

St. Stephen's University  
M.A. in Theology and Culture

Ultimate Redemption: Resurrection and the End of the Ages

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Module: Pauline Themes Through the Eyes of the Father's

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## **Outline**

- I. Introduction
- II. Being made alive in Christ
- III. A New Humanity
- IV. Everything subjected to Christ
- V. God all in all
- VI. Conclusion

### **I. Introduction**

As an increasing number of churchgoers deconstruct their beliefs, traditional evangelical doctrines concerning the future of creation have become one of the main targets of criticism in this global shift. Often rooted in a deep heart-felt conviction that the inherited narrative violates human conscience, Spirit-led intuition recoils also from its incompatibility with the Abba of Jesus.

In contrast, the early fathers and mothers of the Church reveal a general hopefulness that exposes our shallow individualism. In their thinking and teaching they confront the question if the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a tragedy or a comedy – will Good prevail or will the universe be forever trapped in a dualistic state that allows evil to exist forever? Based on this question, I will determine what the Ancient Church believed concerning these matters in the light of its interpretation of the Apostle Paul’s discourse in 1. Corinthians 15:12-28.<sup>1</sup>

### **II. Being Made Alive in Christ**

Paul writes about the final defeat of death at the end of the ages and points to Christ’s resurrection as the proof for this hope (verses 12-25). Death will be swallowed up in the life of Christ. The “destruction” of death, is described by the

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<sup>1</sup> Citing a selected and limited number of sources.

Greek word *katargeó*, meaning “to nullify, discard, exempt, abolish, to make unproductive” (verse 26).<sup>2</sup> The text is speaking about more than just reanimation or resuscitation, as Paul compares the “making alive in Christ” to the resurrection of Jesus. Hence he writes that not all will be raised from physical death, but that all will be transformed by the life of Christ (verses 51-53). Gregory of Nyssa and Theodoret the Blessed testify:

“The resurrection promises the restoration of the fallen to their ancient state, for the grace we look for is a certain return to the first life...”<sup>3</sup>

“For Christ has wholly destroyed the power of sin by his promise of immortality; for it (sin) cannot trouble immortal bodies.”<sup>4</sup>

### **III. A New Humanity**

Christ is being presented as the new Adam, “the eschatological counterpart of the primeval Adam ... the pattern or ‘prototype’ of Christ”<sup>5</sup> in whom creation is being restored (verses 21-22 and Romans 5:15-19). Hence both Jesus and Adam are called “son of God” (Luke 3:38), wherein the parental disposition of the

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<sup>2</sup> *Katargeó*. In *Strong’s Concordance*. Accessed, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from the *Bible Hub* website: <https://biblehub.com/greek/2673.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man XVII.2*. in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Vol. V. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Ed.), Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, USA: Christian Literature Company, 1893, 407.

<sup>4</sup> Theodoret the Blessed, *Commentary on Hebrews 9:26*, as cited in, Thomas Allin, *Christ Triumphant*, Canyon Country, California, USA: Concordant Publishing Concern, 1890, 144.

<sup>5</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA/Cambridge, U.K.: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006, 199-2004.

Divine towards humanity is implied. Origen and Gregory of Nazianzus write concerning this:

“For we must dare say that the goodness of Christ appeared greater and more divine and truly in accordance with the image of the Father ‘when he humbled himself and became obedient to death on a cross ...’”<sup>6</sup>

“Our humanity was joined to and made one with God – the higher nature having prevailed – in order that I too might be made God as truly as he is made human.”<sup>7</sup>

#### **IV. Everything subjected to Christ**

The apostle envisions creation’s universal resurrection after Christ has abolished “all dominion, authority and power” (verse 24), having subjected *all* his enemies and subjecting himself, as Son, in the same way to his Father (the identical Greek word *hupotagē*<sup>8</sup> is being used, see also Romans 10:3, 4 speaking about the subjection to the righteousness of God to everyone that believes)<sup>9</sup> – in the power of his resurrection, resulting from the union with his Abba and the

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<sup>6</sup> Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10, Book 1.231*, Ronald E. Heind (Transl.), cited in, *Fathers of the Christian Church: A New Translation, Vol. 80*, Washington, DC, USA: Catholic University of America Press, 1989, 80.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, Stephen Reynolds (Transl.), *Five Theological Orations, Oration 3, On the Son 1, §19*. Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012 from the *University of Toronto* website: <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/36303/1/Gregory%20of%20Nazianzus%20Theological%20Orations.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *Hupotagē*. In *Strong’s Concordance*. Accessed, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from the *Bible Hub* website: <https://biblehub.com/greek/5292.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Gerry Beauchemin, *Hope Beyond Hell – The Righteous Purpose of God’s Judgment*, Olmiti, Texas, USA: Malista Press, 2007, 105-06.

integrity of their relationship (Philippians 3:21).<sup>10</sup> Again Gregory of Nyssa and also Eusebius of Caesarea teach:

“When all enemies have become God’s footstool, they will receive a trace of divinity in themselves. Once death has been destroyed – for if there are no persons who will die, not even death would exist – then we will be subjected to him; but this is not understood by some sort of servile humility. Our subjection, however, consists of a kingdom, incorruptibility and blessedness living in us; this is Paul’s meaning of being subjected to God. Christ perfects his good in us by himself, and effects in us what is pleasing to him.”<sup>11</sup>

“The Son’s ‘breaking in pieces’ his enemies is for the sake of remolding them, as a potter his own work, as Jeremiah 18:6 says: i.e., to restore them once more to their former state.”<sup>12</sup>

## **V. God all in all**

The vision culminates in God being all in all, everything in everyone – nothing left outside the Divine Dance of Father, Son and Spirit. Every opposition to the love of God has been overcome. Macrina the Younger and again Gregory of Nyssa share their insights:

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this thought see David Kowalick, *All About Glory - Where Hope and Meaning Meet*, Adelaide, Australia: Godwin Media, 2013, 93-106.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, as cited in *In illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. Accessed May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, from *Eclectic Orthodoxy* website: <https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2019/10/04/in-illud-tunc-et-ipse-filius/>

<sup>12</sup> Eusebius of Casarea, *De Eccles. Theol. iii. 16*, as cited in Thomas Allin, *Christ Triumphant*, Canyon Country, California, USA: Concordant Publishing Concern, 1890, 144.

“His end is one, and one only; it is this: when the complete whole of our race shall have been perfected from the first man to the last... to offer every one of us participation in the blessings, which are in him, which, the Scriptures tell us, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,’ nor thought ever reached. But this is nothing else ... but to be in God himself.”<sup>13</sup>

“For it is evident that God will in truth be all in all when there shall be no evil in existence, when every created being is at harmony with itself and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; when every creature shall have been made one body.”<sup>14</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

Even though space permits only a limited number of sources, those presented - while differing in details - point to the general hopefulness of the Ancient Church, that was rooted in their vision of the parental nature of the Divine. For these early thinkers, the revelation of Jesus’ Abba solved all contradictions and explained all mysteries of life and scripture alike.<sup>15</sup> God being Parent by nature - according to Baxter Kruger, essential to the Nicene Creed<sup>16</sup> - meant that all judgment was corrective and restorative (John 3:16, Hebrews 12:5-

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<sup>13</sup> Saint Macrina the Younger, as cited in Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection*. accessed May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, from the *New Advent* website: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2915.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, as cited in *In illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. Accessed May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, from *Eclectic Orthodoxy* website: <https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2019/10/04/in-illud-tunc-et-ipse-filius/>

<sup>15</sup> J. W. Hanson, *Universalism, the Prevailing Doctrine of the Christian Church During Its First Five Hundred Years* (Boston and Chicago, USA: Universalist Publishing House, 1899), xx.

<sup>16</sup> C. Baxter Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing of Adam* (Jackson, Mississippi, USA: Perichoresis Press, 2003), 64

11, Ephesians 1:3-6, 2:4-6).<sup>17</sup> Even Augustine of Hippo, before cementing “infernalism”<sup>18</sup> in the Western tradition,<sup>19</sup> declared the parental love of God as “the message that supports and explains all the other messages” in Scripture.<sup>20</sup> Only when this central truth was replaced with the legal legislator of the Roman Empire, that violence against others was being justified through the influence of teachers like former Roman lawyer Tertullian,<sup>21</sup> and retributive punishment took hold in the Church.<sup>22</sup> I would argue that wherever there is a rediscovery of the parental love of God, the future of creation will sooner or later come into question.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Poland: Empire Books/Amazon Fulfilment, 1867/2013), 14-17.

<sup>18</sup> Bradley Jersak, *Her Gates Will Never Be Shut: Hope, Hell and the New Jerusalem* (Eugene, Oregon, USA: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved?” With a Short Discourse on Hell* (San Francisco, USA: Ignatius Press, 1988), 71.

<sup>20</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, *A Spiritual Commentary to the Letter to the Romans* (Kansas City, USA: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Trevor Galpin, *Finding the Father in the Story of the Church* (Winchester, UK: Trevor & Linda Galpin Ministries, 2016), 86-89.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas B. Thayer, *The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment* (Herman, Missouri, USA: Tentmaker Ministries & Publications, 2004), 134-135.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Erskine, Joseph Campbell, George MacDonald and Thomas A. Smail are classic examples.

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