

## **Spiritual formation and the body-soul relation in Gregory of Nyssa**

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This contribution will ask to what extent Gregory of Nyssa's concepts of spiritual formation illuminate his notion of the body-soul relationship. On the one hand, he uses the trope of the flight of the soul from the material (including the material body); on the other hand, his spiritual writings often think of spiritual practice as being inherently embodied. This tension has been studied in some previous scholarship, but here my focus will be on two areas in particular which have received less attention: first, Gregory's use of the motifs from the visual arts (sculpting or painting the self); secondly, his ascetic writings *De professione Christiana*, *De perfectione*, and *De instituto Christiano*. I will be concentrating not on Gregory's concept of the spiritual goal, but rather on the advance towards that goal: the process of spiritual formation. Consequently, my attention will be directed less on exceptional 'moments' of spiritual experience/prayer which seem, in Gregory's thought, to be proleptic indicators of an eschatological goal, and more on everyday spiritual practice.