

THE THREE THEOPHANIES IN GREGORY OF NYSSA'S LIFE OF MOSES¹

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<https://doi.org/10.47433/tv.xcviiin1-4.84>

Abstract

In the second book of the Life of Moses, Gregory presents his idea of the way towards human perfection as the renewal of God's image in humans. In his argumentation, he uses various approaches, but in all of them there is one strong unifying undercurrent: All this human strife depends on, and is meaningful because of, what Christ has done for humanity. This connection between anthropology and Christology strongly comes to the fore in the three places of the work Life of Moses where God reveals himself to Moses: (1) the theophany in the burning bush; (2) the theophany in darkness on Sinai; (3) the revelation of God's glory.

Keywords: image of God in humans, knowledge of God, Incarnation, life of virtue

In the *Life of Moses*, especially in its second book, Gregory presents his idea of the way towards human perfection through the life of virtue. The aim of this process is to renew God's image in humans. He develops his argumentation on several levels: He stresses the importance of reason/rationality that leads to the life of virtue as opposed to the world of passions and irrationality. Then he proceeds to the importance of freedom/free will that allows the choice of virtue. But in all this varied moral (or psychological) approach, there is one strong undercurrent that unifies it: All this human strife depends on, and is meaningful because of, what Christ has done for humanity – in other words, it depends on God's incarnation. This connection between anthropology and Christology strongly comes to the fore in the

¹ This article is an extended version of the one published as "God's Revelation to Moses according to Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Moses", in *Analele științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași*, XXVI/2, Teologie ortodoxă, 2021, pp. 23-34.