THE SACRED WRITINGS OF ...

GREGORY OF NYSSA

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Gregory Of Nyssa – A Biography

A saint and father of the church, born in Cappadocia about 331, died about 400. He was a younger brother of Basil the Great, studied with him at Athens and Constantinople, was married, then embraced the ecclesiastical profession, and was ordained lector. Yielding to his passion for literature, he opened a school of eloquence, but was induced by Gregory Nazianzen to dedicate his talents to the ministry. In 370 he became assistant to his brother at Caesarea, and in 372 was chosen bishop of Nyssa. He was exiled under Valens by the Arians. was deputed in October, 379, by the council of Antioch, to visit the churches of Palestine and Arabia, was present at the council of Constantinople in 381, and again in 382 and 383. Gregory of Nyssa's works contain the most complete philosophical exposition of Christian dogma given before St. Augustine. He follows Origen in his scientific methods, combats expressly his heterodox theorems, and has been accused of leaning toward his theory of the final salvation of all beings.

His works were published in part by Sifanus (Basel, 1562-'7l); by the Jesuit Fronton du Due (2 vols., Paris, 1615; vol. iii. edited by Claude Morel in 1638); and by Migne (Patrologie grecque, vols. xliv.-xlvi., Paris, 1857-'66). A selection of his works is found in Ohler's Bibliothek der Kirchenvater, vols. i.-iv. (Leipzig, 1858).

Editor’s Preface

THESE translations from the works of St. Gregory of Nyssa have involved unusual labour, which the Editor hopes will

be accepted as a sufficient apology for the delay of the volume. The difficulty has been extreme of conveying with correctness in English the meaning of expressions and arguments which depend on some of the most subtle ideas of Greek philosophy and theology; and, in addition to the thanks due to the translators, the Editor must offer a special acknowledgment of the invaluable help he has received from the exact and philosophical scholarship of the Rev. J. H. Lupton, Surmaster of St. Paul's School. He must renew to Mr. Lupton, with increased earnestness, the expression of gratitude he had already had occasion to offer in issuing the Translation of St. Athanasius. From the careful and minute revision which the volume has thus undergone, the Editor ventures to entertain some hope that the writings of this important and interesting Father are in this volume introduced to the English reader in a manner which will enable him to obtain a fair conception of their meaning and value.—HENRY WACE, *Kings College, London, 6th November, 1892.*

Preface

THAT none of the Treatises of S. Gregory of Nyssa have hitherto been translated into English, or even (with one exception long ago) into French, may be partly due to the imperfections, both in number and quality, of the MSS., and by consequence of the Editions, of the great majority of them. The state of the MSS., again, may be owing to the suspicion diligently fostered by the zealous friends of the reputation of this Father, in ages when MSS. could and should have been multiplied and preserved, that there were large importations into his writings from the hands of the Origenists—a statement which a very short study of Gregory, whose thought is *always* taking the direction of Origen, would disprove.

This suspicion, while it resulted in throwing doubts upon the genuineness of the entire text, has so far deprived the current literature of the Church of a great treasure. For there are two qualities in this Gregory's writings not to be found in the same degree in any other Greek teacher, namely, a far-reaching use of philosophical speculation (quite apart from allegory) in bringing out the full meaning of Church doctrines, and Bible truths; and excellence of style. With regard to this last, he himself bitterly deplored the days which he had wasted over the study of style; but we at all events need not share that regret, if only for this reason, that his writings thereby show that patristic Greek could rise to the level of the best of its time. It is not necessarily the thing which it is, too easily, even in other instances, assumed to be. Granted the prolonged decadence of the language, yet perfects are not aorists, nor aorists perfects, the middle is a middle, there are classical constructions of the participle, the particles of transition and prepositions in composition have their *full* force in Athanasius; much more in Basil; much more in Gregory. It obscures facts to say that there was good Greek only in the age of Thucydides. There was good and bad Greek of its kind, in every epoch, as long as Greek was living. So far for mere syntax. As for adequacy of language, the far wider range of his subject-matter puts Gregory of Nyssa to a severer test; but he does not fail under it. What could be more dignified than his letter to Flavian, or more choice than his description of the spring, or more richly illustrated than his praises of Contemplation, or more pathetic than his pleading for the poor? It would have been strange indeed if the Greek language had not possessed a Jerome of its own, to make it speak the new monastic devotion.

But the labours of J. A. Krabinger, F. Oehler, and G. H. Forbes upon the text, though all abruptly ended, have helped to repair the neglect of the past. They in this century, as the scholars of Paris, Ghent, and Basle, though each working with fewer or more imperfect MSS., in the sixteenth and seventeenth, have been better friends to Gregory than those who wrote books in the sixth to defend his orthodoxy, but to depreciate his writings. In this century, too, Cardinal Mai has rescued still more from oblivion in the Vatican—a slight compensation for all the materials collected for a Benedictine edition of Gregory, but dispersed in the French Revolution.

The longest Treatise here translated is that *Against Eunomius* in 13 Books. The reproduction of so much ineffectual fencing in logic over a question which no longer can trouble the Church might be taken exception to. But should men like Gregory and Basil, pleading for the spirit and for faith and, for mystery against the conclusions of a hard logician, be an indifferent spectacle to us? The interest, too, in the contest deepens when we know that their opponent not only proclaimed himself, but was accepted, as a martyr to the Anomoean cause; and that he had large congregations to the very end. The moral force of Arianism was stronger than ever as its end drew near in the East, because the Homoeans were broken up and there was no more complicity with the court and politics. It was represented by a man who had suffered and had made no compromises; and so the life-long work, previous to his, of Valens the bishop at last bore fruit in conversions; and the Anomoean teaching came to a head in the easily understood formula that the ÆAgennhsiawas the essence of the Father—an idea which in the Dated Creed Valens had repudiated.

What, then, was to be done? Eunomius seemed by his parade of logic to have dug a gulf for ever between the Ungenerate and the Generate, in other words between the Father and the Son. The merit and interest of this Treatise of Gregory consists in showing this logician as making endless mistakes in his logic; and then, that anything short of the “eternal generation” involved unspeakable absurdities or profanities; and lastly, that Eunomius was fighting by means of distinctions which were the mere result of mental analysis. Already, we see, there was floating in the air the Conceptualism and Realism of the Middle Ages, invoked for this last Arian controversy. When Eunomius retorted that this faculty of analysis cannot give the name of God, and calls his opponents atheists for not recognizing the more than human source of the term ÆAgennhto", the last word of Nicene orthodoxy has to be uttered; and it is, that God is really incomprehensible, and that here we can never know His name.

This should have led to a statement of the claims of the Sacraments as placing us in heart and spirit, but not in mind, in communion with this incomprehensible God. But this would have been useless with such opponents as the Eunomians. Accuracy of doctrine and clearness of statement was to them salvation; mysteries were worse than nothing. Only in the intervals of the logical battle, and for the sake of the faithful, does Gregory recur to those moral and spiritual attributes which a true Christianity has revealed in the Deity, and upon which the doctrine of the Sacraments is built.

Such controversies are repeated now; *i.e.* where truths, which it requires a certain state of the affections to understand, should be urged, but cannot be, on the one side; and truths which are logical, or literary, or scientific only, are ranged on the other side; as an instance, though

in another field, the arguments for and against the results of the “higher criticism” of the Old Testament exhibit this irreconcilable attitude.

Yet in one respect a great gain must have at once resulted to the Catholic cause from this long work. The counter opposition of Created and Uncreate, with which Gregory met the opposition of Generate and Ungenerate, and which, unlike the latter, is a dichotomy founded on an *essential* difference, must have helped many minds, distracted with the jargon of Arianism, to see more clearly the preciousness of the Baptismal Formula, as the casket which contains the Faith. Indeed, the life-work of Gregory was to defend this Formula.

The Treatise *On Virginity* is probably the work of his youth; but none the less Christian for that. Here is done what students of Plato had doubtless long been asking for, *i.e.* that his “love of the Beautiful” should be spiritualized. Beginning with a bitter accusation of marriage, Gregory leaves the reader doubtful in the end whether celibacy is necessary or not for the contemplative life; so absorbed he becomes in the task of showing the blessedness of those who look to the source of all visible beauty. But the result of this seeing is not, as in Plato, a mere enlightenment as to the real value of these visible things. There are so many more beautiful things in God than Plato saw; the Christian revelation has infinitely enriched the field of contemplation; and the lover of the beautiful now must be a higher character, and have a more chastened heart, not only be a more favoured child of light, than others. His enthusiasm shall be as strong as ever; but the model is higher now; and even an Aristotelian balance of moral extremes is necessary to guide him to the goal of a successful Imitation.

It was right, too, that the Church should possess her *Phaedo,* or Death-bed Dialogue; and it is Gregory who has supplied this in his *On the Soul and the Resurrection.* But the copy becomes an original. The dialogue is between a sister and a brother; the one a saintly Apologist, the other, for argument's sake, a gainsayer, who urges all the pleas of Greek materialism. Not only the immortality of the soul is discussed, but an exact definition of it is sought, and that in the light of a truer psychology than Plato's. His "chariot" is given up; sensation, as the basis of all thought, is freely recognized; and yet the passions are firmly separated from the actual essence of the soul; further, the "coats of skins" of fallen humanity, as symbolizing the *wrong* use of the passions, take the place of the "sea-weed" on the statue of Glaucus. The grasp of the Christian philosopher of the traits of a perfect humanity, so conspicuous in his *Making of Man,* give him an advantage here over the pagan. As for the Resurrection of the flesh, it was a novel stroke to bring the beliefs of Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato, and the later Platonists, into one focus as it were, and to show that the teaching of those philosophers as to the destinies of the soul recognized the possibility, or even the necessity, of the reassumption of *some* body. Grotesque objections to the Christian Resurrection, such as are urged nowadays, are brought forward and answered in this Treatise.

The appeal to the Saviour, as to the Inspiration of the Old Testament, has raised again a discussion as to the Two Natures; and will probably continue to do so. But before the subject of the "communication of attributes" can be entered upon, we must remember that Christ's mere humanity (as has been lately pointed out) is, to begin with, sinless. He was perfect man. What the attributes of a perfect, as contrasted with a fallen, humanity are, it is not given except by inference to know; but no Father has

discussed this subject of Adam's nature more fully than Gregory, in his treatise *On the Making of Man.*

The reasons for classing the *Great Catechism* as an Apologetic are given in the Prolegomena: here from first to last Gregory shows himself a genuine pupil of Origen. The plan of Revelation is made to rest on man's free-will; every objection to it is answered by the fact of this free-will. This plan is unfolded so as to cover the whole of human history; the beginning, the middle, and the end are linked, in the exposition, indissolubly together. The Incarnation is the turning-point of history; and yet, beyond this, its effects are for all Creation. Who made this theology? Origen doubtless; and his philosophy of Scripture, based on a few leading texts, became, one point excepted, the property of the Church: she at last possessed a Théodicée that borrowed nothing from Greek ideas. So far, then, every one who used it was an Origenist: and yet Gregory alone has suffered from this charge. In using this Théodicée he has in some points surpassed his master, *i.e.* in showing in details the skilfulness (sofia) which effected the real "touching" of humanity; and how the "touched" soul and the "touched" body shall follow in the path of the Redeemer's Resurrection.

To the many points of modern interest in this Gregory should be added his eschatology, which occupies a large share of his thoughts. *On Infants' Early Deaths* is a witness of this. In fact, when not occupied in defending, on one side or another, the Baptismal Formula, he is absorbed in eschatology. He dwells continually on the agonizing and refining processes of Purgatory. But to claim him as one who favours the doctrine of "Eternal Hope" in a universal sense is hardly possible, when we consider the passage in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* where he speaks of a

Last Judgment as coming after the Resurrection and Purgatory.

So much has been said in a Preface, in order to show that this Volume is a step at least towards reinstating a most interesting writer, doubtless one of the most highly educated of his time, and, let it be observed as well, a canonized saint (for, more fortunate than his works, he was never branded as a heretic), in his true position.

In a first English translation of Treatises and Letters most of which (notably the books against Eunomius) have never been illustrated by a single translator's note, and by but a handful of scholia, a few passages remain, which from the obscurity of their allusion, local or historical, are unexplained. In others the finest shades of meaning in one Greek word, insisted on in some argument, but which the best English equivalent fails to represent, cause the appearance of obscurity. But, throughout, the utmost clearness possible without unduly straining the literal meaning has been aimed at; and in passages too numerous to name, most grateful acknowledgment is here made of the invaluable suggestions of the Rev. J. H. Lupton.

It is hoped that the Index of Subjects will be of use, in lieu of an analysis, where an analysis has not been provided. The Index of Texts, all of which have been strictly verified, while it will be found to prove Gregory's thorough knowledge of Scripture (nothwithstanding his somewhat classical training), does not attempt to distinguish between citation and reminiscence; care, however, has been taken that the reminiscence should be undoubted.

The Index of Greek words (as also the quotations in foot-notes of striking sentences) has been provided for those interested in the study of later Greek.—W. M., *July*, 1892.

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Dates of Treatises, &C., Here Translated.

(*Based on Heyns and Rupp.*)

331. Gregory Born.

360. *Letters x. xi. xv.*

361. Julian's edict. Gregory gives up rhetoric.

362. Gregory in his brother's monastery.

363. *Letter vi.* (probably)

368. *On Virginity.*

369. Gregory elected a reader.

372. Gregory elected Bishop of Nyssa early in this year.

374. Gregory is exiled under Valens.

375. *On the Faith. On "Not Three Gods."*

376. *Letters vii. xiv. On the Baptism of Christ.*

377. *Against Macedonius*

378. Gregory Returns to his See. *Letter iii.*

379. *On Pilgrimages.* [Rupp places this after the Council of Constantinople, 381. *Letters i., v., vii., xvi.* are also probably after 381.] *Letter ii.*

380. *On the Soul and the Resurrection; On the Making of Man; On the Holy Trinity.*

381. Gregory present at the Second Council. *Oration on Meletius.*

382–3. *Against Eunomius,* Books I–XII.

383. Present at Constantinople. *Letter xxi.*

384. *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*

385. *The Great Catechism*

386. *Letter xiii.*

390. *Letter iv.*

393. *Letter to Flavian.*

394. *Present for Synod at Constantinople*

395. *On Infant's Early Deaths.*

The Life and Writings of Gregory of Nyssa

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Chapter I.—A Sketch of the Life of S. Gregory of Nyssa.

IN the roll of the Nicene Fathers there is no more honoured name than that of Gregory of Nyssa. Besides the praises of his great brother Basil and of his equally great friend Gregory Nazianzen, the sanctity of his life, his theoIogical learning, and his strenuous advocacy of the faith embodied in the Nicene clauses, have received the praises of Jerome, Socrates, Theodoret, and many other Christian writers. Indeed such was the estimation in which he was held that some did not hesitate to call him ‘the Father of Fathers’ as well as ‘the Star of Nyssa’ .”

Gregory of Nyssa was equally fortunate in his country, the name he bore, and the family which produced him. He was a native of Cappadocia, and was born most probably at Caesarea, the capital, about A.D. 335 or 336. No province of the Roman Empire had in those early ages received more eminent Christian bishops than Cappadocia and the adjoining district of Pontus.

In the previous century the great prelate Firmilian, the disciple and friend of Origen, who visited him at his See, had held the Bishopric of Caesarea. In the same age another saint, Gregory Thaumaturgus, a friend also and disciple of Origen, was bishop of Neo-Caesarea in Pontus. During the same century, too, no less than four other Gregories shed more or less lustre on bishoprics in that country. The family of Gregory of Nyssa was one of considerable wealth and distinction, and one also conspicuously Christian.

During the Diocletian persecution his grandparents had fled for safety to the mountainous region of Pontus, where

they endured great hardships and privations. It is said that his maternal grandfather, whose name is unknown, eventually lost both life and property. After a retirement of some few years the family appear to have returned and settled at Caesarea in Cappadocia, or else at Neo-Caesarea in Pontus, for there is some uncertainty in the account.

Gregory's father, Basil, who gave his name to his eldest son, was known as a rhetorician. He died at a comparatively early age, leaving a family of ten children, five of whom were boys and five girls, under the care of their grandmother Macrina and mother Emmelia. Both of these illustrious ladies were distinguished for the earnestness and strictness of their Christian principles, to which the latter added the charm of great personal beauty.

All the sons and daughters appear to have been of high character, but it is only of four sons and one daughter that we have any special record. The daughter, called Macrina, from her grandmother, was the angel in the house of this illustrious family. She shared with her grandmother and mother the care and education of all its younger members. Nor was there one of them who did not owe to her religious influence their settlement in the faith and consistency of Christian conduct.

This admirable woman had been betrothed in early life, but her intended husband died of fever. She permitted herself to contract no other alliance, but regarded herself as still united to her betrothed in the other world. She devoted herself to a religious life, and eventually, with her mother Emmelia, established a female conventual society on the family-property in Pontus, at a place called Annesi, on the banks of the river Iris.

It was owing to her persuasions that her brother Basil also gave up the worldly life, and retired to lead the devout life in a wild spot in the immediate neighbourhood of Annesi. Here for a while he was an hermit, and here he persuaded his friend Gregory Nazianzen to join him. They studied together the works of Origen, and published a selection of extracts from his Commentaries, which they called “Philocalia.” By the suggestions of a friend Basil enlarged his idea, and converted his hermit’s seclusion into a monastery, which eventually became the centre of many others which sprung up in that district.

His inclination for the monastic life had been greatly influenced by his acquaintance with the Egyptian monks, who had impressed him with the value of their system as an aid to a life of religious devotion. He had visited also the hermit saints of Syria and Arabia, and learnt from them the practice of a severe asceticism, which both injured his health and shortened his days.

Gregory of Nyssa was the third son, and one of the youngest of the family. He had an elder brother, Nectarius, who followed the profession of their father, and became rhetorician, and like him died early. He had also a younger brother, Peter, who became bishop of Sebaste.

Besides the uncertainty as to the year and place of his birth it is not known where he received his education. From the weakness of his health and delicacy of his constitution, it was most probably at home. It is interesting, in the case of one so highly educated, to know who, in consequence of his father’s early death, took charge of his merely intellectual bringing up: and his own words do not leave us in any doubt that, so far as he had a teacher, it was Basil, his senior by several years. He constantly speaks of him as the revered ‘Master:’ to take but one instance, he says in his

Hexaemeron (ad init.) that all that will be striking in that work will be due to Basil, what is inferior will be the 'pupil's.' Even in the matter of style, he says in a letter written in early life to Libanius that though he enjoyed his brother's society but a short time yet Basil was the author of his oratory (logou): and it is safe to conclude that he was introduced to all that Athens had to teach, perhaps even to medicine, by Basil: for Basil had been at Athens. On the other hand we can have no difficulty in crediting his mother, of whom he always spoke with the tenderest affection, and his admirable sister Macrina, with the care of his religious teaching. Indeed few could be more fortunate than Gregory in the influences of home. If, as there is every reason to believe, the grandmother Macrina survived Gregory's early childhood, then, like Timothy, he was blest with the religious instruction of another Lois and Eunice.

In this chain of female relationship it is difficult to say which link is worthier of note, grandmother, mother, or daughter. Of the first, Basil, who attributes his early religious impressions to his grandmother, tells us that as a child she taught him a Creed, which had been drawn up for the use of the Church of Neo-Caesarea by Gregory Thaumaturgus. This Creed, it is said, was revealed to the Saint in a vision. It has been translated by Bishop Bull in his "Fidei Nicaenae Defensio." In its language and spirit it anticipates the Creed of Constantinople.

Certain it is that Gregory had not the benefit of a residence at Athens, or of foreign travel. It might have given him a strength of character and width of experience, in which he was certainly deficient. His shy and retiring disposition induced him to remain at home without choosing a profession, living on his share of the paternal property, and educating himself by a discipline of his own.

He remained for years unbaptized. And this is a very noticeable circumstance which meets us in the lives of many eminent Saints and Bishops of the Church. They either delayed baptism themselves, or it was delayed for them. Indeed there are instances of Bishops baptized and consecrated the same day.

Gregory's first inclination or impulse to make a public profession of Christianity is said to have been due to a remarkable dream or vision.

His mother Emmelia, at her retreat at Annesi, urgently entreated him to be present and take part in a religious ceremony in honour of the Forty Christian Martyrs. He had gone unwillingly, and wearied with his journey and the length of the service, which lasted far into the night, he lay down and fell asleep in the garden. He dreamed that the Martyrs appeared to him and, reproaching him for his indifference, beat him with rods. On awaking he was filled with remorse, and hastened to amend his past neglect by earnest entreaties for mercy and forgiveness. Under the influence of the terror which his dream inspired he consented to undertake the office of reader in the Church, which of course implied a profession of Christianity. But some unfitness, and, perhaps, that love of eloquence which clung to him to the last, soon led him to give up the office, and adopt the profession of a rhetorician or advocate. For this desertion of a sacred for a secular employment he is taken severely to task by his brother Basil and his friend Gregory Nazianzen. The latter does not hesitate to charge him with being influenced, not by conscientious scruples, but by vanity and desire of public display, a charge not altogether consistent with his character.

Here it is usual to place the marriage of Gregory with Theosebeia, said to have been a sister of Gregory

Nazianzen. Certainly the tradition of Gregory's marriage received such credit as to be made in after times a proof of the non-celibacy of the Bishops of his age. But it rests mainly on two passages, which taken separately are not in the least conclusive. The first is the ninety-fifth letter of Gregory Nazianzen, written to console for a certain loss by death, i.e. of "Theosebeia, the fairest, the most lustrous even amidst such beauty of the adelfoi; Theosebeia, the true priestess, the yokefellow and the equal of a priest." J. Rupp has well pointed out that the expression 'yokefellow' (suzugon), which has been insisted as meaning 'wife,' may, especially in the language of Gregory Nazianzen, be equivalent to adelfoi. He sees in this Theosebeia 'a sister of the Cappadocian brothers.' The second passage is contained in the third cap. of Gregory's treatise *On Virginity*. Gregory there complains that he is "cut off by a kind of gulf from this glory of virginity" (parqenia). The whole passage should be consulted. Of course its significance depends on the meaning given to parqenia. Rupp asserts that more and more towards the end of the century this word acquired a technical meaning derived from the purely ideal side, i.e. virginity of soul: and that Gregory is alluding to the same thing that his friend had not long before blamed him for, the keeping of a school for rhetoric, where his object had been merely worldly reputation, and the truly ascetic career had been marred (at the time he wrote). Certainly the terrible indictment of marriage in the third capof this treatise comes ill from one whose wife not only must have been still living, but possessed the virtues sketched in the letter of Gregory Nazianzen: while the allusions at the end of it to the law-courts and their revelations appear much more like the professional reminiscence of a rhetorician who must have been familiar with them, than the personal complaint of one who had cause to depreciate marriage. The powerful words of Basil, de Virgin. I. 610, a. b., also favour the above

view of the meaning of parqenia: and Gregory elsewhere distinctly calls celibacy parqenia tou` swmato, and regards it as a means only to this higher parqeniva (III. 131). But the two passages above, when combined, may have led to the tradition of Gregory's marriage. Nicephorus Callistus, for example, who first makes mention of it, must have put upon parqenia the interpretation of his own time (thirteenth century,) i.e. that of continence. Finally, those who adopt this tradition have still to account for the fact that no allusion to Theosebeia as his wife, and no letter to her, is to be found in Gregory's numerous writings. It is noteworthy that the Benedictine editors of Gregory Nazianzen(ad Epist. 95) also take the above view.

His final recovery and conversion to the Faith, of which he was always after so strenuous an asserter, was due to her who, all things considered, was the master spirit of the family. By the powerful persuasions of his sister Macrina, at length, after much struggle, he altered entirely his way of life, severed himself from all secular occupations, and retired to his brother's monastery in the solitudes of Pontus, a beautiful spot, and where, as we have seen, his mother and sister had established, in the immediate neighbourhood, a similar association for women.

Here, then, Gregory was settled for several years, and devoted himself to the study of the Scripture and the works of his master Origen. Here, too, his love of natural scenery was deepened so as to find afterwards constant and adequate expression. For in his writings we have in large measure that sentiment of delight in the beauty of nature of which, even when it was felt, the traces are so few and far between in the whole range of Greek literature. A notable instance is the following from the *Letter to Adelphus*, written long afterwards:—"The gifts bestowed upon the spot by Nature, who beautifies the earth with an

impromptu grace, are such as these: below, the river Halys makes the place fair to look upon with his banks, and glides like a golden ribbon through their deep purple, reddening his current with the soil he washes down. Above, a mountain densely overgrown with wood stretches, with its long ridge, covered at all points with the foliage of oaks, more worthy of finding some Homer to sing its praises than that Ithacan Neritus which the poet calls ‘far-seen with quivering leaves.’ But the natural growth of wood as it comes down the hill-side meets at the foot the plantations of human husbandry. For forthwith vines, spread out over the slopes and swellings and hollows at the mountain’s base, cover with their colour, like a green mantle, all the lower ground: and the season also was now adding to their beauty with a display of magnificent grape-clusters.” Another is from the treatise *On Infants’ Early Deaths*: —“Nay look only at an ear of corn, at the germinating of some plant, at a ripe bunch of grapes, at the beauty of early autumn whether in fruit or flower, at the grass springing unbidden, at the mountain reaching up with its summit to the height of the ether, at the springs of the lower ground bursting from its flanks in streams like milk, and running in rivers through the glens, at the sea receiving those streams from every direction and yet remaining within its limits with waves edged by the stretches of beach, and never stepping beyond those fixed boundaries: and how can the eye of reason fail to find in them all that our education for Realities requires?” The treatise *On Virginity* was the fruit of this life in Basil’sonastery.

Henceforward the fortunes of Gregory are more closely linked with those of his great brother Basil.

About A.D. 365 Basil was summoned from his retirement to act as coadjutor to Euseblus, the Metropolitan of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and aid him in repelling the assaults of the

Arian faction on the Faith. In these assaults the Arians were greatly encouraged and assisted by the proclivities of the Emperor Valens. After some few years of strenuous and successful resistance, and the endurance of great persecution from the Emperor and his Court, a persecution which indeed pursued him through life, Basil is called by the popular voice, on the death of Eusebius, A.D. 370, to succeed him in the See. His election is vehemently opposed, but after much turmoil is at length accomplished.

To strengthen himself in his position, and surround himself with defenders of the orthodox Faith, he obliges his brother Gregory, in spite of his emphatic protest, to undertake the Bishopric of Nyssa , a small town in the west of Cappadocia. When a friend expressed his surprise that he had chosen so obscure a place for such a man as Gregory, he replied, that he did not desire his brother to receive distinction from the name of his See, but rather to confer distinction upon it.

It was with the same feeling, and by the exercise of a like masterful will, that he forced upon his friend Gregory Nazianzen the Bishopric of a still more obscure and unimportant place, called Sasima. But Gregory highly resented the nomination, which unhappily led to a lifelong estrangement.

It was about this time, too, that a quarrel had arisen between Basil and their uncle, another Gregory, one of the Cappadocian Bishops. And here Gregory of Nyssa gave a striking proof of the extreme simplicity and unreflectiveness of his character, which without guileful intent yet led him into guile. Without sufficient consideration he was induced to practise a deceit which was as irreconcileable with Christian principle as with common sense. In his endeavours to set his brother and

uncle at one, when previous efforts had been in vain, he had recourse to an extraordinary method. He forged a letter, as if from their uncle, to Basil, earnestly entreating reconciliation. The inevitable discovery of course only widened the breach, and drew down on Gregory his brother's indignant condemnation, The reconciliation, however, which Gregory hoped for, was afterwards brought about.

Nor was this the only occasion on which Gregory needed Basil's advice and reproof, and protection from the consequences of his inexperienced zeal. After he had become Bishop of Nyssa, with a view to render assistance to his brother he promoted the summoning of Synods. But Basil's wider experience told him that no good would come of such assemblies under existing circumstances. Besides which he had reason to believe that Gregory would be made the tool of factious and designing men. He therefore discouraged the attempt. At another time Basil had to interpose his authority to prevent his brother joining in a mission to Rome to invite the interference of Pope Damasus and the Western Bishops in the settlement of the troubles at Antioch in consequence of the disputed election to the See. Basil had himself experience of the futility of such application to Rome, from the want of sympathy in the Pope and the Western Bishops with the troubles in the East. Nor would he, by such application, give a handle for Rome's assertion of supremacy, and encroachment on the independence of the Eastern Church. The Bishopric of Nyssa was indeed to Gregory no bed of roses. Sad was the contrast to one of his genre spirit, more fitted for studious retirement and monastic calm than for controversies which did not end with the pen, between the peaceful leisure of his retreat in Pontus and the troubles and antagonisms of his present position. The enthusiasm of his faith on the subject of the Trinity and the Incarnation brought upon him

the full weight of Arian and Sabellian hostility, aggravated as it was by the patronage of the Emperor. In fact his whole life at Nyssa was a series of persecutions.

A charge of uncanonical irregularity in his ordination is brought up against him by certain Arian Bishops, and he is summoned to appear and answer them at a Synod at Ancyra. To this was added the vexation of a prosecution by Demosthenes, the Emperor's *chef de cuisine*, on a charge of defalcation in the Church funds.

A band of soldiers is sent to fetch him to the Synod. The fatigue of the journey, and the rough treatment of his conductors, together with anxiety of mind, produce a fever which prevents his attendance. His brother Basil comes to his assistance. He summons another Synod of orthodox Cappadocian Bishops, who dictate in their joint names a courteous letter, apologising for Gregory's absence from the Synod of Ancyra, and proving the falsehood of the charge of embezzlement. At the same time he writes to solicit the interest of Astorgus, a person of considerable influence at the Court, to save his brother from the indignity of being dragged before a secular tribunal.

Apparently the application was unsuccessful. Demosthenes now obtains the holding another Synod at Gregory's own See of Nyssa, where he is summoned to answer the same charges. Gregory refuses to attend. He is consequently pronounced contumacious, and deposed from his Bishopric. His deposition is followed immediately by a decree of banishment from the Emperor, A.D. 376. He retires to Seleucia. But his banishment did not secure him from the malice and persecution of his enemies. He is obliged frequently to shift his quarters, and is subjected to much bodily discomfort and suffering. From the consoling answers of his friend Gregory of Nazianzen (for his own

letters are lost), we learn the crushing effects of all these troubles upon his gentle and sensitive spirit, and the deep despondency into which he had fallen.

At length there is a happier turn of affairs. The Emperor Valens is killed, A.D. 378, and with him Arianism ‘vanished in the crash of Hadrianople.’ He is succeeded by Gratian, the friend and disciple of St. Ambrose. The banished orthodox Bishops are restored to their Sees, and Gregory returns to Nyssa. In one of his letters, most probably to his brother Basil, he gives a graphic description of the popular triumph with which his return was greeted.

But the joy of his restoration is overshadowed by domestic sorrows. His great brother, to whom he owed so much, soon after dies, ere he is 50 years of age, worn out by his unparalleled toils and the severity of his ascetic life. Gregory celebrated his death in a sincere panegyric. Its high-flown style is explained by the rhetorical fashion of the time. The same year another sorrow awaits him. After a separation of many years he revisits his sister Macrina, at her convent in Pontus, but only to find her on her death-bed. We have an interesting and graphic account of the scene between Gregory and his dying sister. To the last this admirable woman appears as the great teacher of her family. She supplies her brother with arguments for, and confirms his faith in, the resurrection of the dead; and almost reproves him for the distress he felt at her departure, bidding him, with St. Paul, not to sorrow as those who had no hope. After her decease an inmate of the convent, named Vestiana, brought to Gregory a ring, in which was a piece of the true Cross, and an iron cross, both of which were found on the body when laying it out. One Gregory retained himself, the other he gave to Vestiana. He buried his sister in the chapel at Annesi, in which her parents and her brother Naucratius slept.

From henceforth the labours of Gregory have a far more extended range. He steps into the place vacated by the death of Basil, and takes foremost rank among the defenders of the Faith of Nicaea. He is not, however, without trouble still from the heretical party. Certain Galatians had been busy in sowing the seeds of their heresy among his own people. He is subjected, too, to great annoyance from the disturbances which arose out of the wish of the people of Ibera in Pontus to have him as their Bishop. In that early age of the Church election to a Bishopric, if not dependent on the popular voice, at least called forth the expression of much popular feeling, like a contested election amongst ourselves. This often led to breaches of the peace, which required military intervention to suppress them, as it appears to have done on this occasion.

But the reputation of Gregory is now so advanced, and the weight of his authority as an eminent teacher so generally acknowledged, that we find him as one of the Prelates at the Synod of Antioch assembled for the purpose of healing the long-continued schisms in that distracted See. By the same Synod Gregory is chosen to visit and endeavour to reform the Churches of Arabia and Babylon, which had fallen into a very corrupt and degraded state. He gives a lamentable account of their condition, as being beyond all his powers of reformation. On this same journey he visits Jerusalem and its sacred scenes: it has been conjectured that the Apollinarian heresy drew him thither. Of the Church of Jerusalem he can give no better account than of those he had already visited. He expresses himself as greatly scandalized at the conduct of the Pilgrims who visited the Holy City on the plea of religion. Writing to three ladies, whom he had known at Jerusalem, he takes occasion, from what he had witnessed there, to speak of