG 46, 57C.

73 Cavarnos, 136. *On Making of Man*, PG 44, 176B.



According to the previous analysis of Cavarnos for Gregory of Nyssa, the tripartite soul is the mind (νοῦς), an intellectual nature,⁷⁴ the irascible part (θυμός) and desire (ἐπιθυμία, ἔρωσ). The mind (νοῦς) has a catalytic role to define the human soul and distinguish it from other logic and without logic beings. The mind is incorporeal like God, but it is created and God isn't. The irascible (θυμός) and the desiring (ἐπιθυμία, ἔρωσ) are parts of man's animal nature and are not intrinsically part of the image of God, the mind (νοῦς), "It is the use by deliberate choice that a man makes of the impulses found in the irascible part (θυμός) and the desiring part (ἐπιθυμία) that constitutes virtue or vice in man."⁷⁵

Gregory in *On the Soul and Resurrection*, shows more interest in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body than the issue of the soul's embodiment, the *ensomatosis* as Origen says.⁷⁶ For Gregory of Nyssa, the body is not a problem, a jail for the soul as Plato⁷⁷ and Plotinus⁷⁸ accept. Despite the influence of Platonism and Neoplatonism of Gregory of Nyssa, the Church Father remains loyal to the dogmatic theology of the Church. He opposes the theory of reincarnation, according to which the soul after the death of man does not return to the imaginary place, but enters into a new rational being or irrational being's body repeatedly. So the soul leads to the disappearance.⁷⁹

A very profane Platonic and Neo-Platonic element in this text is the teaching of Gregory for the soul that is immaterial and antiasthmatic. The soul doesn't have its existence in the body as it is in a place. Here there is a parallelism with *Enneads* of Plotinus:⁸⁰ "We must say in general that neither any of the parts of the soul nor the whole soul is in the body as in a place. In place is something encompassing, encompassing body, and where each divided part is, there it is so that the whole is not [as a whole] in any place, but the soul is not a body and is no more encompassed than encompassing. It is certainly not in the body as in a receptacle either.' Thus, 'Plato rightly does not put the soul in the body when he is speaking of the universe, but the body in the soul.'"⁸¹

Finally, Gregory of Nyssa is "applying the principle, also well attested in 'pagan' Platonism, of the τέλος as similar to the ἀρχή, which Origen had already applied to apokatastasis.⁸² For Gregory, the τέλος is not only similar to, but also surpasses, the ἀρχή, since at that point soul, or better rational creatures, will be in the Good (i.e. God) not as a datum, but by voluntary choice,⁸³ and will infinitely grow in knowledge and love."⁸⁴

The basic element and factor for Christian apokatastasis is the Incarnation, the Passions, the Crucifixion, and the resurrection of Christ,⁸⁵ as is referred to in the previous part of this paper.

74 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 176BD.

75 Theophanes 2014, 47. Gregory of Nyssa, *The life of Moses*, 2, 96, PG 44, 397C.

76 Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* 6.85, PG 14, 226D, 228A.

77 Plato, *Phaedo* 62b.

78 Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.7.8.

79 *On Making of Man*, PG 44, 232D, 233A. Peroli, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Neoplatonic Doctrine of the Soul", p. 135.

80 Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.3.20.10-16.

81 *Ibid.*

82 For Origen's influence on Gregory see Ramelli 2019, 312-39.

83 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 81BC, 56AB, 101C-104A. 1 Cor. 15:28.

84 Ramelli, "Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul", 130.

85 *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46, 83BC.



CONCLUSIONS

The dialogue *On soul and resurrection* is regarded as the second part in a unified project of reflection on the theme of anthropology which begins with *On the making of Man*, *Catechetical Speech*, and finishes with *On infant's Early Deaths*.⁸⁶ The dialogue *On soul and resurrection* is thought that it has the most Platonic elements of any other work of Gregory. It has many similarities with Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*⁸⁷ because both these works of Plato and Gregory deal with the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Plato accepts materialism and reincarnation, something that Gregory rejects. Like another Socrates, the dying Macrina discusses and solves her brother's questions about the status and the nature of the soul. Many scholars support that Macrina expresses the opinions of Gregory. She is the mouth of Gregory. Some others support that Macrina was the Christian philosopher and had deepened more in the Christian theology than Gregory had done. Generally, "Plato's influence on Gregory is that it is built upon finding similarities between doctrines in a Platonic dialogue and specific doctrines given by Gregory in, usually, *On the Resurrection and the Soul*, the *Canonical Epistle*, and *On the Making of Man*".⁸⁸

In this dialogue, Gregory of Nyssa explains that the whole God-created person has two parts, his soul and his body. The latter has a crucial and catalytic role for human salvation and the *apokatastasis* of human nature to his original situation⁸⁹ and the universal salvation.⁹⁰ As Christian, he is concerned not only with death as an end but as a new beginning for a new life. Human nature will be enhanced after the resurrection, the body will be connected again with his immortal soul and because the goodness of God's grace, will leave near God for eternity. Gregory accepts as the other Cappadocian Fathers and Greek Philosophers the idea that every human person constitutes a microcosm that represents the same order and harmony as the macrocosm, the universe.

Gregory in this specific work analyses the reflections on the soul as intelligible essence and its nature opposed to the body⁹¹ from which one must separate, as much as possible,⁹² to contemplate the Ideas has many references to Plato's *Phaedo*. Gregory refuses the idea of the preexistence of the souls⁹³ and the metempsychosis, reincarnation of them.⁹⁴

Plato analyses the three parts of the soul⁹⁵ and Gregory uses this three part's division and refers to "rational", "irascible" and "concupiscent" parts of the soul.⁹⁶ Sometimes, the Cappadocian Father speaks about the nous and the soul. The latter gives life to the body and their nous can be found.⁹⁷

86 Maturi 2010, 27.

87 "Moreover, not only was Plato's *Phaedo* the model for Gregory's *De Anima et Resurrectione*, but also his *Symposium*, especially with respect to Macrina's character, which is shaped not only by Plato's Socrates in the *Phaedo*, but also on Diotima in the *Symposium*," Ramelli 2018, 115.

88 Barnes, "The 'Platonic' Character of Gregory of Nyssa's Psychology: The Old Canon", 2019, 7.

89 *On the Soul and Resurrection*, 6, PG 46, 89BC. 93AB, Roth, 77, 78, 79. Maspero 2010, 55-56.

90 Ludlow 2000, 3-4.

91 *On the Soul and Resurrection*, PG 46, 36A.

92 *Ibid.*, PG 46, 88A, 89C.

93 *Ibid.* PG 46, 113D-117C, 125C-128A.

94 *Ibid.* PG 46, 103B-121A.

95 Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c.

96 *On the Soul and Resurrection*, PG 46, 48CD.

97 *Ibid.*, PG 46, 29B.



To sum up, Gregory in his *On soul and resurrection* makes profane his knowledge of Plato's and Plotinus' work. He manages to employ some of their ideas under the Christian garment of theology. For this reason, he is called a "Christian Platonist". On the other hand, we can observe that Origen had influenced Gregory for the subject of the *apokatastases* because Gregory refuse the eternal situation of punishment for the sinful souls and he accepts the purification of the souls for the *apokatastases* of them to take place.⁹⁸

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⁹⁸ Ibid., PG 46, 89BC, 97C-100C, 157B-D, 160C.



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Η ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΣΩΜΑ ΣΤΟ ΕΡΓΟ ΠΕΡΙ ΨΥΧΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ ΝΥΣΣΗΣ

Summary:

Ο διάλογος με τίτλο «Περί Ψυχής και Ανάστασης» μπορεί να θεωρηθεί ως ο σημαντικότερος από τους διαλόγους του Γρηγορίου Νύσσης. Είναι ένας διάλογος μεταξύ του ίδιου και της αδερφής του Μακρίνας. Είχε ως πρότυπο το διάλογο του Φαίδωνα, έργο του Πλάτωνα. Η «μίμηση» του Πλάτωνα ως προς τη δημιουργία του διαλόγου, φανερώνει το χρέος που ο χριστιανός συγγραφέας έχει στον Πλάτωνα για τη λογοτεχνική μορφή του έργου του, εκτός από τον δανεισμό των ιδεών. Εδώ εξετάζεται η σύνδεση σώματος και ψυχής. Η ψυχή είναι εντελώς διαφορετική από την ουσία του σώματος. Η ψυχή εξακολουθεί να κατοικεί στο σώμα όσο είναι ζωντανό. Συνενώνεται με τα σωματικά στοιχεία της ανθρώπινης φύσης. Όταν το σώμα πεθαίνει, τα στοιχεία του διαλύονται στο χύμα, η ψυχή, όμως, δεν χάνεται μαζί του. Λόγω της πνευματικής και αδιάστατης φύσης της, δεν διαλύεται, αλλά επιβιώνει και παραμένει προσκολλημένη σε όλα τα στοιχεία που κάποτε είχαν δημιουργηθεί στο σώμα της. Όντας αδιάστατη, η ψυχή δεν συστέλλεται ούτε διασκορπίζεται όπως είναι τα υλικά πράγματα που έχουν διαστάσεις. Ως εκ τούτου, τίποτα δεν εμποδίζει την ψυχή να παραμείνει παρούσα με όλα τα φυσικά στοιχεία του προηγούμενου σώματός της, ανεξάρτητα από το πώς είναι διασκορπισμένα. Έτσι και στον θάνατο η ψυχή επιβιώνει σε ένωση με τα στοιχεία του σώματος. Ο Γρηγόριος έχει επηρεαστεί από τις πλατωνικές και νεοπλατωνικές ιδέες για το σώμα και την ψυχή και ποιες είναι οι απόψεις του για το σώμα, την ψυχή και την επιθυμία του αλλά και τις σχέσεις τους με το άλλο φύλο και τη σεξουαλικότητά του.

Άλλωστε, ο διάλογος «Περί Ψυχής και αναστάσεως» θεωρείται ως το δεύτερο μέρος σε ένα ενιαίο έργο προβληματισμού για το θέμα της ανθρωπολογίας που ξεκινά με το Περί κατασκευής του ανθρώπου, τον Κατηχητικό Λόγο και τελειώνει με το «περί των νηπίων προ ώρας αφαρπαζομένων». Ο εν λόγω διάλογος θεωρείται ότι έχει τα περισσότερα πλατωνικά στοιχεία από κάθε άλλο έργο του Γρηγορίου. Έχει πολλές ομοιότητες με τον διάλογο του Πλάτωνα Φαίδωνα, γιατί και τα δύο αυτά έργα του Πλάτωνα και του Γρηγορίου πραγματεύονται την αθανασία της ψυχής και την ανάσταση του σώματος. Ο Πλάτων αποδέχεται τον υλισμό και τη μετενσάρκωση, κάτι που ο Γρηγόριος απορρίπτει. Σαν ένας άλλος Σωκράτης, η ετοιμοθάνατη Μακρίνα συζητά και λύνει τις απορίες του αδελφού της σχετικά με την κατάσταση και τη φύση της ψυχής. Πολλοί μελετητές υποστηρίζουν ότι η Μακρίνα εκφράζει τις απόψεις του Γρηγορίου. Είναι το στόμα του Γρηγορίου. Κάποιοι άλλοι υποστηρίζουν ότι η Μακρίνα ήταν πραγματικά ο χριστιανός φιλόσοφος και είχε εμβαθύνει περισσότερο στη χριστιανική θεολογία από ό,τι ο Γρηγόριος.

Σε αυτόν τον διάλογο ο Γρηγόριος Νύσσης εξηγεί ότι ολόκληρος ο θεόπλαστος άνθρωπος έχει δύο μέρη, την ψυχή και το σώμα του. Ο τελευταίος έχει καθοριστικό και καταλυτικό ρόλο για την ανθρώπινη σωτηρία και για την αποκατάσταση της ανθρώπινης φύσης στην αρχική της κατάσταση και την επίτευξη της καθολικής σωτηρίας. Ως Χριστιανός, ενδιαφέρεται όχι μόνο για τον θάνατο ως τέλος, αλλά ως νέα αρχή για μια νέα ζωή. Η ανθρώπινη φύση θα ενισχυθεί μετά την ανάσταση, το σώμα θα συνδεθεί ξανά με την θάνατη ψυχή του και επειδή η καλοσύνη της χάρις του Θεού, θα φύγει κοντά στον Θεό για την αιωνιότητα. Ο Γρηγόριος αποδέχεται ως άλλοι Καππαδόκες Πατέρες και Έλληνες Φιλόσοφοι την ιδέα ότι κάθε άνθρωπος αποτελεί έναν μικρόκοσμο που αντιπροσωπεύει την ίδια τάξη και αρμονία με τον μακρόκοσμο, το σύμπαν.



Ο Γρηγόριος στο συγκεκριμένο έργο αναλύει σχετικά με τους στοχασμούς για την ψυχή ως νοητή ουσία και τη φύση της αντίθετη με το σώμα από το οποίο πρέπει να αποχωριστεί κανείς, όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερο, για να συλλογιστεί τις Ιδέες, έχει πολλές αναφορές στον Φαίδωνα του Πλάτωνα. Ο Γρηγόριος αρνείται την ιδέα της προϋπαρξης των ψυχών και της μετεμψύχωσης, μετενσάρκωσής τους. Επιπροσθέτως, ο Πλάτωνας αναλύει τα τρία μέρη της ψυχής και ο Γρηγόριος χρησιμοποιεί αυτή τη διαίρεση των τριών μερών και αναφέρεται σε «λογικά», «οργισμένα» και «συνηθισμένα» μέρη της ψυχής. Μερικές φορές ο Καππαδόκης Πατήρ μιλάει για το νοῦ και την ψυχή. Το τελευταίο δίνει ζωή στο σώμα και εκεί μπορεί να βρεθεί νους. Επιπλέον, ο Γρηγόριος σημειώνει ότι η ψυχή αποτελείται από τρία μέρη κι αυτό δείχνει τη δημιουργία της κατ' εικόνα Θεού εφόσον με την τριμερή της διάκριση υποδεικνύει τις τρεις υποστάσεις της Αγίας Τριάδας⁹⁹. Αυτή η διάκριση της ψυχής σε τρία μέρη δεν αφορά στη νοερή της φύση αλλά στον τρόπο της ύπαρξής της.¹⁰⁰

Συνοψίζοντας, ο Γρηγόριος στο «Περί ψυχής και ανάστασης», κάνει βεβηλωμένη τη γνώση του για το έργο του Πλάτωνα και του Πλωτίνου. Καταφέρνει να χρησιμοποιήσει κάποιες από τις ιδέες τους κάτω από το χριστιανικό ένδυμα της θεολογίας. Για το λόγο αυτό αποκαλείται «Χριστιανός Πλατωνιστής». Από την άλλη, μπορούμε να παρατηρήσουμε ότι ο Ωριγένης είχε επηρεάσει τον Γρηγόριο για το θέμα των αποκαταστάσεων, επειδή ο Γρηγόριος αρνείται την αιώνια κατάσταση τιμωρίας για τις αμαρτωλές ψυχές και δέχεται τον εξαγνισμό των ψυχών για να γίνουν οι αποκαταστάσεις τους.

Keywords:

Σώμα,
Ψυχή,
Ανάσταση,
Πλατωνικές και
νεοπλατωνικές ιδέες.

99 Mantzarides 1979, 103.

100 Ibid.