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JOHN BEHR

On the Soul and the Resurrection

ST GREGORY OF NYSSA

translated by

CATHARINE P. ROTH

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CHAPTER 10

The Doctrine of the Resurrection

After my teacher had explained this much, when most of the people sitting by thought that the discourse had reached a fitting conclusion, I for my part feared that there might not be anyone left to resolve for us the objections brought by outsiders concerning the resurrection, if the teacher should be overcome by her illness (as indeed it happened).

"Our discourse has not yet," I said, "grasped the most important point of the doctrines under investigation. For the inspired Scripture says, according to both the new and the old teaching, that as our nature proceeds in a certain order and series according to the periodic movement of time, there will eventually be a complete cessation of this flowing course which goes forward through the succession of descendants. When the fullness of the universe no longer allows increase in quantity, the whole complement of souls will return again from their invisible and scattered condition to unity and visibility. The same elements will come back to one another, returning in the same order as before. The Scriptures of the divine doctrine call this condition of life 'resurrection,' naming the whole movement of the elements from the upward rising of the earthly element."

"So what part of this," she asked, "has been omitted in what we have already said?"

"The actual doctrine of the resurrection," I said.¹

"But surely," she said, "many of the matters which we have

1 We return after a rather lengthy digression to the issue raised above, p. 88.

discussed thoroughly are relevant to this goal."

"Don't you know," I said, "how great a swarm of objections our opponents bring forward against this hope?" At the same time I tried to tell her how many arguments are invented by contentious people to overthrow the doctrine of the resurrection.

But she said, "I think that we should first run briefly through what is set forth in various places by the divine Scripture concerning this doctrine, so that from there we may approach the conclusion of our discourse. I have heard, indeed, what David sings in his divine odes, when he has made the ordering of the universe the subject of his hymn. Near the end of the 103rd Psalm he says, 'You will take away their spirit, and they will die and return to their dust. You will send out Your Spirit, and they will be created, and You will renew the face of the earth.'² He is saying that the power of the Spirit, accomplishing everything in everything, both gives life to those whom it enters and removes from life those from whom it departs. He says that the death of the living happens by the departure of the Spirit, and by Its presence the renewal of the dead takes place. Because the death of those who are being renewed comes first in the order of the words, we can say that the mystery of the resurrection is being proclaimed to the Church, as David has foretold this grace by his spirit of prophecy.

"In another place, moreover, this same prophet says that the God of all, the Lord of those that are, has appeared to us to inaugurate the feast with a covering [of branches],³ by the word 'covering' signifying the feast of the Tabernacles which was legislated of old by the tradition of Moses. Prophetically, I suppose, the lawgiver was foretelling what was to come: while the feast was always being celebrated, it had not yet been accomplished. Although the truth was being revealed in a type by the symbolism of what was being done, the true tabernacle had not

² Psalm 103(104):29-30.

³ Psalm 117(118):27 (LXX).

yet been pitched.⁴ According to the prophetic word, however, the God and Lord of all revealed Himself to us in order to inaugurate for human nature the feast of the tabernacle of our destroyed dwelling, which would again be covered with a body when the elements should come back together. For the word 'covering,' according to its proper meaning, signifies a garment and the adornment which this produces. But the verse of the psalm continues like this: 'God, the Lord, has even appeared to us; inaugurate a feast with a covering up to the horns of the altar.' This seems to me to foretell symbolically that one feast is being established for all the rational creation, the inferior joining together with the superior in the assembly of the good. For in the symbolic arrangement of the Temple, not everyone was permitted to come inside the outer walls, but all gentiles and foreigners were prohibited from entry. Again, not all of those who came inside had an equal right to enter further, unless they had been sanctified by a purer manner of life and certain cleansing rites. Furthermore, even among these very people the interior part of the Temple was not accessible to all, but the priests alone were designated to enter within the curtain as their priestly service might require. Moreover, the hidden and inaccessible part of the Temple in which the altar was located, decorated with horns surrounding it, might not be entered even by the priests except for the high priest himself. Once a year on a certain appointed day, bringing a more secret and mystical sacrifice, he entered alone into the interior room. If such distinctions were made in this Temple, which was a kind of image and copy of the spiritual condition, the physical observance teaches us that not all rational beings approach the Temple of God (that is, the confession of the great God), but those who have strayed to false beliefs are outside the divine enclosure. Moreover, among those who have come inside by the strength of their

⁴ The typological interpretation of the Temple is derived from the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapters 8-10.

confession, those who have cleansed themselves in advance by purifications and chastity are honored more than the others; and among these, those who have dedicated themselves to the ascetic life already have the greater part, so that they are counted worthy to enter into the inner mysteries. It is possible to make the interpretation of the symbolism even clearer. We can learn these things by the teaching of the passage: some of the rational powers are seated like the holy altar in the inaccessible sanctuary of the Godhead; others again of them appear prominently, set in front like horns; and others around them are first and second according to some order of rank. The race of men, however, because of the evil which has entered us, has been driven outside of the divine precinct. Only those who are cleansed by the purifying bath⁵ may come inside.

"Since at some time these middle partitions are going to be destroyed⁶ (the partitions by which evil has shut us off from the sanctuary which is inside the curtain), when our nature will have its tabernacle pitched again by the resurrection, and all the corruption which has entered in connection with evil will be abolished from the things that are, then the festival around God will be inaugurated in common for those who are covered by the resurrection, so that one and the same joy will be set before all. No longer will rational beings be divided by different degrees of participation in equal good things. Those who are now outside because of evil will eventually come inside the sanctuary of divine blessedness, and will join themselves with the horns of the altar (that is, with the preeminent powers of the heavenly beings). The apostle says this more plainly, expounding the agreement of the universe in the good: 'To Him every knee will bow' of heavenly, earthly, and subterranean beings, and 'every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'⁷ Instead of horns he

5 Baptism.

6 Compare Ephesians 2:14.

7 Philipians 2:10-11; see above p. 63.

speaks of angelic and heavenly beings, and by the rest he signifies the creatures which are ranked next after them, namely us, for all of whom one harmonious festival will prevail. This festival is the confession and knowledge of the One who truly is.

"Furthermore, it is possible," she said, "to gather many other testimonies from the holy Scriptures to support the doctrine of the resurrection. Ezekiel, for example, leaping over the whole interval of time and space by his spirit of prophecy, takes his stand at the very moment of the resurrection by his power of foreknowledge. As if already beholding that which will be, he brings it before the view of his narration. He sees a vast plain extended without limit and on it a great heap of bones, thrown about here and there haphazardly. Then he sees them moved together by divine power towards the bones which belong to them, and growing into their own joints. Then sinews, flesh, and skin enwrap them (which the psalm calls 'covering'), and a spirit gives life and awakens all that were lying dead.⁹

"Why should one mention the apostle's enumeration of the miracles connected with the resurrection, which is readily available for the reader? The passage tells how at a command and the sound of trumpets, all together in a moment of time, those who are lying dead will be changed into a condition of immortal nature.¹⁰

We shall also pass over the words of the Gospels, because they are well known to everyone. The Lord does not merely say in words that the dead will rise, but He brings about the actual resurrection, beginning His wonder-working with those miracles which are nearer to us and less likely to be disbelieved. First He shows His life-giving power in mortal diseases, dispelling sufferings by His

8 In the Greek Bible, God's words in Exodus (3:14) "I am who I am" are translated as "the existing one." Philo of Alexandria associated this with Plato's philosophical expression for the divine, "that which truly is."

9 Ezekiel 37:1-14.

10 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

word of command.¹¹ Then He wakes a newly-dead child.¹² Next He raises from the coffin a young man who is already being carried to the tombs and gives him back to his mother.¹³ After this, when the dead Lazarus has already begun to decompose, after four days He leads him out living from the tombs, by the command of His voice bringing to life the man who was lying dead.¹⁴ Then, when His own humanity has been pierced with nails and spear, He raises it from the dead on the third day, keeping the prints of the nails and the wound of the spear as evidence of His resurrection. Concerning these deeds I do not think it is necessary to go into detail, as there is no doubt among those who have accepted the Scriptures."

"But," I said, "this was not the question I was asking. For most of the hearers will agree on the basis of the scriptural proofs and the arguments already examined that the resurrection will take place at some time and that mankind will be subjected to the infallible judgment. We need to investigate whether that which is expected will be like that which is now. If it should be so, I would say that we human beings ought to shun the hope of the resurrection. For if our human bodies are reestablished in the next life just as they were when they departed from this life, then what we men hope for is an endless misfortune. What more pitiable sight could there be than when in extreme old age the shrivelled bodies become ugly and misshapen, when the flesh is used up by time and the wrinkled skin is dried to the bones? The sinews are contracted when they are no longer lubricated by the natural moisture, and because of this the whole body is drawn together and becomes an absurd and pitiable sight. The head is bent down to the knee, and the hand which has become useless for its natural operation is always shaking to and fro with involuntary spasms. Or what about the bodies of those who are

11 For example John 4:46-53, Luke 7:1-10.

12 Luke 8:49-56 and parallels.

13 Luke 7:11-17.

14 John 11:1-44.

wasted by chronic diseases, which differ only so much from bare bones as to appear covered by a thin and already worn-out skin? Or what about those who are swollen with dropsical illnesses? And what word could bring before our sight the shameful disfigurement of those subject to the sacred disease, how gradually as the decay progresses it eats away all their members, both the limbs used for action and the organs of perception?¹⁵ What would one say about those mutilated in earthquakes or wars or from some other cause, who before their death live for some time in this unfortunate condition, or about those who from birth by some accident have grown up with distorted limbs? What can we think about the newly-born infants who are exposed or strangled¹⁶ or perish by accident? If they are brought back again to life, will they remain in infancy? What could be more miserable? Or will they reach the measure of maturity? And by what milk will their nature nourish them?

"So if our bodies will be revived the same in all respects, what we expect is a misfortune; but if they will not be the same, the one who is being raised will be a different person from the one who was dead. For if the child has fallen, but the adult is raised, or vice versa, how can we say that the very one who was lying dead is raised up, if the fallen person appears at a different stage of life? If we see an adult instead of a child, and instead of an old man one in the prime of life, we behold a different person from the other. The same is true if we see a whole person instead of a cripple, and a robust person instead of an emaciated one, and all the other similar cases (I shall not make the discourse tiresome by going through each in detail). If the body does not return to life such as it was when it was mixed with the earth, it is not the dead body

15 The "sacred disease" is usually epilepsy, as in the Hippocratic writers, but here the reference is apparently to leprosy.

16 Infanticide was commonly practiced in the ancient world as a means of limiting family size.

which will be raised, but instead the earth will be fashioned again into another person. So what is the resurrection to me, if instead of me someone else will return to life? How would I myself recognize myself, seeing in myself that which is not myself? I would not truly be myself, if I were not in all respects the same as myself. It would be as if in the present life I had the image of someone in memory. Let us suppose for the sake of the illustration that the man has scanty white hair, protruding lips, a flat nose, pale skin, grey eyes, and a wrinkled body. In looking for this man, suppose that I should meet a young man with long hair, a hooked nose, dark skin, and all the rest of his appearance differing from the image in my memory: if I see someone like this, will I think that he is that man?

"But why should we spend time rather on the weaker objections, while we neglect the stronger? Who does not know that human nature is like a stream, proceeding from birth to death perpetually in motion and ceasing from motion only when it ceases from being? This motion is not any change of location, for our nature does not move out of itself but makes its progress through alteration. This alteration never remains in the same condition as long as it really is alteration; for how could the process of change be compatible with sameness? Our nature is like the fire on a wick which seems to be always the same because the continuity of its motion shows that it is inseparably united with itself, but in truth it is always replacing itself and never remains the same. For the moisture drawn out by the warmth at the same time blazes, burns up, and is changed into smoke. The movement of the flame is always energized by the power of change, converting the underlying matter into smoke by its activity. Thus, you see, even if you touch the flame again in the same place, you cannot take hold of the same flame twice."¹⁷ The swiftness of the change does not wait for

¹⁷ According to Plato (*Cratylus* 402A), Heraclitus said, "You could not step twice into the same river." He also used imagery of fire to express the fluidity of apparently stable things.

you to touch it again a second time, no matter how quickly you do this, but the flame is always new and fresh, always new-born and never remaining in the same condition. Something like this happens also in regard to the nature of our bodies. The inflowing and outflowing of our nature which always proceed and move with the motion of change stop only when we cease from life. As long as our nature is alive, it has no stillness. Either the body is being filled or it is emptying itself, or actually it is always involved in both. So if a person is not the same as he was yesterday but becomes another by alteration, it follows that when the resurrection restores our body again to life, the one man will have to become a whole people. In this way no aspect of the one raised will be missing: the infant, the toddler, the child, the youth, the husband, the father, the old man, and all the intermediate stages.

"Since self-control and intemperance operate through the flesh, and since those who endure bitter punishments on behalf of true religion, as well as those who avoid them out of weakness, demonstrate each of these responses in their bodies, how can the judgment be just? If the same person now has sinned but again cleanses himself by repentance, and perhaps slips again into sin, so that the polluted body and the pure body alternate in the course of his life and neither one of them prevails throughout, what kind of body will be punished along with the licentious person? The body which is shrivelled with old age as it approaches death? But this is different from the one which perpetrated the sin. Or that which was polluted by passion? And then where is the elderly man? For either he will not rise, and the resurrection is not effective, or else he will be raised, and the guilty one will escape justice.

"Shall I also mention another of the objections which are made to us by those who do not accept the doctrine? 'Nature,' they say, 'has made no part of the body useless. The cause and power of our life reside in some parts without which our fleshly life

cannot subsist, such as the heart, liver, brain, lungs, stomach, and the other internal organs. To other parts the impulse of perception is allotted. Others contain the active and motive energy, and others are appropriate for the procreation of successors. So if the life hereafter will subsist in the same functions, the change will be to no purpose. If, however, the word is true,¹⁸ as indeed it is true, 'which declares that marriage will not be involved in the life after the resurrection nor will that life be maintained by food and drink, what will be the use of those parts of the body, since the purposes for which the limbs are now adapted are not expected to persist in that life? If the organs of marriage exist for the sake of marriage, when that function does not exist we shall need none of the organs for that function. Similarly the hands are for work, the feet for running, the mouth for the reception of food, the teeth for the service of nourishment, the bowels for digestion, and the outlet passages for the elimination of what has been used. So when these functions do not exist, how or for what purpose will the organs which came to be because of them still exist? If there should not be any parts in the body which will not contribute towards that life, then logically none of the organs which now complete the body should exist; for our life would subsist in a different kind of body and we could no longer call such a state 'resurrection,' if all the individual members do not rise along with the body because they are not needed in that life. If on the other hand the resurrection will be effective through all of these organs, He who brings about the resurrection will be creating parts for us which are useless and meaningless for that life. But in fact we believe that there is a resurrection, and that it is not absurd. Therefore we must consider carefully how we can show the whole doctrine to be plausible."

When I had gone through all this, "Bravely," my teacher said, "you have attacked the doctrine of the resurrection by the art which they call rhetoric, persuasively surrounding the truth with destruction"

¹⁸ Matthew 22:30 and parallels; Romans 14:17.

tive words, so that those who have not adequately investigated the mystery of truth are likely to be affected by your speech and to suppose that you have validly raised a further difficulty in regard to what we have said. But this is not the truth," she said, "even if I am not able to orate against your speech in the same style. The truth about this is stored up in the hidden treasury of wisdom and will be disclosed at the time when we are taught the mystery of the resurrection in deed, when we will no longer need words to reveal what we hope for. If at night wakeful people discuss at length what the light of the sun is like, the grace of the rays by its mere appearance makes vain the verbal description; in the same way every reasoning which conjectures about the future restoration will be proved worthless when what we expect comes to us in experience.

"But since we should not leave entirely unexamined the objections brought against us, we shall take up their discussion in the following manner. First we must understand what the aim is of the doctrine about the resurrection, why this is declared by the holy revelation, and why we believe it. Therefore to describe this doctrine and limit it with a certain definition, we shall say this, that resurrection is the restoration of our nature to its original condition. In the first life, of which God himself became the creator,¹⁹ there was presumably neither old age, nor infancy, nor the sufferings caused by the many kinds of diseases, nor any other type of bodily misery; for it is not likely that God created such things. Human nature was a divine sort of thing, before humanity started on the course of evil. All these things attacked us when evil entered our life. Therefore the life without evil will not need to be subject to the conditions which have happened because of evil. If a man travels through frosts his body inevitably becomes cold, or

¹⁹ For "creator," Macrina uses the word δημιουργός suggesting a contrast with the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*, who fashions a less-than-perfect world.

if he goes through warm sunshine his face becomes dark. If, however, he should make his journey without either of these conditions, he would be freed entirely from the dark and the cold. No one could reasonably ask why this happened, when the cause of coldness or darkening is absent. In the same way, when our nature became subject to passions, it encountered those conditions which necessarily follow the life of passion; but when it returns again to the passionless blessedness, it will no longer encounter the consequences of evil. Since whatever was added to human nature from the irrational life was not in us before humanity fell into passion, we shall also leave behind all the conditions which appear along with passion.²⁰ If a man wearing a ragged tunic should be denuded of his garment, he would no longer see on himself the ugliness of what was discarded. Likewise, when we have put off that dead and ugly garment which was made for us from irrational skins (when I hear 'skins' I interpret it as the form of the irrational nature which we have put on from our association with passion), we throw off every part of our irrational skin along with the removal of the garment.²¹ These are the things which we have received from the irrational skin: sexual intercourse, conception, childbearing, dirt, lactation, nourishment, evacuation, gradual growth to maturity, the prime of life, old age, disease, and death. If we will not be wearing that skin, how shall we preserve the conditions which come from it? So since we hope for a different state in the life to come, it is pointless to object to the doctrine of the resurrection because of what has nothing in common with that life. For if bodies with their changeable nature become shrivelled or robust, wasted or plump, or any other shape, what does this have to do with that life, which is

separated from the changing and transitory course of this life? The principle of resurrection seeks one thing only, that a man has come to be by generation, or rather, as the Gospel says, if a man has been born into the world,²² but length or shortness of life, and the manner of death, whether it happened in this way or another, are irrelevant when we are examining the principle of the resurrection. For whatever hypothetical circumstances we may imagine, it is all the same, since such a difference makes neither difficulty nor ease for the resurrection. He who has begun to live must undoubtedly return to life when the dissolution which interrupted his life has been corrected by the resurrection. But how or when the dissolution takes place, what does this have to do with the resurrection?

"The investigation of these matters aims at a different goal, such as whether a person lived pleasantly or painfully, virtuously or wickedly, whether he passed his time so as to deserve praise or blame, in wretchedness or blessedness. All these and similar questions are answered from the measure and character of one's life. To evaluate the way a person has lived, the judge would need to examine all these factors: how he endured suffering, dishonor, disease, old age, maturity, youth, wealth, and poverty; how through each of these situations he ran the course of the life allotted to him either well or badly; and whether he became able to receive many good things or many evil things in a long lifetime or did not reach even the beginning of either good or evil, ceasing to live when his mind was not yet fully developed. But when God brings our nature back to the first state of man by the resurrection, it would be pointless to mention such matters and to suppose that the power of God is hindered from this goal by such obstructions. He has one goal: when the whole fullness of our nature has been perfected in each man, some straightaway even in this life purified from evil, others healed hereafter through fire for the appropriate

22 John 16:21.

²⁰ It is not clear how this version of man's creation agrees with that given above (p. 57), even if emotions are to be distinguished from passions.

²¹ Gregory's interpretation of Genesis 3:21. He is probably following Origen, for whom the "garments of skin" were a kind of denser materiality which bodies took on after the fall.

length of time, and others ignorant of the experience equally of good and of evil in the life here, God intends to set before everyone the participation of the good things in Him, which the Scripture says eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor thought attained.²³ This is nothing else, according to my judgment, but to be in God Himself; for the good which is beyond hearing, sight, and heart would be that very thing which surpasses everything. But the difference between a life of virtue and a life of wickedness will appear hereafter chiefly in allowing us to participate earlier or later in the blessedness which we hope for. The duration of the healing process will undoubtedly be in proportion to the measure of evil which has entered each person. This process of healing the soul would consist of cleansing it from evil. This cannot be accomplished without pain, as we have discussed previously.²⁴

"Truly, we should recognize the superfluity and ineptitude of the objections, as we plumb the depth of the apostle's wisdom. He explains this mystery to the Corinthians, who may perhaps also have made the same objections to him which are brought forward now by those who attack the doctrine to overthrow our faith. With his own authority he cuts short the audacity of their ignorance, speaking in this manner: 'Will you say to me, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come back?"' Fool,' he says, 'what you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and what you sow is not the body which will be, but a bare kernel perhaps of wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He has chosen.'²⁵ Here he seems to me to be reproving those who measure the divine power by their own strength, who think that only so much is possible for God as human understanding can comprehend and that what is beyond us exceeds God's power as well. For he who asks the apostle, 'How are the dead raised?' is asserting that the scattered

23 1 Corinthians 2:9, quoting Isaiah 64:4.

24 See above p. 84.

25 1 Corinthians 15:35-38.

elements of the body cannot come again into combination. Because he supposes that this is impossible and that no other body exists besides the combination of the elements, like a clever dialectician by some sequence of reasoning he concludes what he assumed as hypothesis. He says, 'If the body is a combination of the elements, and if these cannot come together again a second time, what kind of body will they use who rise?' So this argument, which these people think they have constructed by some kind of clever wisdom, the apostle calls the foolishness of those who have not seen in the rest of the creation the surpassing greatness of divine power. He leaves aside the more sublime of God's miracles, by which he could have led the hearer into perplexity, such as, 'What is the heavenly body, and where does it come from? What about the solar and lunar bodies? Or the body which appears in the stars?'²⁶ The ether? The air? Water? Earth?' Instead he refutes the careless objectors from familiar and common experiences. 'Does not farming teach you,' he says, 'that a man is a fool if he evaluates the surpassing greatness of the divine nature by his own measure? Where do the seeds get the bodies which grow around them? What leads to their sprouting? Is it not death, if indeed the dissolution of a compound is a kind of death? The seed would not begin to grow outwards if it were not dissolved in the soil and did not become loose-textured and porous, so that its own quality could be mixed with the surrounding moisture. It is transformed into root and sprout, yet does not remain in these, but changes into a stalk with joints in it like supporting braces to help it carry upright the ear heavy with fruit. So where were these features of the grain before its dissolution in the earth?' 'But they come from the seed.' 'If the seed did not come before, the ear would not begin to exist afterwards. So you see, the body of the ear grows from the seed when the divine Power creates the one from the other by art, and the ear is neither altogether the same as the seed nor entirely

26 Compare 1 Corinthians 15:40-41.

different. In the same way,' he says, 'the mystery of the resurrection is already proclaimed to you in advance by the miracles accomplished in the seeds. The divine Power in the excess of Its might not only gives back to you that which was dissolved but also adds for you other great and beautiful gifts through which your nature is built up to greater magnificence. It is sown,' he says, 'in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.'²⁷ When the grain in the earth leaves behind after its dissolution the small quantity of its size and the particular quality of its shape, nevertheless it does not abandon itself. While remaining in itself it becomes an ear which differs completely from its former self in size, beauty, variety, and form. In the same manner the human nature also, when it abandons to death all the properties which it acquired through the state of subjection to passion (I mean dishonor, corruption, weakness, difference of age), does not abandon itself. Instead, as if ripening into an ear, it changes into incorruptibility, glory, honor, power, and every kind of perfection. It no longer has its life ordered by its natural properties, but goes over into a spiritual and immutable state (for it is characteristic of the physical body to be continuously altered from what it is and to be always changing into something different). Of those excellent qualities which we see now shared by human beings along with plants and animals, none will be left in the life hereafter.

"But I think that the apostolic word agrees with our idea of the resurrection and shows what our definition means when it says that the resurrection is nothing other than the restoration of our nature to its original state.²⁸ In the beginning of the creation we have learned from the Scripture that first the earth sprouted the plant of the grass, as the story tells, and then the seed came from the plant.

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

²⁸ See above p. 113.

When this fell on the earth, the same species as that which grew originally sprang up again.²⁹ The divine apostle says that this happens also at the resurrection. We learn from him not only that mankind changes to greater magnificence but also that what we hope for is nothing other than what was at first. Since in the beginning the ear did not come from the seed, but the seed from the ear, and after this the ear grew around the seed, the order of the symbolic narrative clearly shows that all the blessedness which will spring up for us through the resurrection will bring us back to the grace of the beginning. For we also were in some manner the ear at the beginning. When we are dried up by the hot summer of evil, the earth, which receives us dissolved by death, in the spring of the resurrection will reveal this bare seed of the body again an ear, large, abundant, upright, and reaching to the height of heaven, adorned not with a stalk or a beard but with incorruptibility and the rest of the godlike qualities; for he says, 'This corruptible nature must put on incorruptibility.'³⁰ Incorruptibility, glory, honor, and power, which are agreed to be characteristic of the divine nature, formerly belonged to the one made in God's image, and are expected to be ours once again. The first ear was the first man, Adam. Since at the entrance of evil our nature was split up into a multitude like the kernels in the ear, each of us, denuded of the form of that first ear and mixed with the earth, at the resurrection will spring up again in the archetypal beauty. Instead of the one first ear, however, we shall have become the innumerable myriads of the wheatfield. But the life of virtue will have this difference from the life of evil, that those who have tended themselves with virtue through their life here will grow at once into a perfect ear. Those, however, for whom the power in the physical seed has become weakened and wind-blasted through evil (like what the experts in these matters say

²⁹ Genesis 1:11-12.

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:53.

happens to the seeds which are called 'horn-struck')³¹ even if they sprout in the resurrection, will receive severe treatment from the judge, because they were not strong enough to grow up into the form of the ear and to become that which we were before the seeds fell to earth. The farmer will heal the harvest by gathering the tares and thorns which have grown up along with the seed and taken all the power which should have nourished the roots. Because of these bastard plants the genuine seed has remained undeveloped and immature, smothered by the unnatural growth.³² So when all that is illegitimate and alien has been plucked out from the nourishing grain and is eliminated, after the fire has consumed whatever is contrary to nature, then the nature of these people also will flourish and will ripen into fruit through this kind of treatment, receiving again after a long period of time the common form which was set upon us by God in the beginning.

"Blessed are they for whom the perfect beauty of the ears rises immediately when they sprout in the resurrection. I do not say this because a bodily difference will appear at the resurrection in those who have lived in virtue or wickedness, as if we thought that the one would be imperfect in body, but the other would have a perfect body. Rather, as the prisoner and the free man are both very much alike in body during their lives but differ greatly from each other in their experience of pleasure and pain, so I suppose we should reckon the difference between the good men and the evil men in the

31 Macrina seems to be showing knowledge of agriculture, but in fact her words sum up the two sources of Gregory's language.

"Weakened" (ἐξέττηλος) and "horn-struck" (κερασβόλος) are rare words which occur in Plato (*Republic* 497B, *Laws* 853D).

"Wind-blasted" (ἀνεμόφθορος) is a rare word which occurs in the Greek Bible (Hosea 8:7). "Horn-struck" refers to seeds that are too hard to germinate or cook properly, supposedly because of falling against the horns of the plow-ox (Plutarch, *Convivial Questions* 2.700C).

32 Matthew 13:24-30; see above pp. 58-59.

time hereafter. For the bodies which grow again from the sowing are said by the apostle to have their perfection in incorruptibility, glory, honor, and power; but if these qualities are diminished, it does not mean that the body which has grown suffers any physical mutilation. It undergoes rather a deprivation and alienation of all the qualities which are considered good. So since a person must undoubtedly have one of the complementary qualities, either good or evil, obviously when we say that someone does not have the good, we are showing without doubt that he has evil. With evil, moreover, there is no honor, nor glory, nor incorruptibility, nor power. So whoever does not have these qualities must inevitably have the opposite qualities: weakness, dishonor, corruption, and everything of this kind. As we have said earlier in our discourse, the passions resulting from evil become hard for the soul to get rid of, thoroughly mixed up with it, growing onto it, and closely united with it.³³ So when such things are cleansed and purified away by the treatment through fire, each of the better qualities will enter in their place: incorruptibility, life, honor, grace, glory, power, and whatever else of this kind we recognize in God Himself and in His image, which is our human nature."

33 See above p. 54.