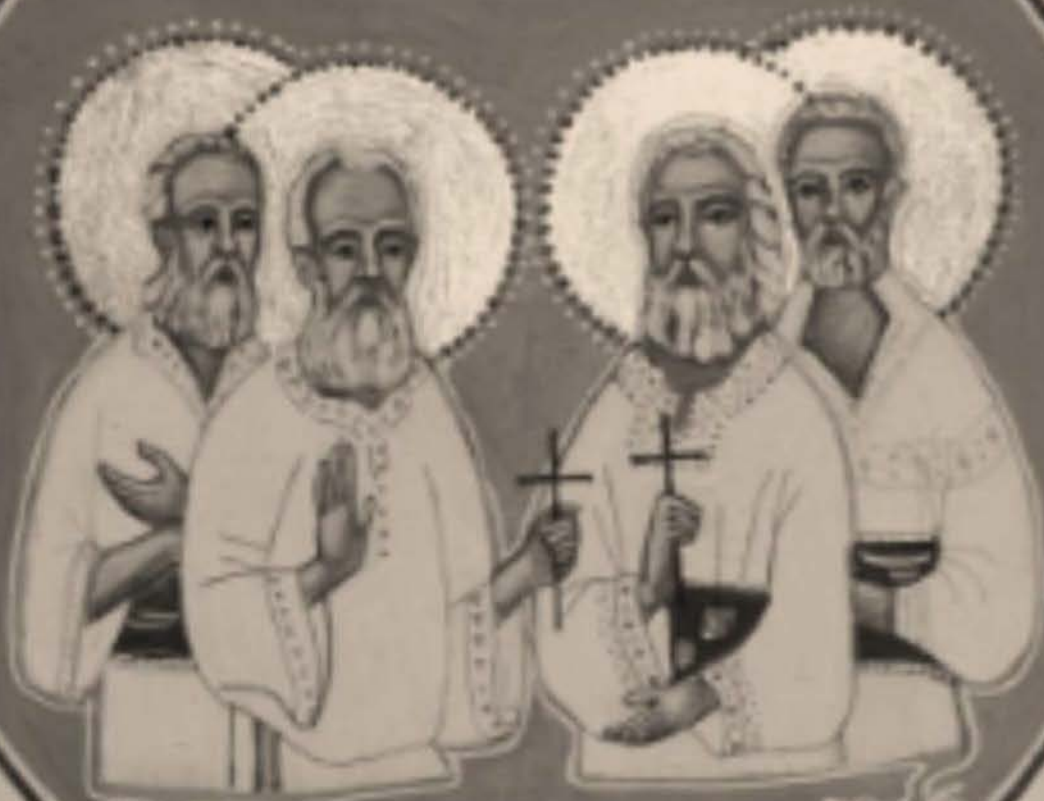


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-Review of History and Culture-

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NĂSĂUDENI



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The concept of the human being in God's design in accordance with views of Gregory of Nyssa

Planul lui Dumnezeu cu privire la existența umană în viziunea Sfântului Grigore de Nyssa

Petro Darmoris

Abstract. Fathers of the Early Church had successfully combined, correlated and compared Christianity with various different philosophical concepts, which were promoting the theocentric cosmology. Among these figures should be singled out Gregory of Nyssa¹, which called by some of modern scholars as the founder of Christian anthropology. The purpose of this work is to explore the theological and philosophical vision of the person and his/her place in this world.

Taking into consideration that the sources are quite remoteness, in this investigation will be used the historical method, which allows to keep trace of the events which took place in Cappadocia during the 4th century. At the same level as the latter, will be used methods of analysis, synthesis, and systematization.

Keywords: Gregory of Nyssa, Church Father, creation, evolution, sin, God's image and likeness, God's design.

Kingdom for a person and a person for Kingdom

According to the Christian view, creation [as act] is the basis of all God's salutary plans and at the same time, it is the beginning of the history of salvation. Thus, every act of the Creator of the universe, each of His actions concerning the creature of the world has a soteriological dimension and does not always lend itself to human comprehension. And already during the firsts centuries of Christianity the Act of creation was and stills nowadays as the mystery for a man.

For its existence, the world saw numerous philosophical systems, which have proposed many theories to dissect the secrets of

¹ Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – c. 395) was bishop of Nyssa from 372 to 376, and from 378 until his death.

its origin and existence. In particular, and in the context of the fourth century after Christ to mankind was offered plenty of theories, paradigms, each of which in its own way were describing this mysterious act.

Creation of the Kingdom

Among the variety of philosophical currents, each of whom certainly substantiated the right to exist of its theory of the beginning of visible world, Gregory of Nyssa was completely accepting the truth of the creation of the world out of nothing, as a creation may not be leakage of Divine essence². Every thing, as guesses Gregory, is a combination of different qualities (color, weight, etc.). When these qualities are combined then comes into being some kind of essence. Because these qualities belong to the mind, and therefore to God in his essence, so this immaterial essence produces some forces, a combination, which enables the beginning of a new essence³. This process occurs thanks to the divine art and power (*ἡ Θεία τέχνη καὶ δύναμις*)⁴.

It is important to note that Gregory, commenting on the verse Gen. 1:1, focuses on the stylistic differences of its translation. The Father of the Church is a proponent to use *ἐν κεφαλαίῳ* instead of *ἐν ἀρχῇ*, where first means "basis" and provides a certain dynamism in the act of creation, and the latter is "in the beginning", which refers to the instant specific action⁵. Professor Victor Nesmelov believes that in this case it is necessary to talk about two ways of the creation of the world: general and special. To the general corresponds the bringing into being the world's forces mentioned above, which by a combination of some of the other create others separate things⁶. Archpriest Vladimir Bashkirov sees here an

² Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, Санкт-Петербург, 2000, p. 336.

³ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Cap. 1.

⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Hexaemeron explication*, T 1, col. 77 D.

⁶ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 344.

evolutionary process in creation, which is due to the presence of the divine forces developing exactly as much time as it need to for its formation⁷.

Consequently, the act of creation belongs to God's will and is unconstrained concerning the Creator. It also certifies a fact of almightiness of God and an unlimitedness of His will⁸. Moreover by God's will was created the spiritual world, quite the opposite to material. The Greek equivalent *τό θεῖον βούλημα* equally with the meaning of *will*, also means *desire* or *design*, which indicates the identity of God's will and intention. In order not to break the unity of creation, a mediator was necessary, who would have had the nature of created world, but would be the closest to God. This intermediary is a person, human being – the crown of creation⁹.

Creation of king

For Gregory the sixth day was symbolic (as Moses lists days to prevent the interpretation of instant creation of things)¹⁰, when God had already prepared possession, the king had to enter there. But it is not supposed to be potentate without the subordinates¹¹. In this situation the person is not discarded at the end as unworthy to be the first creature, but becomes a guest and before arrival of this person it was necessary to clean the house, cover the table and prepare the rest room¹². We can conclude that in light of Gregory's vision, the person comes into this world not as a servant, not at the same level as the other creature, but immediately becomes the boss of these creations. In this sequence of creation we can view some sense, contradictory at first sight. Note that God did not create the human in the beginning of his act of creation to come to an agreement with person about other creature. So there may be

⁷ Башкиров В., *Проблема creatio и evolutio в космологии святителя Григория Нисского* // Труды Минской Духовной Академии № 3, Жировичи, 2004.

⁸ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, pp. 338-339.

⁹ Мартынов А., "Антропология св. Григория Нисского (Опыт исследования в области христианской философии IV века). Введение. Отдел I. Первобытное состояние человека" in *Прибавление к Творениям св. Отцов*, Санкт-Петербург, 1886, p. 64.

¹⁰ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 349.

¹¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

controversy about the endless love of God and the teachings of the Church about the free will of man.

The bishop of Nyssa makes impossible the existence of such differences directing the Council Persons (Holy Trinity). This Council took place on the eve of the creation of man about his image and future, what was not taking place in the creation of the sun or other unique things¹³. Thus, a perfect God before the creation of the person could not create something unworthy to it. And then, as the basis of all subsequent explanations, Gregory of Nyssa uses a phrase from Scripture: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth"¹⁴. So God has given man what he could not imagine being created. The best present could not be imagined.

a. Mind and soul

The purpose of the creation of man is to reconcile the spiritual and the physical in order to reconcile earthly existence with the divine¹⁵. Logically it follows that human nature is the unity of two separate elements – body and spirit, where the latter is the highest level of human nature¹⁶. Gregory of Nyssa says that pure spirit can not unite with brute matter, therefore, there must be another force, which is the lower than the spirit, but higher than the matter¹⁷. Such a force is the soul.

Because the soul and mind are connected to the human body, then it is essential to determine where they reside. The writings of St. Gregory show that his present was full of hypotheses for this problem. There were thoughts that the soul could reside in the heart,

¹³ *Ibid.*, Capt. 3.

¹⁴ Genesis 1, 26.

¹⁵ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 359.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

¹⁷ μέσως έχουσα κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν τῆς τε νοεράς καὶ τῆς ὑλιδεστέρας οὐσίας τοσοῦτω παχὺ μερεστέρα ταύτης, ὅσω καθαρωτέρα ἐκείνης. PG I: 145.

from where it conveniently involves the whole body¹⁸. The mind exists in the brain, as king, which guides and controls the senses. Thus, if someone damaged his or her cerebral cortex, or if someone's brain is affected by intoxication, then the mind stops working properly¹⁹. Gregory knew something about medicine, because he called other causes, violation of mental functions, denied any such theory, saying that immaterial essence does not fit in any frames²⁰. So, a mind is not “bound” to any part of the body, but with all it touches²¹. The soul is one, clever and nonmaterial, which connects with the body through the senses²². Being created in the image of God, the soul has divine nature, and so is uncreated and immortal²³.

Professor Martynov, exploring the work of Gregory of Nyssa “On the soul and resurrection”, says that the organic structure of the body, i.e. trichotomy, remains in the same form and as in the dead. But the body is not incapacitated and incapable, because the source of life is absent. Therefore, bodily senses by themselves are dead matter²⁴. Professor Martynov comes to the following conclusion: “Sensuous bodies serve [the soul] only as obedient instruments”²⁵.

Gregory of Nyssa strongly criticizes the two extremes in the understanding of the existence of the soul: before the creation of a body and after that. In this he departs from the Original and criticizes the preexistence of souls and also their relocation. It is only correct for him to profess that the doctrine is the only one reason for the existence of the soul and the body, with only one beginning. God creates wholeness, so it is impossible to oppose the soul with the body, and especially in time difference, a person cannot contradict oneself²⁶. What happens to the soul after the death of man in the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa, will be considered later.

¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, Capt. 14.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Скворцов Кирил, “Учение св. Григория Нисского о достоинстве природы человеческой”, in *Труды Киевской Духовной Академии*, Киев, 1865 р. 163.

²⁴ Мартынов А., “Антропология св. Григория Нисского (Опыт исследования в области христианской философии IV века). Введение. Отдел I. Первобытное состояние человека,” р. 79.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 29.

b. "In the image and likeness"²⁷

In God's design man was a likeness and a representation of God's royal power. Thus the Church says that human goodness and virtue, is evidence of the image of God: "Clean, impartiality, bliss, renunciation of all evil [...]. These are the colours that the Creator of His own image used when painting our existence". These attributes, without any objections, cannot be provided to the servant. According to Gregory, the concept of domination is mandatory for the image of God, to justify human superiority over subordinates is necessary in order to fulfill human needs²⁸. The concept of understanding animals as subjects servants may seem to postmodern man as nonsense, but the nun Nonna Harrison indicates that Gregory also described the rural economy of that time. At that time the farmer worked daily with cattle, taking care of it, because it allows him to continue with his life²⁹.

With no need to obtain his own vital benefits, a person is entirely in his structure of the body different from other creatures. Gregory says: "The human has straight stature and a direct face turned to heaven"³⁰. The king's posture emphasizes the individual. Thus, all differences in the structure of the body from other creatures, especially the possibility to stand on two legs and have free hands, characterize a person as a verbal being. Largely due to an expansive linguistic system, which is not accessible to the obtaining of food, but for its ready consumption, man is able to talk and with free hands is able wisely spread the word on paper³¹.

²⁷ Genesis 1:27.

²⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 7.

²⁹ Harrison Nonna Verna, "The human person as image and likeness of God" in *Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. by Mary B. Cunningham and E. Theokritof, 2009, p. 86.

³⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 8.

³¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 8.

Thus, human beings are smart. Gregory of Nyssa speaks about the mind as a gift³². But God does not *δωκεν* (given as a gift in hand or exchange) mind and wisdom, but *μετέδωκε*, which means “enrooted” in human nature³³. This emphasizes the similarity of the “image” to “authentic image” because the image of God is inseparable from God and to have it means to be in communion with God, to reflect Him³⁴.

As a result, there is antinomy of accordance corporal to incorporeal, temporal to eternal. To resolve this problem, Gregory uses the example of the history of Creation of the first people as a stumbling block in this aspect. Yes, creation of man and woman does not contradict the “authentic image” in which there is no distinction between the sexes. So one should say that the creation of human nature is to some extent a sort of dichotomy. It is a medium between the Divine incorporeal essence and dumb creatures³⁵. This explains the absence of sexual division in the Divine nature and its necessity in creation. In this aspect, Archpriest Skvortsov concludes that there are two states of the body. The first one is spiritual, and the second - mutilated by sin, separated by sex, thus man after sin cannot multiply like angels³⁶. Morvenna Ludlow, analyzing the same issues, likens the spiritual creation to the original spiritual state of man and the eternity of human nature³⁷.

The image of God allows both freedom and responsibility, because God is free. “God is like a mirror image of the heart of our existence to the extent that we can choose different directions [life roads]”³⁸. Adam and Eve made their choice and took responsibility for it. It should also be noted that the right to act freely is the privilege of a free man, more so for a king.

“As the image of God is rooted in this very nature, it is not due to a specific person, but all human nature [...] the likeness is not

³² *έδωκεν εκ φιλοτιμίας τη ανθρωπίνη φύσει*, Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 9.

³³ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 9.

³⁴ Верховской С., *Бог и человек*, Нью-Йорк, 1956, p. 175.

³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 16.

³⁶ Скворцов И., *Христианское употребление философии или философия Григория Нисского*, Киев, 1863, p. 153.

³⁷ Ludlow M., *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern*, Oxford, 2007, p. 167.

³⁸ Harrison Nonna Verna, “The human person as image and likeness of God,” p. 81.

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due to the nature, but every man personally, because it must be obtained³⁹". In his essay "On the Soul and Resurrection" Gregory of Nyssa says: "The likeness of God to our soul is as much possible as becoming similar to the highest essence⁴⁰". Assimilation to God is keeping virtues at the forefront of this subsection, and it is the purpose of life, while the image of God is the condition and the means to achieve this goal⁴¹.

This is the doctrine of Bishop Gregory of Nyssa on the original design of God concerning man. It is fair to say that man is the cause of Creation of the world by the boundless love of God. God gave man eternity, placed him in Paradise, where the master sat, but humans did not want to be there. What happened with the human being will be found in the following section.

The King in exile

In the eighth conversation on blissful happiness Gregory of Nyssa talks about the initial position of the person: "Humans had it all: immortality and a carefree life"⁴². Man enjoyed the contemplation of God. However, due to circumstances, our first parents could not keep for themselves this gift and were forced to leave the Garden of Eden. Gregory of Nyssa tries to find out what is so special about this occurrence and what man has to do now to understand and settle in the place which was originally designed for man. Therefore, following the footsteps of his reasoning.

Life in New Abode

Gregory of Nyssa maintains that the source of knowledge of heavenly life for is the Holy Scripture. It is an important passage from the Gospel of Luke: "Those who will be worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from the dead will not get married; and can

³⁹ Несмелов В., *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 387.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, PG III: 89.

⁴¹ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 388.

⁴² Gregory of Nyssa, PG I:1225.

no longer die, because they are similar to the angels, they are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection”⁴³. On this, the holy author concludes: “The gift of resurrection does not promise anything other than restoring the fallen to its original state”⁴⁴. So blissful eternity is the return to the original life and it means that it is in angelic paradise⁴⁵. But here there are some internal contradictions.

The Scriptures talk of the existence of trees in the Garden of Eden. But if there were trees, “life” and “knowledge of good and evil” and they had their fruit suitable for consumption, it testifies to the existence of sensory Paradise that Gregory denies⁴⁶. So here, as Professor Nyesmyelov accentuates, Gregory of Nyssa resorted to allegorical explanations⁴⁷. He says, “We should imagine a fruit worthy of being planted by God in Eden and no doubt the person consumed it. The same God’s garden should be understood as a luxury or pleasure (τρυφή)”⁴⁸. Thus, if understanding that Paradise is not a concrete reality in space, but as a blessed state, it is then right in the same way to understand the fruits of the trees in Paradise as did Gregory. In his opinion, says Professor Victor Nyesmyelov, the fruits are all good, the use of which was a separate feature of the original human existence⁴⁹.

But not all fruits are permitted for consumption. The Tree of Life is every tree whose fruits are allowed to eaten by God. And opposite him was the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, forbidden fruit which in its essence was mixed (συγμεχυμένον καί σύμμικτον καρπον), composed of opposite qualities⁵⁰. The name of the tree already contains in itself the contrast and promiscuity, and so - complexity. But Gregory says that true good is all that is simple in nature and has one image⁵¹. So there exists the “perception that from the experience of this fruit is the beginning of death and decay”⁵².

⁴³ Luk. 20, 53-56.

⁴⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 390.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 19.

⁴⁹ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 391.

⁵⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 19.

⁵¹ ἀπλοῦν καί μονοειδές ἐστὶ τῆ φύσει, Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Cap. 20.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Fair will be the question about the objective existence of such a tree in Paradise. Gregory of Nyssa here provides an answer through the dialectical art in work *In cantica cantic homilia*. In his opinion, "this tree did not exist and could not have"⁵³. He sees a contradiction in the biblical story of the two trees that are found in Paradise. Therefore, he claims at one point that there cannot be two trees, one of them is not in the centre of Eden, but then the scripture is wrong⁵⁴. Gregory, surprisingly, sees no contradiction: "The middle of God's planting is life and death, which never has its own place, no space and not rooted, but plants with the loss of life when living with the loss of communication with Supreme good"⁵⁵. Then the fruits of the tree of "knowledge of good and evil" are the illusory benefits, which the serpent decorated by beautiful color and sweet taste (*ὡς ἀν ὀφθείη τε ἡδέως*), to evoke the desire to eat them⁵⁶. The fruit of this tree is a loss of true good and evil is its replacement, says Nyesmelov. When this change took place, Paradise immediately disappeared⁵⁷. Moreover, Gregory says that no man was in Paradise but the Paradise was inside the man, because man discloses all good through the will of human nature, only man can give to himself this good when he wants, but not someone else⁵⁸.

It should be noted here something that will dot the i's and cross the t's in the issue of man's expulsion from paradise. A man was endowed with intellect and a free will, therefore he has a natural ability to discover the unknown⁵⁹. St. Gregory writes that "man could not be tempted by obvious evil"⁶⁰ and therefore did not know to expect a foe against him. And that curiosity was the reason for "tasting of the fruit". The Saintly author says that sin lies not in the searches for knowledge but in the voluntary and conscious

⁵³ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 392.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *In cantica cantic homilia XII*, t. 1, col. 1021 B.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 19.

⁵⁷ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 393.

⁵⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beatitudinibus. Oratio V*, t. 1, col. 1258 A.

⁵⁹ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 419.

⁶⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I: 200.

disobedience to God's will⁶¹. God obviously knew the intricacies of human nature and its craving for the unknown, so to prevent death for it He has established a commandment. All cognition is only in God and it deepens in the aspiration to Him and in the learning of the benefits granted by Him, it can serve as the foundation of God's guidance⁶². Thus, any knowledge outside of God does not exist. Tasting of the fruit was a rejection of God and therefore rejection of all cognition and the loss of life.

So humans, who had everything necessary for a happy and eternal life, was tempted to believe that the cognition of something was unknown for her. Since, it was impossible to stay in Eden, God could not transfigure a man into non-existence, because he had soul, which, according to the teachings of Cappadocians, is immortal. Thus began a new phase of life, the repentance and penance stage, which lasts to this day, which will be considered in the next section.

Life on the earth

Gregory argues that when a person rejects the divine blessings, their mind “stops displaying original beauty and their sinful actions takes place in its own flesh”⁶³. Thus, the human being subdues the spirit and “forcing it into not serving God, but sinful passions”⁶⁴. We can confidently make the general conclusion that man’s expulsion was the humiliation of God's image.

The Sainly Author in *De beautitudinimus* states that that which happened with the human body: “Which was created in the image of the heavenly became the earthly [...] while was stiling in paradisiacal pleasure, was evicted into a painful and long-suffering country”⁶⁵. Then there is another problem regarding the existence of man in heaven. Gregory of Nyssa does not deny the existence of human bodies from its creation, such as God created it. But at first this body was spiritual and pure because it did not incur any blemish⁶⁶, and than it became coarse, wearing rough leather robes of sin and in this

⁶¹ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 419.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 395.

⁶³ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I: 161.

⁶⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I: 253.

⁶⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, PG III: 1223

⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, PG III: 520.

condition could no longer be in Eden⁶⁷. The image and likeness of God in Paradise were ontologically inherent for man before the fall, because man was created in His likeness. But through the mediation of sin the likeness to God becomes blemished⁶⁸.

The image of God does not disappear and cannot disappear in person, but because of sin and physical passions its beauty hides⁶⁹. However, Gregory points out that the possibilities of the human mind do not reduce, so it can take control of all movements to the passions, and even convert them to the virtues of wisdom, love, sincerity etc.⁷⁰ The one who is successful in fighting with passions or temptations, "in whom the beauty is not dimmed, thus man confirms that he is a creation in the likeness of God"⁷¹.

Equally important will be mentioned the doctrine of Gregory about the increase of the birth of the souls. According to the thoughts of Gregory, the Creator immediately predicted the number of souls, which was reaching its fullness through the birth. The reproduction in Paradise had happened quite differently than on earth, but the Creator through His providence made the person such that he or she could reproduce in the manner of a dumb creature, so as not to decrease the number of souls⁷². This fact gives a hint to the future life in an authentic home of man, because the concept is about the numbers of human souls in the kingdom of God. The calculation of those souls does not stop on earth but is lengthening.

Therefore, God prepared in advance in mansions with selected servants and settled the idea of king. But it was not enough and because of disobedience man lost this kingdom and entered into the realm of slavery - on Earth. But the Good Lord could not allow the eternal suffering of the dearest creation, which is created in His own image. So when a person experienced the taste of the sinful fruit

⁶⁷ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, p. 601.

⁶⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I, 18.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Capt. 17.

and was crying for help, God succored and outlined the way back to the place of eternal joy in heaven⁷³.

The promise of a return

Gregory of Nyssa says: “Who provides the *beginning* of the movement, just as one certainly will not call into question the *end*; and who does not accept the end, exactly the one does not accept the beginning”⁷⁴. Therefore, continuing to review the dynamics of human life according to God's design for the person, we have to turn to its final stage - the resurrection and the life in heaven, from which everything started from. Gregory of Nyssa is particularly original in his vision of the resurrection, because he is a supporter of the doctrine of Origen's Apokatastasis. Also, the Church Father asserts an affiliation of soul to the body. However, all of these things should be given a considerable attention. This will be an objective point of this section. So first we will get acquainted with the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa about human death and then with his views about life after it.

Meaning of death in principle of Divine economy

A person deserved to die because of disobedience to the Creator rather than what was fairly a light punishment: the expulsion from Paradise. In this world he or she grows, develops, changes, and ultimately the ending of human life on earth is death. If we interpret this phenomenon from a spiritual point of view, death will serve as a necessary preparation to restore oneself to our original state⁷⁵. For example, death, in light of the vision of Gregory of Nyssa, is an indispensable stage to eternal bliss. God is not acting as a formidable and fair judge, but as a gracious Father. He created man in all their beauty, gave him reason and free will, appointed to the beautiful, but man rejected the gift in favor of evil, and assumed the defect of sin⁷⁶. After that the Creator did not take final leave of His creation that bears His image, but according to the teachings of St. Gregory, gave

⁷³ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, р. 427.

⁷⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *De officio hominis*, Сарт. 19.

⁷⁵ Мартынов А, “Есхатология св. Григория Нисского,” р. 94.

⁷⁶ Несмелов Викто, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, р. 588.

the opportunity to return to the consumption of all goods from the Tree of Life.

According to assertions of Cappadocians, after committing Original sin, God put into the human dead "leather vestments". With these vestments a person adopted a rough material life with all its manifestations: birth, growth, ageing and death⁷⁷. All of those factors are the vices of sin. But "the vice is not so much powerful to exceed a good strength"⁷⁸. Continuing this thought, Bishop of Nyssa speaks about the limitations of these vices, and about some of its limits out of which dominates good. When we arrive at the limits of vice, to "the land of sinful darkness", then "we begin again to live in the light", so it is "again Paradise, again the tree, which is the Tree of life"⁷⁹. For a person this way is only through the death as through the treatment and rejection of sin. "Therefore, our body, as analyses Viktor Skvortsov, has to be placed in the ground to be cleansed from vice and to return to the previous image by the intercession of the Resurrection"⁸⁰.

Gregory of Nyssa in *De opificio hominis* says about the "Tree of life" which will be in Paradise. However, the saint did not mention the existence of the "Tree of knowledge of good and evil". The modern reader can presume that the Church Father rejects the possibility of the existence of the Tree of death. The following assertion proves the truth of these hypotheses. First of all we turn to the Holy Scripture, as did Gregory, namely to the Gospel story about the rich man and Lazarus, which highlights the relationship between the inhabitants of Paradise and hell: "And besides, there is a great chasm separating us [between inhabitants of Paradise and those who are in hell]. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there"⁸¹. This passage eloquently argues that there is no sin in Eden, and thus no death. Moreover, as between

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

⁷⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 21.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Скворцов И., *Христианское употребление философии или философия Григория Нисского*, Киев, 1863, p. 77.

⁸¹ Luk 16,26.

these realities there is a compelling gap and it is impossible to transcend, thus there will never be any place for sin.

Gregory of Nyssa is convinced that death is beneficial for everyone, despite lifestyle. That death is desirable not only for the righteous but must be the same for the sinner, because death stops the development of vice. Of course, it brings pain to the righteous man but also hope for purifying⁸².

In any case, physical death is inevitable for the person. This undeniable reality says that the body “itself directs its aspirations only to preserve life”⁸³ but death is not the end of all and it does not fully stop existence. Gregory of Nyssa widely elaborated the aspects of resurrection, especially life after death, which is the final stage of the human journey and lasts forever.

The return to home

Earlier in this paper it was mentioned about the spiritual body of man, burdened by sin. From the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa we can conclude that the leather vestment, which God had given to the first people, was reflective of their dressing in skin and bones, which was necessary for life on earth⁸⁴. Gregory in the context of death and resurrection says: “The rough structure of the material body has to disappear and to be reformed into thin structure of the spiritual body”⁸⁵. Hence we have a fair conclusion that the resurrection is the rejection of all that is physically coarse as non-genuine for a person in his or her Creation.

However, as noted by Gregory, death is not a final termination of connections between body and soul. Bishop of Nyssa conducts a good distinction between the concepts and *σῶμα εἶδος*. Gregory understands *σῶμα* that the body and thus all rude matter is inherent to man. The term *εἶδος* means a peculiar bodily image that does not belong to the temporary body, but to immortal spirit⁸⁶. To confirm his theory Gregory appeals to the Scripture, in particular including the already mentioned parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

⁸² Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I: 529.

⁸³ Мартынов А., “Есхатология св Григория Нисского,” р. 97.

⁸⁴ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, р. 601.

⁸⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I: 520.

⁸⁶ Несмелов Виктор, *Догматическая система святого Григория Нисского*, р. 603.

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In the twenty-seventh chapter *De opificio hominis* Gregory talks about the bodily denotation of the soul after death "Lazarus was recognized and a rich man also did not remain as unknown"⁸⁷. Gregory of Nyssa goes on and proves the resurrection of bodies to eternal life. In his view, the body decomposes because of death, but do not cease to exist⁸⁸. Professor Martynov in his analyses regarding Gregory's ideas emphasizes that the body decomposes into elements, becomes clean and re-composes again⁸⁹. "Every soul knows its body"⁹⁰ - says Gregory, so it leads itself in the main part of this process. Thus, in a Paradise after death a person will stay in the body, but without the vestiges of sin. We can assume that means a spiritual body again, the same one, which God gave to the person in Creation.

Is left to clear up the matter how the Bishop of Nyssa can explain universal resurrection. In the context of the problems of life after death, he says that everyone is free from submitting to sin. Instead of it a person will "live in the manner of angels"⁹¹. Origen worked this concept on in detail and as did Gregory, as his supporter, who eventually took over and enhanced it. The Church Father explains it by means of philosophy. So after the court will come the time of retribution for human actions. According Gregory's thoughts, God's mercy is the highest of any vice⁹², therefore all of people are worthy of salvation without exceptions. There is a view of the injustice of God concerning the righteous, because ultimately all wait for one state - Paradise. Therefore, Gregory says about the unavoidable punishment for sinners. The purifying fire will realize it and each varies in length. Accordingly, sin will become extinct when the last sinners will be cleaned⁹³.

⁸⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 27.

⁸⁸ Мартынов А., "Есхатология св Григория Нисского," р. 96.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I:44.

⁹¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, Capt. 18.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Capt. 21.

⁹³ Gregory of Nyssa, PG T I: 585.

Gregory on this issue follows Origen, who represented the doctrine of Apokatastazys as the world hope⁹⁴. However, Gregory of Nyssa did not undergo such censure, as his predecessor. In this aspect, the Bishop Kallistos Ware cites considerable argument about the authority of the brother of Gregory - Basil the Great. On the other hand, continues Bishop Ware, the attitude to Gregory could be different because he previously rejected the pre-existence of souls, that which Origen defended. Thus, “A carefully worded statement about world hope, devoid of speculation about the world fall, was acceptable even within the strict orthodoxy”⁹⁵.

From that which is stated above, we can fail to observe the omnipresent anthropocentric view on eschatology. Everything is happening around the person, rather - to the person. The human being is weak in its nature, of one's own accord is left the source of eternal good and the ability to choose a different lifestyle. From the modern perspective on justice God has had an absolute right to leave a person in his or her own power, what means to condemn them to death. We can overlook another of Gregory's points of view regarding the understanding of the concept of justice. God could not abandon the one, who is “His image”, because then he would cast out Himself, which is unacceptable and ridiculous. So the continuance of creation (which is the carrying on of His image) as Himself is impartial. Therefore, man's expulsion on this earth can be regarded as a temporary sensual trial of evil.

⁹⁴ Καλλιστ Уер, “Προ ВСЕСВІТНЮ НАДІЮ,” in *Наша Віра*, December, 2009, p. 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*