

THEOLOGIA CORPORUM AND THE CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS

Christopher Ben Simpson

Nietzsche levels the charge against Christians that they are “Despisers of life,”¹ of their own material, bodily existence in this world.² Christianity is a religion of despisers of the earth,³ despisers of the body,⁴ “world-slanderers.”⁵ Having invented another world “Apart, Beyond, Outside, Above” this one,⁶ Christians seek to escape this present life, renouncing it⁷ and so become “preachers of death.”⁸ How are Christian theologians to answer this charge? Does Christianity affirm this life?⁹ Does Christian theology have the ability to love the body and to remain faithful to the earth?¹⁰

This paper seeks to address questions like these as part of a larger project (a work in progress) of a *theologia corporum*—a theology of bodies. The basic thrust of this project is to trace an orthodox Christian theological reflection upon, and

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 13 (hereafter NietTSZ).

² NietTSZ 32, 76.

³ NietTSZ 32, 73, 122; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.130, 4.344, 5.346 (hereafter: NietGS with book and section).

⁴ NietTSZ 32, 34, 73; NietGS 3.136, 3.139.

⁵ NietTSZ 228, 259.

⁶ NietGS Preface.2, 4.344; NietTSZ 32.

⁷ NietTSZ 27; NietGS 1.27.

⁸ NietTSZ 45.

⁹ NietTSZ 76, 109.

¹⁰ NietTSZ 13, 61, 73-74, 77, 122.

affirmation of, bodies taken in three interrelated senses: the *corporeal* (regarding the material world as such), the *corporal* (regarding human bodies), and the *corporate* (regarding social bodies, their languages, practices and histories). As a corollary, it critiques a perhaps all-too-common kind of Christian thought and practice evident in the past and alive and well today—a Christianity that (1) degrades the physical world in favor the spiritual realm, that (2) devalues the human body as sinful “flesh” in favor of souls worth saving, and that (3) demeans the social as the sinful “world” (seeking to escape entanglements with language, social practices, or history) in favor one’s individual “relationship” with God—such a Christianity is seen to be a distortion of orthodox Christianity. Furthermore, this project explores how many of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity (such as that of the Trinity, Creation, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Church, the Sacraments, and so on) entail a robust affirmation of the world, the body, and the social. Thus the affirmation of the material, etc., does not merely “fit” within a Christian view of the world, but it could be that the Christian enables a more affirmative, more profound and coherent affirmation of the corporeal, the corporal and the corporate than that of a mere materialism.

In particular, this paper presents the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa—toward such a *theologia corporum*. At first blush, the Cappadocian Fathers could be seen as poster children for a Christianity that demeans the body—monks (Basil, indeed one of the founders of Eastern monasticism) practicing, in Nietzsche’s words, the ascetic’s “slow suicide”¹¹—mystics, otherworldly, philosophical theologians, who had imbibed deeply from Platonism—who in their love of the divine sought to flee the material, in particular the material stuff of their own bodies, the flesh that would draw them away from God and to flee the mass of other people’s bodies, society, favoring the eternal over against the time-bound. We will see that this is all something of a caricature. Presenting briefly the contributions of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa—giving particular attention to the last—to such a project, this paper follows this broadly chiasmic structure: First, on the corporeal, the creation and the nature of the universe; second, on the corporal—the human composition of body and soul and its

¹¹ NietGS 3.131.

dissolution; third (and especially briefly), on the corporate; and fourth and fifth the corporal and the corporeal: on the Incarnation, theosis, and the restoration of all things. This progression is cumulative like climbing a mountain—not leaving the material, but ascending it—with the later including the earlier, the higher the lower.

THE CORPOREAL: CREATION

God as Spirit is incorporeal, without a body¹²—without composition and so without corruption or dissolution.¹³ God, as presented by Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, is infinite—“free from limitation,” “enclosed by no boundary,”¹⁴ such that there is no “dividing line” between God and the universe.¹⁵ God is the good¹⁶ and loving Benefactor,¹⁷ the “fount of love”¹⁸ whose true being, whose true life is the “cause” of the life and subsistence of the world.¹⁹

¹² Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Bloomfield Jackson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume VIII Basil: Letters and Select Works*, ed. by Philip Schaff (Eerdmans 1975), 6, 9 (hereafter BasOHS); Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration, Oration 28.9* in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Tr. by Lionel Wickham (Yonkers: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002) (hereafter the particular Theological Oration); Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), II.Eternal Progress (hereafter NysLM).

¹³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration, Oration 28.7*; NysAE 1.15; NysLM II.Eternal Progress.

¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Not Three Gods*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.* Ed. by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) (hereafter NysNTG); Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 1.15, 8.5 (hereafter NysAE); NysLM I.Prologue, II.Eternal Progress.

NysLM II.Eternal Progress: “It most certainly follows, then, that those who think God is bounded conclude that he is enclosed by evil.” – “he who encloses the Divine by any boundary makes out that the Good is ruled over by its opposite.”

¹⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration, Oration 28.9*.

¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, trans. Bloomfield Jackson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume VIII Basil: Letters and Select Works*, ed. Philip Schaff (Eerdmans 1975), 1.7 (hereafter BasHex); NysLM I.Prologue.

¹⁷ BasHex 1.2, 3.10; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great [Catechetical] Oration*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of*

God, then, in a manner beyond our understanding,²⁰ created the universe—freely giving forth²¹ and bringing it into being²² from nothing²³—thus giving rise to the fundamental distinction between created and uncreated nature.²⁴ Such creation, for the Cappadocian Fathers, is trinitarian, happening by inseparably mutual action²⁵ such that “every operation which extends from God to the Creation...has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit”²⁶—“beginning from the Father, advancing through the Son, and completed in the Holy Spirit,”²⁷ such that “whatever comes to pass...comes to pass by the action of the Three.”²⁸

Dividing the created world into the invisible/intelligible/incorporeal domain and the visible/sensible/corporeal domain,²⁹ the Cappadocian Fathers characterize the corporeal in terms of that which is substantially (Gregory of Nazianzus writes in terms of the “thick” or “heavy”³⁰) located in space and time.³¹ As spatially extended, corporeal beings are divisible and thus composite,³²

Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc., ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 15 (hereafter NysGCO).

¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 5.2 (hereafter NysOMM).

¹⁹ NysGCO 11; NysLM II.Eternal Progress.

²⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) (hereafter NysOSR); NysGCO 11; NysLM II.The Departure from Egypt.

²¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.11, 31.31-33.

²² NysAE 4.2.

²³ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Faith*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); NysOMM 24.3; NysAE 5.4.

²⁴ NysAE 5.1, 5.4, 8.5.

²⁵ BasHex 2.6, 9.6; BasOHS; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Faith*; NysNTG; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit, against the followers of Macedonius*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) (hereafter NysOHSafM).

²⁶ NysNTG; BasOHS 16.

²⁷ NysOHSafM.

²⁸ NysNTG.

²⁹ BasHex 6.1, 6.11; NysOSR; NysOMM 8.5; NysAE 1.22; NysGCO 6; NysLM II.The Mountain of Divine Knowledge.

³⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.3; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Third Theological Oration*, Oration 29.19.

³¹ NysAE 1.14.

a combination of various qualities.³³ Such beings (especially living beings) also exist as changing in the temporal succession of birth and death,³⁴ in, for instance, the material generation of plants and animals³⁵—an immanent becoming, unfolding, evolution of fertility and productivity³⁶ that Basil describes as being like seeds³⁷ unfolding and evolving “without interruption” over “the course of ages,”³⁸ coming “to life with the means of assuring their preservation.”³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa sees the change of the “coming to be” of creation as instilling within the corporeal a becoming, a mutability in its being.⁴⁰ Gregory describes this mutability⁴¹ as “the offspring of rest and motion,”⁴² an interrelation of the contraries of flux and stability—an “interweaving [of] change in the stable nature and motion with that which is not subject to change.”⁴³ The corporeal order has a dynamism—it is “always advancing by way of motion” with an “inability to rest”—such that “if it should ever cease moving it will assuredly have cessation also of its being.”⁴⁴ This dynamic becoming is constituted by Divine Wisdom as an orderly process, such that there is “a concord of the whole creation with itself, and the natural contrariety does not break the chain of agreement.”⁴⁵ Of the “instinctive law,”⁴⁶ the being-together in nature’s community of difference, Gregory marvels at “how elements essentially opposed to each other are all woven together in an ineffable union to serve one common end, each contributing its particular force to maintain the whole; how the unmingling and mutually repellent do not fly apart from each other by virtue of their peculiarities, any more than they are destroyed, when compounded, by such contrariety.”⁴⁷ Basil, in his *Orations on the Hexameron* describes the artful purpose

³² Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.7.

³³ NysOSR.

³⁴ BasHex 1.5.

³⁵ BasHex 5.8; NysAE 8.3.

³⁶ BasHex 2.1, 2.3.

³⁷ BasHex 7.2.

³⁸ BasHex 5.5, 5.10.

³⁹ BasHex 9.4.

⁴⁰ NysOMM 16.14; NysGCO 6; NysLM II.Birth and Childhood.

⁴¹ NysAE 4.1; NysLM II.The Burning Bush.

⁴² NysOMM 1.2.

⁴³ NysOMM 1.4. See NysOMM 1.1-4.

⁴⁴ NysOMM 13.1.

⁴⁵ NysGCO 1, 6, 28.

⁴⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.6, 28.16; BasHex 7.4, 7.5.

⁴⁷ NysOSR.

of this dynamic order in terms of “fitness” or “usefulness”⁴⁸—the goodness of the world is manifest in its manifold developing and working together in an harmonious and elegant whole.⁴⁹ “The great and prodigious show of creation”⁵⁰ manifests integrity and order,⁵¹ a beauty at once grand and minute. The universe is a vast whole⁵² exhibiting an “indissoluble attachment,” so as to be as a “great city”⁵³ or an “harmonious symphony”⁵⁴—“so perfect a fellowship and harmony that the most distant, in spite of their distance, appeared united in one universal sympathy.”⁵⁵ The beauty of creation is also minute—an elaborate and complex “grandeur” even in the smallest things,⁵⁶ of an insect or the least plant⁵⁷—such that “a blade of grass is sufficient to occupy all your intelligence in the contemplation of the skill which produced it.”⁵⁸ Such a picture is a celebration, a “recital” of the plurality and diversity and variety of creation⁵⁹—not just the lily of the field and the bird of the air but all of the many plants and blooms and flying creatures and animals and geographical formations⁶⁰—“for the marvels of creation,” Basil writes, come “one after the other in constant succession like the waves.”⁶¹ Beyond this celebration of the corporeal world in itself, the beauty, order and majesty of the corporeal world help us to discover and to know and to admire and to love the wisdom and art and goodness of this world’s Creator and Benefactor.⁶² Indeed, there seems to be a coinciding of the intelligible order of the world as pointing to God (who is ultimately unknowable) and the ultimate unknowability of the world.⁶³ Our understanding of God, such as it is, does not

⁴⁸ BasHex 1.6., 3.10, 5.4.

⁴⁹ BasHex 4.6, 5.4.

⁵⁰ BasHex 6.1.

⁵¹ BasHex 1.1, 9.4.

⁵² BasHex 6.11.

⁵³ BasHex 6.1.

⁵⁴ BasHex 1.7.

⁵⁵ BasHex 2.2.

⁵⁶ BasHex 5.9, 5.10, 6.11, 7.4.

⁵⁷ BasHex 6.11; NysAE 10.1.

⁵⁸ BasHex 5.3.

⁵⁹ BasHex 7.6; NysOMM 1.5.

⁶⁰ BasHex 5.9, 7.2, 8.4; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.23, 28.25, 28.26.

⁶¹ BasHex 7.6.

⁶² BasHex 1.6, 1.11, 3.10, 5.9, 6.1; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.3, 28.13, 28.16; NysGCO summary, 12.

⁶³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.5, 28.21, 30.17.

function as an Archimedean point for the Cappodocian Fathers. The world declares the glory of the ineffable God—such that “all shows ineffable wisdom” and “the inexhaustible wisdom which is displayed in the works of creation.”⁶⁴ And this serves to deepen our perplexity before a creation that exceeds our full grasp and mastery—be it in the microscopic part or the telescopic whole or the human between.⁶⁵

Beyond the corporeal world’s pointing to God from its beautiful design, God, for the Cappodocian Fathers, pervades and “fills the universe”⁶⁶—“in everything, penetrating it, embracing it, and seated in it.”⁶⁷ The divine Word sustains creation in “the care and providence of God” and “holds in...unforced consent the nature of all things that are.”⁶⁸ The Spirit fills the world.⁶⁹ The Triune God is the sustaining life of the world,⁷⁰ such that all things participate and have a “share” and a “portion of the Divine fellowship”⁷¹ which “holds together Nature in existence” with continual care.⁷²

THE CORPORAL: THE HUMAN

Human being, for the Cappadocian Fathers was created “formed of earth,” human from humus, “the work of God’s hands”⁷³—composed from a material substratum,⁷⁴ “of the atoms of the universe,”⁷⁵ from our “kindred dust.”⁷⁶ More

⁶⁴ BasHex 5.8, 8.8.

⁶⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.5, 28.21; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fourth Theological Oration*, Oration 30.17; BasHex 5.3, 5.7, 8.8.

⁶⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.8; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fifth Theological Oration*, Oration 31.29.

⁶⁷ NysGCO 25.

⁶⁸ BasOHS 8.

⁶⁹ BasOHS 23.

⁷⁰ NysAE 8.5; NysLM II.Eternal Progress.

⁷¹ NysGCO 6, 12. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Faith*; NysOMM 12.9, 12.10; NysLM II.The Burning Bush.

⁷² NysGCO 25; BasHex 9.5.

NysAE 1.22: “The fountain, the origin, the supply of every good is regarded as being in the world that is uncreate, and the whole creation inclines to that, and touches and shares the Highest Existence only by virtue of its part in the First Good.”

⁷³ BasHex 6.1; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The First Theological Oration*, Oration 27.7.

⁷⁴ NysOMM 30.4.

specifically, “the Deity,” Gregory of Nyssa explains, “proceeded by a sort of graduated and ordered advance to the creation of man”⁷⁷—an inclusive, ascending development from inanimate matter to vegetative life to animal life to rational life, with the higher and later always including the lower and earlier⁷⁸—such “that nature makes an ascent as it were by steps—I mean the various properties of life—from the lower to the perfect form.”⁷⁹ Created in likeness to the natural world,⁸⁰ the development of the human as such—as a gathering together of what came before it (the material, vegetative life, animal life)—is echoed in the development of the body of a human individual as coinciding with the development and “blending” of the “forms” or “forces” or “powers” of his or her soul.⁸¹

For Gregory of Nyssa ours is a “compound nature” of body and soul⁸² bearing a “double likeness”—a likeness to the rest of the material world and a likeness to God⁸³—as a kind of a “mean” between the Divine nature and the material.⁸⁴ Created in the image of God, there is in us “an element akin to God,”⁸⁵ the mind or soul, “which is the likeness of the Creator,”⁸⁶ which participates in some of the properties of the Creator⁸⁷ and was intended to be governed by God.⁸⁸ A key element of this image, then, is our freedom from necessity,⁸⁹ our ability, to some

⁷⁵ NysOSR.

⁷⁶ NysOSR; NysOMM 6, 8.

⁷⁷ NysOSR.

⁷⁸ NysOMM 8.5; NysOSR.

⁷⁹ NysOMM 8.7.

⁸⁰ NysOMM 16.1.

⁸¹ NysOSR; NysOMM 8.4, 8.5, 14.2.

⁸² NysOMM 12.13; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit*, trans. by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

⁸³ NysOMM 18.3.

⁸⁴ NysOMM 16.9.

⁸⁵ NysGCO summary.

⁸⁶ NysOMM preface, 5.1, 5.2, 11.4, 18.3; NysOSR.

⁸⁷ NysOSR; NysOMM 12.9.

NysOMM 16.4: “the image of that nature which is immortal, pure, and everlasting.”

NysOMM preface, 5.1, 5.2, 11.4; NysOSR: intellectual (“mind and word”) and immaterial

NysOMM 5.1: freedom from passion, blessedness.

NysOMM 16.10: “being filled with all good.”

⁸⁸ NysOMM 12.10, 12.13; NysLM I.Prologue.

⁸⁹ NysOMM 16.11; NysGCO 5.

degree, to “giv[e] birth to ourselves by our own free choice.”⁹⁰ Yet this mind or reason or soul is attached to the body “in some inexplicable and incomprehensible way, and coming into contact with it, is to be regarded as both in it and around it”⁹¹ and so governs and “holds the reins...of the body”⁹² and is “expressed in the substratum.”⁹³ As such, the human being is “a little world”⁹⁴—including and uniting inanimate matter, nutritive/vegetative life, sensitive/animal life, and divine rational life.⁹⁵ Beyond humanity’s initial appearance in the world as made in the image of God, we are now “truly...like the beasts” receiving in our “nature the present mode of transient generation”⁹⁶—in brief, we, body and soul, are born, with neither preexisting the other.⁹⁷

Human being’s purpose—as “human,” of the earth, and made in the image of God—is enjoyment. We are created to behold and to know the wonders and the beauty of the good things of earth and of God.⁹⁸ We are made to rejoice in the bringing together in and through ourselves (but not ourselves alone) of the Creator and the creation as a whole (more on this later).⁹⁹ Existing in the midst of the corporeal, human life is in constant motion¹⁰⁰—it is to be a progression, a consistency of motion¹⁰¹ ordered by desire as an intrinsic orientation toward the good, the beautiful,¹⁰² and the enjoyment of God.¹⁰³ This oriented progression follows a natural law in us not altogether unlike that which is in nature.¹⁰⁴ This

⁹⁰ NysLM II.Birth and Childhood.

⁹¹ NysOMM 15.3; See NysOSR; NysGCO 11; BasHex 6.11.

NysOMM 15.3: “neither implanted in it nor enfolded with it, but in a way which we cannot speak or think, except so far as this, that while the nature prospers according to its own order, the mind is also operative; but if any misfortune befalls the former, the movement of the intellect halts correspondingly.”

⁹² Gregory of Nyssa, On Virginity, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume V Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 22 (hereafter NysOV); NysOMM 12.13.

⁹³ NysOMM 30.30.

⁹⁴ NysOSR; Gregory of Nazianzus, The Second Theological Oration, Oration 28.22.

⁹⁵ NysOMM 8.5.

⁹⁶ NysOMM 17.5.

⁹⁷ NysOMM 27.9, 29.3, 29.8.

⁹⁸ NysOMM 2.1, 2.2; NysGCO 6, 8.

⁹⁹ NysGCO 6.

¹⁰⁰ NysOMM 13.1.

¹⁰¹ NysOSR.

¹⁰² NysOV intro; NysGCO 21; NysLM IIEternal Progress.

¹⁰³ BasHex 6.1, 9.2, 9.6; NysOV 18; NysOMM 21.2.

¹⁰⁴ BasHex 7.5.

virtuous path, the habit of proper progression, is one of moderation—not utter abstinence from the corporeal and the corporal enjoyment thereof, but a sober habit of temperance, of controlling and setting limits on one's desire for finite things.¹⁰⁵

The problem is that we stray from this virtuous proper ordering, creating disorder by subordinating our desire for God to an inordinate attachment to corporeal things and so not being true to our being-between.¹⁰⁶ It is with this inordinate attachment that “passion”—not as mutability itself but as “a diseased condition of the will”—enters into human life.¹⁰⁷ “For,” as Gregory of Nyssa writes, “those qualities with which brute life was armed for self-preservation, when transferred to human life, became passions”; what is fitting for one order may not be for another—e.g., it is not fitting for a seed to act as something immaterial (denying the lower order), nor is it fitting for it to act as a something merely material, say a rock (denying that it is of a higher order).¹⁰⁸ The problem of the inversion of order,¹⁰⁹ of the “retrocession of the soul from the beautiful,”¹¹⁰ is in the will¹¹¹ which “makes choice of the worse in preference to the better.”¹¹² Vice arises not from the corporal itself but from “the evil husbandry of the mind.”¹¹³ It is with the mind's inordinate attachment to and abuse of the material¹¹⁴ that it falls into an habitual, indeed vicious, “groove,”¹¹⁵ into the “fetters”¹¹⁶ of a “habit of affection...towards this earthiness,”¹¹⁷ and is so “dragged down.”¹¹⁸ This habitual inordinate attachment to physical pleasure “makes men

BasHex 9.4: “Virtues exist in us also by nature, and the soul has affinity with them not by education, but by nature herself. We do not need lessons to hate illness, but by ourselves we repel what afflicts us, the soul has no need of a master to teach us to avoid vice.”

¹⁰⁵ NysOV 8, 9, 16, 18, 20-23; NysOMM 18.5; NysLM II.The Royal Way.

¹⁰⁶ BasOHS 9; BasHex 9.2; NysOV 18; NysLM I.History of Moses, II.The Death of the Firstborn; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The First Theological Oration*, Oration 27.7.

¹⁰⁷ NysAE 6.3; NysLM II.The Burning Bush.

¹⁰⁸ NysOMM 18.2; NysOSR.

¹⁰⁹ NysOMM 18.3.

¹¹⁰ NysGCO 5.

¹¹¹ NysOV 12-13; NysOSR; NysAE 2.13.

¹¹² NysGCO 5.

¹¹³ NysOMM 18.4. See Gregory of Nazianzus, *The First Letter to Cledonius*, Letter 101.9-10.

¹¹⁴ NysOSR.

¹¹⁵ NysOV 23.

¹¹⁶ NysOV 4.

¹¹⁷ NysOSR.

¹¹⁸ NysOV 5, 8, 10, 11, 21, 23; NysOSR.

beasts,” makes “them forget their human nature,”¹¹⁹ such that “the carnal man” is the one who forgets anything above his animal nature¹²⁰ and is likened to material “accretions” and “excrescences” of sin hardened upon the divine image of our soul.¹²¹ This condition of sin, in brief, leads to the aberration of the division of human nature in death—the alien departure of the soul and the decomposition and dissolution of the body.¹²²

THE CORPORATE BODY

The human body, for the Cappodocian Fathers, exhibits a fundamental dependence upon the world around it—it has a “poverty [that] requires external aid for its own subsistence.”¹²³ But, due to our rational nature, we are not only in *need* of what is other than ourselves (air, food, etc.), we are also able to use what is other as tools, as extensions of ourselves.¹²⁴ As the corporeal is the substratum for the corporal (for the human body), so is the human body the substratum for the corporate, for the social body. With our mouths we make speech.¹²⁵ With our hands we “speak by writing.”¹²⁶ In language our rational powers extend beyond ourselves, “produc[ing] the music of reason by means of our instrumental construction.”¹²⁷ Within our mutable and finite namings and significations,¹²⁸ God remains a mystery to us.¹²⁹ However, the Divine mysteries are delivered to us through “the loving dispensation of the Holy Spirit,” who condescends to our limited and mutable significations, “convey[ing] its

¹¹⁹ NysLM II.Balaam.

¹²⁰ BasOHS 22.

¹²¹ NysOV 12; NysOSR; NysGCO 8.

¹²² NysOSR; NysGCO 8; NysGCO 16; NysLM II.Eternal Progress.

¹²³ NysOMM 39.13. NysOMM 30.18: “Our nature is poor and in need of supplies for its own maintenance from all quarters.”

¹²⁴ NysOMM 7.2-3.

¹²⁵ NysOMM 8.8, 9.1-3.

¹²⁶ NysOMM 8.2.

¹²⁷ NysOMM 10.1.

¹²⁸ NysNTG; NysAE 7.4.

¹²⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Theological Oration*, Oration 28.4, 28.11; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fourth Theological Oration*, Oration 30.17; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fifth Theological Oration*, Oration 31.31, 31.33; NysNTG; NysAE 2.3, 7.4, 10.1; NysLM I.History of Moses; NysLM II.The Departure from Egypt; NysLM II.The Darkness.

instruction on those matters which transcend language by means of what is within our capacity...turning its teaching to what we can easily perceive, it describes by terms well worn in human use."¹³⁰ This revelation has then been passed down in linguistic signs, with its developing understandings and experiences, through the corporate body of the church—where its individual, corporal members come and go like corporeal atoms—in the tradition of the church.¹³¹ Part of this tradition is the memory of living examples of the saints as embodied interpretations of the Gospel for us to imitate.¹³² Living thusly, the church dwells within the Spirit as the church is indwelt by the Spirit,¹³³ effecting a unified, spiritual and corporate body—both in the present and throughout history.¹³⁴ As the central message of “what we are taught and learn from the Revelation of the truth” in the Church, enabled by the Holy Spirit,¹³⁵ is “that God in the beginning made man and saved him when he had fallen”¹³⁶—to that we now turn.

**THE CORPORAL AND THE CORPOREAL:
INCARNATION, *THEOSIS*, AND *APOKATASTASIS***

Through belief and baptism¹³⁷—itself material, bodily and social (one does not baptize oneself, after all)—we are quickened, regenerated, given life through the Spirit,¹³⁸ and enter into the mystery of Christ.¹³⁹ Central to the Christian confession of the triune God is the mystery that the Divine Son, in a manner

¹³⁰ NysAE 8.4.

¹³¹ BasOHS 7, 29; NysOV 23; NysNTG; NysAE 1.13,

¹³² NysOV intro, 23-24; NysOMM 18.7; NysGCO 18; NysLM I.Prologue, II.The Meeting with Aaron, II.Conclusion.

¹³³ BasOHS 4, 26.

¹³⁴ BasOHS 16, 26.

¹³⁵ NysOHSafM.

¹³⁶ NysGCO 8.

¹³⁷ BasOHS 12.

¹³⁸ BasOHS 10, 15; NysOHSafM.

¹³⁹ NysGCO 35.

beyond our comprehension,¹⁴⁰ became incarnate,¹⁴¹ taking on the whole of our human nature¹⁴² –remaining “what he was” and assuming “what he was not,”¹⁴³ he became our “companion.”¹⁴⁴ In his resurrection from the dead the Incarnate Christ reunites and knits together “by the cement of His Divine power”¹⁴⁵ the body and soul that were divided by sin and death. As Gregory of Nyssa writes, “in the suffering of His human nature the Godhead fulfilled the dispensation for our benefit by severing the soul for a season from the body, yet without being Itself separated from either of those elements to which it was once for all united, and by joining again the elements which had been thus parted”¹⁴⁶ “into an indissoluble union through a mutual incorporation.”¹⁴⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, in *On the Soul and Resurrection*, observes that after death “the soul exists [diffused] in the actual atoms which she has once animated,”¹⁴⁸ and in the general resurrection, “dissolution in death [is] repaired,” in that “the identical atoms (belonging to each soul) reassembl[e] together in the same order as before”¹⁴⁹ and yet “reconstituted” and “reformed anew after the original pattern”¹⁵⁰—that “the whole human being fallen under sin might be fashioned anew.”¹⁵¹ Furthermore, in the one Body of Christ, the “little leaven assimilates to itself the whole lump” “vivify[ing] the whole of mankind”¹⁵²—we are made “divine by the power of his incarnate manhood,”¹⁵³ in that our human nature is “assumed” and “united with

¹⁴⁰ NysAE 5.3-4; NysGCO 10. Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Third Theological Oration*, Oration 29.19. This is an ineffability akin to that regarding the creation of the world and human nature. See NysGCO 11.

¹⁴¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Third Theological Oration*, Oration 29.18; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The First Letter to Cledonius*, Letter 101.4.

¹⁴² NysAE 2.13.

¹⁴³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Third Theological Oration*, Oration 29.19.

¹⁴⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fourth Theological Oration*, Oration 30.13.

¹⁴⁵ NysGCO 16.

¹⁴⁶ NysAE 2.13; NysGCO 35; NysLM II. The Heavenly Tabernacle.

¹⁴⁷ NysGCO 16.

¹⁴⁸ NysOSR: The soul “diffuses herself along with those which belong to herself when they are being mingled with their kindred dust, and suffers no exhaustion in keeping up with the whole number of them when they stream back into the universe, but remains with them, no matter in what direction or in what fashion Nature may arrange them.”

¹⁴⁹ NysOSR; NysOMM 27.2.

¹⁵⁰ NysGCO 8; NysOSR; NysOMM 17.2.

¹⁵¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The First Letter to Cledonius*, Letter 101.4.

¹⁵² NysGCO 36-37.

¹⁵³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fourth Theological Oration*, Oration 30.14.

God"¹⁵⁴—as “He was transfused throughout our nature, in order that our nature might by this transfusion of the Divine become itself divine, rescued as it was from death.”¹⁵⁵ With the Spirit's vivifying presence as the “Supplier of life,”¹⁵⁶ “quicken[ing] together with God, who produces and preserves all things alive, and together with the Son, who gives life,”¹⁵⁷ we look to be “united to the deity in body and in soul,”¹⁵⁸ to be “partakers of His glory,”¹⁵⁹ “made bright and luminous himself in the communion of the real Light”¹⁶⁰—to be made like God.¹⁶¹

In Christ's “own body” our human nature receives “the principle of the resurrection, raising as He did by His power along with Himself the whole man....[T]he resurrection principle of this Member, as though the whole of mankind was a single living being, passes through the entire race, being imparted from the Member to the whole by virtue of the continuity and oneness of the nature.”¹⁶² As, for Gregory of Nyssa, the union of man and God in Christ brings about our divinization, so the union of the material (the corporeal) in man is united to God in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ—“that God, taking dust of the ground, formed the man, and by an inspiration from Himself He planted life in the work of His hand, that thus the earthy might be raised up to the Divine, and so one certain grace of equal value might pervade the whole creation, the lower nature being mingled with the supramundane.”¹⁶³ In the Apokatastasis, the restoration of all things, the Power that created all things from nothing will transform the universe,¹⁶⁴ and will restore all things, and nothing will be “left without its portion of the Divine fellowship”¹⁶⁵ and “God will be all in all.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The First Letter to Cledonius*, Letter 101.5.

¹⁵⁵ NysGCO 25.

¹⁵⁶ BasOHS 9.

¹⁵⁷ BasOHS 24. See Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fifth Theological Oration*, Oration 31.28.

¹⁵⁸ NysAE 2.13.

¹⁵⁹ NysOV 1.

¹⁶⁰ NysOV 11.

¹⁶¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fourth Theological Oration*, Oration 30.6.

¹⁶² NysGCO 32; NysOMM 22.5.

¹⁶³ NysGCO 6.

¹⁶⁴ NysOMM 23.5, 24.3; BasHex 5.10.

¹⁶⁵ NysGCO 6.

¹⁶⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fourth Theological Oration*, Oration 30.6.

The Christian vision that for Nietzsche has “found the world ugly and bad” and so “made the world ugly and bad”¹⁶⁷ is otherwise for the Cappodocian Fathers. For them, the Christian faith is a transforming vision—transforming our vision:

Of the corporeal, material—crafted as a work of love full of goodness and full of God

Of the corporal—of the human—the little world of kindred dust and divinity made to delight in the world and its maker

Of the corporate—of the choral music of words and deeds in time and space—through which we receive this faith

That our corporal humanity is assumed by the Son that we might be raised and united to God beyond death

That the corporeal world itself will be restored

That we—with this vision—made in the image of God might be transformed into the likeness of God

Who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Who did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

¹⁶⁷ NietGS 3:130.