

THE PLENITUDE (ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑ) OF HUMAN NATURE
ACCORDING TO GREGORY OF NYSSA*

by

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ABSTRACT: The concept of human nature constitutes a basis for Gregory of Nyssa's entire anthropology. He considered human nature to be an indivisible monad created by God in the first act of creation before He created the first human being – Adam. It is human nature as a unity that constitutes the image of God and that image has been perfect from the very beginning. Gregory claims that nothing that was created can be indefinite (ἀόριστον). Hence human nature also has its own plenitude (πλήρωμα) recognised by God at the very moment of its creation. That plenitude will be realised when all human individuals are born. The accomplishment of the plenitude of human nature will determine the end of time, resurrection and apokatastasis, upon which human nature will return to its primordial state. I am convinced that Gregory thought of human nature as of a reality transcendent of individuals and that concept explains how he could speak simultaneously about the apokatastasis and the damnation of the sinners.

Although many scholars have written about the concept of human nature according to Gregory of Nyssa, I have an impression that the relationship between human nature and its plenitude (πλήρωμα) has never been sufficiently worked out. I am convinced that this issue is a point of departure for stating whether human nature transcends individuals or is immanent in them. And this is not a theoretical problem. I will try to show how the interpretation of Gregory's soteriology and eschatology depends on it. In fact, it is a mutual relationship: I will need to analyse some texts about Incarnation in order to better explain how Gregory understood human nature.

THE CREATION OF HUMAN NATURE

Gregory evidently distinguished two acts/stages of man's creation. But there is a huge difference in their interpretations: most scholars think that what God created in the first creation was only something planned, not real. So, we should first examine carefully Gregory's descriptions of the double creation.

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