

**Epektasis and Syntax of Salvation in Gregory of Nyssa  
(in comparison with Clement)**

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Handout

Text 1:

Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, ed. Hermann Langerbeck (Leiden, 1986), 253,15-254,4:

rendered more divine and transformed by the beautiful change into a higher glory with respect to the glory she had, in such a way as to inspire awe in the choir of angels surrounding the Bridegroom who together address to her the astonished greeting “You have ravished my heart, our sister and bride” (Song 4:9). In fact, having obtained impassibility, this very condition of impassibility, which shines both in her and in the angels, introduces her into kinship and fraternity with the incorporeal beings.

μεταποιηθεῖσα πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης ἐν ἧ ἦν πρὸς τὴν ἀνωτέραν δόξαν μεταμορφωθεῖσα διὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἀλλοιώσεως, ὡς θαῦμα γενέσθαι τῷ περὶ τὸν νυμφίον τῶν ἀγγέλων χορῷ καὶ πάντας εὐφήμως πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν θαυμαστικὴν ταύτην προέσθαι φωνὴν ὅτι Ἐκαρδίωσας ἡμᾶς, ἀδελφὴ ἡμῶν νύμφη· ὁ γὰρ τῆς ἀπαθείας χαρακτηρ ὁμοίως ἐπιλάμπων αὐτῇ τε καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις ἐῖς τὴν τῶν ἀσωμάτων αὐτὴν ἄγει συγγενεῖάν τε καὶ ἀδελφότητα τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ τὸ ἀπαθὲς κατορθώσασαν.

Text 2:

Gregorio di Nissa, *In inscriptionem Psalmorum*, Book II, ch. VI (GNO V, 86, 14-23):

Thus the title "on Maeleth" states that every victory gained over the enemies with sweat and toil is greeted with joy and dance, since all intelligible creation accords with the victors as in the harmony of a choir. For this was the case when the dance of rational nature was one and the same, and it looked to a single coryphaeus and directed the dance according to the harmony that he, from there, provided for the movement with his commandments (Enn VI, 9, 9). But after the intervention of sin broke this common song of the choir inspired by God and caused the fall by pouring the oil of hell on the feet of men who danced together with the angelic powers, then man was separated from communion with the angels, for the fall severed the bond. That is why much sweat and toil is required of him who has fallen, so that, after struggling and turning back, he may regain his pre-fall condition, having received the divine dance as a reward for his victory in the struggle.

οὕτως πᾶσαν νίκην ἰδρῶτί τε καὶ πόνῳ κατὰ τῶν ἀντιπάλων κατορθουμένην ἢ περὶ τοῦ Μαελέθ ἐπιγραφὴ εὐφροσύνην λέγει καὶ χοροστασίαν ἐκδέχεσθαι, πάσης τῆς νοητῆς κτίσεως ἑαυτὴν καθάπερ ἐν χοροῦ συμφωνίᾳ τοῖς νικηταῖς συναρμοζούσης. ἦν γὰρ ὅτε μία τῆς λογικῆς φύσεως ἦν ἡ χοροστασία πρὸς ἓνα βλέπουσα τὸν τοῦ χοροῦ κορυφαῖον, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἐνδιδομένην αὐτοῦ τῇ κινήσει διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἀρμονίαν τὸν χορὸν ἀνελίσσουσα. ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὴν ἔνθεον ἐκείνην διέλυσεν τοῦ χοροῦ συνῳδία παρεμπεσοῦσα ἢ ἁμαρτία καὶ τοῖς ποσὶ τῶν πρώτων ἀνθρώπων τῶν ταῖς ἀγγελικαῖς δυνάμεσι συγχορευόντων τὸν τῆς ἀπάτης ὄλισθον ὑποχέασα πτόμα ἐποίησεν, ὅθεν διεσπάσθη τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους συναφείας ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τοῦ πτώματος τὴν συμβολὴν διαλύσαντος τούτου χάριν πολλῶν ἰδρώτων χρεια τῷ πεπτωκότι καὶ πόνων,

ἵνα τὸν ἐπικείμενον αὐτοῦ τῷ πτώματι καταγωνισάμενός τε καὶ ἀνατρέψας πάλιν ἀνορθωθῆ, γέρας τῆς κατὰ τοῦ παλαίοντος νίκης τὴν θείαν χοροστασίαν δεξάμενος.

Text 3:

Gregory of Nyssa, *Mort*, GNO IX, p. 61 (it. ed. #19, p. 72), engl. tr. is mine:

Let us suppose that instead of the iron mass there is the natural instinct active in every man, and instead of the dross there are the objects to which the instinct now directs its impulses: pleasure, wealth, ambition, power, pride, and other such passions. Of all these, death becomes the scrupulous purifying agent. And when it has been stripped and purged of all carnal desires, the instinct will turn actively only towards that which is beautiful, desirable and lovable. Our natural impulses will not be totally extinguished, but will change so as to participate in the immaterial good. In that existence there will be the unflagging love of authentic beauty, the commendable longing for the treasures of wisdom, the beautiful and good ambition that is realised in the communion with the kingdom of God. There you will experience the praiseworthy passion for heavenly banquets, which never ceases out of satiety to progress in the good. You must therefore understand that at the proper time the creator of the universe will make the bodily mass a means of happiness, fashioning "the breastplate of righteousness," as the apostle says, and "the sword of the Spirit and the helmet of hope and the whole armour of God." Therefore, according to the apostle's law, love your body, for he says: "No one hates his body".

Ἐστω καθ' ὑπόθεσιν ἀντί μὲν τῆς βώλου ἢ δρεξις ἢ φυσικῶς ἐπὶ πάντων ἐνεργουμένη, ἀντί δὲ τῆς σκωρίας ταῦτα πρὸς & νῦν τὰς ὁρμὰς ἔχει ἢ δρεξις, ἡδοναί καὶ πλοῦτοι καὶ φιλοδοξίαι καὶ δυναστεΐαι καὶ θυμοὶ καὶ τυφοὶ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. Τούτων ἀπάντων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων καθάρσιου ακριβὲς ὁ θάνατος γίνεται· ὧν γυμνωθεῖσά τε καὶ καθαρθεῖσα πάντων ἢ δρεξις πρὸς τὸ μόνον δρεκτόν τε καὶ ἐπιθυμητόν καὶ ἐράσμιον τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ τραπήσεται, οὐκ ἀποσβέσασα καθόλου τὰς ἐγκειμένας φυσικῶς ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὁρμὰς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν «Χυλὸν τῶν ἀγαθῶν μετουσίαν μεταποιήσασα. Ἐκεῖ γὰρ ὁ ἔρωσ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ κάλλους ὁ ἀπαυστος, ἐκεῖ ἢ ἐπαινετὴ τῶν τῆς σοφίας θησαυρῶν πλεονεξία καὶ ἡ καλὴ τε καὶ ἀγαθὴ φιλοδοξία ἢ τῆ κοινωνία τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ βασιλείας κατορθουμένη καὶ τὸ καλὸν πάθος τῆς ἀπληστίας οὐδέποτε κόρω τῶν ὑπερκειμένων πρὸς τὸν ἀγαθὸν πόθον ἐπικοπτόμενον. Οὐκοῦν μαθῶν ὅτι τοῖς καθήκουσι χρόνοις ὁ τοῦ παντός τεχνίτης τὴν τοῦ σώματος βώλον εἰς δπλον εὐδοκίας μεταχαλκεύσει «θώρακα δικαιοσύνης», καθὼς φησὶν ὁ ἀπόστολος, καὶ «μάχαιραν πνεύματος» καὶ «περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδος» καὶ πάσαν τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ «πανοπλίαν» κατεργασάμενος, ἀγάπα τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα κατὰ τὸν τοῦ ἀποστόλου νόμον, ὅς φησὶν ὅτι «οὐδεὶς τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα ἐμίσησεν».

Text 4:

Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita sanctae Macrinae* 22, 26-39 (GNO VIII/1, 396,1-14):

And it seemed to me that she [Macrina] no longer behaved like human beings, but as if an angel had providentially taken on a human form, an angel who did not have any relationship and affinity with life in the flesh and whose thought in no way was unlikely to remain in impassibility (ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ), insofar as the flesh does not pull it down toward the passions that characterise it. Thus, it seems to me that she showed to everyone that divine and pure love for the invisible Bridegroom, whom she harboured hidden in the depths of her soul, and that she made known to all the disposition (διάθεσιν) that she carried in her heart to cast herself towards the One she desired (ποθοῦμενον) in order to

be with Him free from the constraints of the body as soon as possible. In fact, her haste (δρόμος) was indeed directed as at a lover (ἐραστήν), without any other pleasures of life being able to divert her gaze.

οὐκέτι μοι ἐδόκει τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων εἶναι, ἀλλ' ὁ ἴον ἀγγέλου τινὸς οἰκονομικῶς ἀνθρωπίνην ὑπελθόντος μορφὴν, ᾧ μηδεμιᾶς οὔσης πρὸς τὸν ἐν σαρκὶ βίον συγγενείας ἢ οἰκειώσεως οὐδὲν ἀπεικὸς ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ τὴν διάνοιαν μένειν, μὴ καθελκούσης τῆς σαρκὸς πρὸς τὰ ἴδια πάθη. διὰ τοῦτό μοι ἐδόκει τὸν θεῖον ἐκεῖνον καὶ καθαρὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ ἀοράτου νυμφίου, ὃν ἐγκεκρυμμένον εἶχεν ἐν τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπορρήτοις τρεφόμενον, ἔκδηλον ποιεῖν τότε τοῖς παροῦσι καὶ δημοσιεύειν τὴν ἐν καρδίᾳ διάθεσιν τῷ ἐπείγεσθαι πρὸς τὸν ποθούμενον, ὡς ἂν διὰ τάχους σὺν αὐτῷ γένοιτο τῶν δεσμῶν ἐκλυθεῖσα τοῦ σώματος. τῷ ὄντι γὰρ ὡς πρὸς ἐραστήν ὁ δρόμος ἐγένετο, οὐδενὸς ἄλλου τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον ἡδέων πρὸς ἑαυτὸ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἐπιστρέφοντος.

Text 5:

Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, 29,20-30,12:

Indeed, the person who before such words, whose immediate meaning speaks of carnal pleasures, does not slip into impure thoughts, but by these words is conducted as by hand to the philosophy of the divine realities, that is, to pure thoughts, shows himself to be no longer human and no longer to have a nature composed together of flesh and blood, but shows himself to have that life of the saints that we hope to receive in the resurrection, in that such a person has become like the angels on account of impassibility (ισάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας). In fact, after the resurrection, the body, becoming changed in its elements to enter into incorruptibility, is united (συμπλέκεται) to the soul of the man while the passions that now plague us through the flesh will not rise along with those bodies, but our life will receive as a gift a condition (κατάστασις) of peace.

ἀληθῶς γὰρ ὁ διὰ τῶν τοιούτων ῥημάτων, ὧν ἡ πρόχειρος ἔμφασις τὰς σαρκώδεις ἡδυπαθείας ἐνδείκνυται, μὴ κατολισθαίνων εἰς τὴν ῥυπῶσαν διάνοιαν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν τῶν θεῶν φιλοσοφίαν, ἐπὶ τὰς καθαρὰς ἐννοίας διὰ τῶν ῥημάτων τοῦ ἔργου χειραγωγούμενος δείκνυσι τὸ μηκέτι ἄνθρωπος εἶναι μηδὲ σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι συμμεμιγμένην τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπιζομένην ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῶν ἁγίων ζωὴν ἐπιδείκνυται ἰσάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας γενόμενος. ὡς γὰρ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὸ μὲν σῶμα μεταστοιχειωθὲν πρὸς τὸ ἄφθαρτον τῆ ψυχῆ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου συμπλέκεται, τὰ δὲ νῦν διὰ σαρκὸς ἡμῖν ἐνοχλοῦντα πάθη τοῖς σώμασιν ἐκεῖνοις οὐ συνανίσταται ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰρηνικὴν κατάστασιν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν διαδέξεται.

Text 6

Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, 134,9-135,6:

In fact, since it was announced that the life after the resurrection will be similar (ὅμοιον) to the condition (καταστάσει) of the angels – and the One who announces it does not lie –, it would be proper that even life in the world would be a preparation for the life we hope for after it, in such a way that those who live in the flesh and in the field of the world do not lead a life according to the flesh nor configure themselves to this world, but practice, in anticipation, the life they long for during their life in this world. Thus the bride inspires in the souls of those who follow her a confirmation, by means of a vow, that their life in this field will be directed at contemplating the Powers, imitating the angelic purity through impassibility (ἀπαθείας). In fact, just as love

(ἀγάπης) becomes more and more kindled, that is, is lifted up and, with addition, grows always toward the better, it is said that the good will of God is carried out in heaven as in earth because the impassibility of the angels is realised in us as well.

ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸν μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν βίον ὅμοιον ἐπήγγελται τῇ ἀγγελικῇ καταστάσει [τῶν ἀνθρώπων] γενήσεσθαι (ἀψευδῆς δὲ ὁ ἐπαγγελιάμενος), ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἶη καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζωὴν πρὸς τὴν ἐλπίζομένην μετὰ ταῦτα παρασκευάζεσθαι, ὥστε ἐν σαρκὶ ζῶντας καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ τοῦ κόσμου διάγοντας μὴ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν μηδὲ συσχηματίζεσθαι τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ προμελετᾶν τὸν ἐλπίζομενον βίον διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζωῆς. διὰ τοῦτο τὴν διὰ τοῦ ὄρκου βεβαίωσιν ἐμποιεῖται ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν μαθητευομένων ἢ νύμφη, ὥστε τὴν ζωὴν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ τούτῳ κατορθουμένην πρὸς τὰς δυνάμεις βλέπειν, μιμουμένην διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας τὴν ἀγγελικὴν καθαρότητα· οὕτω γὰρ ἐγειρομένης τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ ἐξεγειρομένης (ὅπερ ἐστὶν ὑψουμένης τε καὶ ἀεὶ διὰ προσθήκης πρὸς τὸ μείζον ἐπαυξομένης) τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶπε θ ἔλημα τοῦ θεοῦ τελειοῦσθαι ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς τῆς ἀγγελικῆς καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀπαθείας κατορθουμένης.

#### Text 7

Clement of Alexandria, *Paed* I, 8, 71, 3, 3–7: SC 70, p. 236. Eng. tr.: S. P. Wood (trans.), *Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator, The Fathers of the Church 23*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D. C. 1954, p. 64:

He who makes some stand on His right and others on His left, if He is considered as the Father, who is good, is called that very thing which He alone is – good; but if He is thought of as being the Son, His Word, who is in the Father, then He is given the title, just, because of their relationship of love (ἐκ τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως ἀγάπης), one for the other, since justice is the term to describe equality of degree.

Ὁ γὰρ ἰστάς τοὺς μὲν ἐκ δεξιῶν, τοὺς δὲ ἐξ εὐωνύμων, καθὸ μὲν πατὴρ νοεῖται, ἀγαθὸς ὢν, αὐτὸ μόνον ὃ ἐστὶ κέκληται ἀγαθός, καθὸ δέ, υἱὸς ὢν, ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ἐστὶ, δίκαιος προσαγορεύεται ἐκ τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως ἀγάπης, ἰσότητι μεμετρημένον ὄνομα δυνάμεως.

#### Text 8

Clement of Alexandria, *Paed* I, 9, 88, 2,1–8: SC 70, p. 266. English translation: S. P. Wood (trans.), *Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator*, p. 78. Variations are mine:

Therefore, God is good of himself, but just for our sake and because He is good. His justice is revealed to us as through His Word who has descended from above (ἄνωθεν) where the Father has always been. Before becoming the Creator, He was God, and good; that is why He wished to become Creator and Father. And His disposition of love (ἢ τῆς ἀγάπης ἐκείνης σχέσις) is the origin of His justice, making His sun to shine and sending down His own Son.

Ὅστε ἀγαθὸς μὲν ὁ θεὸς δι' ἑαυτόν, δίκαιος δὲ ἤδη δι' ἡμᾶς, καὶ τοῦτο ὅτι ἀγαθός. Τὸ δίκαιον δὲ ἡμῖν διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐνδείκνυται τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ἐκεῖθεν ἄνωθεν, ὅθεν γέγονεν πατήρ. Πρὶν γὰρ κτίστην γενέσθαι θεὸς ἦν, ἀγαθὸς ἦν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ δημιουργὸς εἶναι καὶ πατὴρ ἠθέλησεν· καὶ ἢ τῆς ἀγάπης ἐκείνης σχέσις δικαιοσύνης γέγονεν ἀρχή, καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἐπιλάμποντος τὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καταπέμποντος τὸν αὐτοῦ.