

0329-0390 – Gregorius Nazianzenus – Funebris oratio in patrem 1

Oration XVIII

On the Death of his Father.

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for the affliction of Joseph;³¹⁷⁵ though they ought to have been kind to those who had met with disaster before them, and by mercy have obtained mercy; as the fir-tree should howl, because the cedar had fallen,³¹⁷⁶ and be instructed by their neighbours' chastisement, and be led by others' ills to regulate their own lives, having the advantage of being saved by their predecessors' fate, instead of being themselves a warning to others.

20. Join with us, thou divine and sacred person, in considering these questions, with the store of experience, that source of wisdom, which thou hast gathered in thy long life. Herewith instruct thy people. Teach them to break their bread to the hungry, to gather together the poor that have no shelter, to cover their nakedness and not neglect those of the same blood,³¹⁷⁷ and now especially that we may gain a benefit from our need instead of from abundance, a result which pleases God more than plentiful offerings and large gifts. After this, nay before it, show thyself, I pray, a Moses,³¹⁷⁸ or Phinehas³¹⁷⁹ to-day. Stand on our behalf and make atonement, and let the plague be stayed, either by the spiritual sacrifice,³¹⁸⁰ or by prayer and reasonable intercession.³¹⁸¹ Restrain the anger of the Lord by thy mediation: avert any succeeding blows of the scourge. He knoweth to respect the hoar hairs of a father interceding for his children. Intreat for our past wickedness: be our surety for the future. Present a people purified by suffering and fear. Beg for bodily sustenance, but beg rather for the angels' food that cometh down from heaven. So doing, thou wilt make God to be our God, wilt conciliate heaven, wilt restore the former and latter rain:³¹⁸² the Lord shall show loving-kindness³¹⁸³ and our land shall yield her fruit;³¹⁸⁴ our earthly land its fruit which lasts for the day, and our frame, which is but dust, the fruit which is eternal, which we shall store up in the heavenly winepresses by thy hands, who presentest both us and ours in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory for evermore. Amen.

Oration XVIII.

3175	Amos vi. 4–6.
3176	Zech. xi. 2.
3177	Isai. lviii. 7.
3178	Exod. xxxii. 11.
3179	Ps. cvi. 23, 30.
3180	1 Pet. ii. 5.
3181	Rom. xii. 1.
3182	Joel ii. 23.
3183	Ps. lxxxv. 13.
3184	Ib. lxvii. 6.

On the Death of his Father.

THIS Oration was delivered A.D. 374. S. Gregory the elder died early in that year, according to the Greek Menæa on the 1st of January, though Clémencet and some others place his death a few months later. His wife, S. Nonna, survived him, and was present to hear the Oration, as was also S. Basil, who desired to honour one who had consecrated him to the Episcopate. The aged Saint, who died in his hundredth year, had originally belonged to a sect called Hypsistarii. Our knowledge of the existence and tenets of this sect is due to this Oration³¹⁸⁵ and to a few sentences in that of S. Greg. Nyssen. (c. Eunom. I. ed. 1615, p. 12), by whom they are called Hypsistians. He was converted by the prayers, influence and example of his wife, S. Nonna, and, soon after his baptism, consecrated Bishop of Nazianzus. He was eminent as an able administrator, a devout Christian, an orthodox teacher, a steadfast Confessor of the faith, a sympathetic Pastor, an affectionate father. In his life and work he was seconded by his wife, and followed by his three children, Gregory, Gorgonia, and Cæsarius, whose names are all to be found upon the roll of the Saints.



Funeral Oration on His Father, in the Presence of S. Basil.

1. O MAN of God,³¹⁸⁶ and faithful servant,³¹⁸⁷ and steward of the mysteries of God,³¹⁸⁸ and man of desires³¹⁸⁹ of the Spirit.³¹⁹⁰ for thus Scripture speaks of men advanced and lofty, superior to visible things. I will call you also a God to Pharaoh³¹⁹¹ and all the Egyptian and hostile power, and pillar and ground of the Church³¹⁹² and will of God³¹⁹³ and light in the world, holding forth the word of life,³¹⁹⁴ and prop of the faith and resting place of the Spirit. But why should I enumerate all the titles which your virtue, in its varied forms, has won for and applied to you as your own?

2. Tell me, however, whence do you come, what is your business, and what favour do you bring us? Since I know that you are entirely moved with and by God, and for the benefit of those who receive you. Are you come to inspect us, or to seek for the pastor, or to take the oversight of the flock? You find us no longer in existence, but for the most part having passed away with him, unable to bear with the place of our affliction, especially now that we have lost our skilful steersman,

³¹⁸⁵ Cf. Orat. viii. § 4, note.

³¹⁸⁶ Josh. xiv. 6.

³¹⁸⁷ Numb. xii. 7.

³¹⁸⁸ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

³¹⁸⁹ Dan. ix. 23 (LXX.).

³¹⁹⁰ The first words are addressed to S. Basil, who was present.

³¹⁹¹ Exod. vii. 1.

³¹⁹² 1 Tim. vii. 15.

³¹⁹³ Isai. lxii. 4. (LXX.).

³¹⁹⁴ Phil. ii. 16.

our light of life, to whom we looked to direct our course as the blazing beacon of salvation above us: he has departed with all his excellence, and all the power of pastoral organization, which he had gathered in a long time, full of days and wisdom, and crowned, to use the words of Solomon, with the hoary head of glory.³¹⁹⁵ His flock is desolate and downcast, filled, as you see, with despondency and dejection, no longer reposing in the green pasture,³¹⁹⁶ and reared up by the water of comfort, but seeking precipices, deserts and pits, in which it will be scattered and perish;³¹⁹⁷ in despair of ever obtaining another wise pastor, absolutely persuaded that it cannot find such an one as he, content if it be one who will not be far inferior.

3. There are, as I said, three causes to necessitate your presence, all of equal weight, ourselves, the pastor, and the flock: come then, and according to the spirit of ministry which is in you, assign to each its due, and guide your words in judgment, so that we may more than ever marvel at your wisdom. And how will you guide them? First by bestowing seemly praise upon his virtue, not only as a pure sepulchral tribute of speech to him who was pure, but also to set forth to others his conduct and example as a mark of true piety. Then bestow upon us some brief counsels concerning life and death, and the union and severance of body and soul, and the two worlds, the one present but transitory, the other spiritually perceived and abiding; and persuade us to despise that which is deceitful and disordered and uneven, carrying us and being carried, like the waves, now up, now down; but to cling to that which is firm and stable and divine and constant, free from all disturbance and confusion. For this would lessen our pain because of friends departed before us, nay we should rejoice if your words should carry us hence and set us on high, and hide distress of the present in the future, and persuade us that we also are pressing on to a good Master, and that our home is better than our pilgrimage; and that translation and removal thither is to us who are tempest-tost here like a calm haven to men at sea; or as ease and relief from toil come to men who, at the close of a long journey, escape the troubles of the wayfarer, so to those who attain to the hostel yonder comes a better and more tolerable existence than that of those who still tread the crooked and precipitous path of this life.

4. Thus might you console us; but what of the flock? Would you first promise the oversight and leadership of yourself, a man under whose wings we all would gladly repose, and for whose words we thirst more eagerly than men suffering from thirst for the purest fountain? Secondly, persuade us that the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep³¹⁹⁸ has not even now left us; but is present, and tends and guides, and knows his own, and is known of his own, and, though bodily invisible, is spiritually recognized, and defends his flock against the wolves, and allows no

³¹⁹⁵ Prov. xvi. 31.

³¹⁹⁶ Ps. xxiii. 2.

³¹⁹⁷ Ezek. xxxiv. 14.

³¹⁹⁸ S. John x. 11.



one to climb over into the fold as a robber and traitor; to pervert and steal away, by the voice of strangers, souls under the fair guidance of the truth. Aye, I am well assured that his intercession is of more avail now than was his instruction in former days, since he is closer to God, now that he has shaken off his bodily fetters, and freed his mind from the clay which obscured it, and holds intercourse naked with the nakedness of the prime and purest Mind; being promoted, if it be not rash to say so, to the rank and confidence of an angel. This, with your power of speech and spirit, you will set forth and discuss better than I can sketch it. But in order that, through ignorance of his excellences, your language may not fall very far short of his deserts, I will, from my own knowledge of the departed, briefly draw an outline, and preliminary plan of an eulogy to be handed to you, the illustrious artist of such subjects, for the details of the beauty of his virtue to be filled in and transmitted to the ears and minds of all.

5. Leaving to the laws of panegyric the description of his country, his family, his nobility of figure, his external magnificence, and the other subjects of human pride, I begin with what is of most consequence and comes closest to ourselves. He sprang from a stock unrenowned, and not well suited for piety, for I am not ashamed of his origin, in my confidence in the close of his life, one that was not planted in the house of God,³¹⁹⁹ but far removed and estranged, the combined product of two of the greatest opposites—Greek error and legal imposture, some parts of each of which it escaped, of others it was compounded. For, on the one side, they reject idols and sacrifices, but reverence fire and lights; on the other, they observe the Sabbath and petty regulations as to certain meats, but despise circumcision. These lowly men call themselves Hypsistarii, and the Almighty is, so they say, the only object of their worship. What was the result of this double tendency to impiety? I know not whether to praise more highly the grace which called him, or his own purpose. However, he so purged the eye of his mind from the humours³²⁰⁰ which obscured it, and ran towards the truth with such speed that he endured the loss of his mother and his property for a while, for the sake of his heavenly Father and the true inheritance: and submitted more readily to this dishonour, than others to the greatest honours, and, most wonderful as this is, I wonder at it but little. Why? Because this glory is common to him with many others, and all must come into the great net of God, and be caught by the words of the fishers, although some are earlier, some later, enclosed by the Gospel. But what does especially in his life move my wonder, it is needful for me to mention.

6. Even before he was of our fold, he was ours. His character made him one of us. For, as many of our own are not with us, whose life alienates them from the common body, so, many of those without are on our side, whose character anticipates their faith, and need only the name of that which indeed they possess. My father was one of these, an alien shoot, but inclined by his life towards us. He was so far advanced in self control, that he became at once most beloved and most modest, two qualities difficult to combine. What greater and more splendid testimony can there

³¹⁹⁹ Ps. xcii. 13.

³²⁰⁰ *Humours*. This word is used Aristoph. Plut. 581, of the obscuring effect of old prejudices.

be to his justice than his exercise of a position second to none in the state, without enriching himself by a single farthing, although he saw everyone else casting the hands of Briareus upon the public funds, and swollen with ill-gotten gain? For thus do I term unrighteous wealth. Of his prudence this also is no slight proof, but in the course of my speech further details will be given. It was as a reward³²⁰¹ for such conduct, I think, that he attained to the faith. How this came about, a matter too important to be passed over, I would now set forth.

7. I have heard the Scripture say: Who can find a valiant woman?³²⁰² and declare that she is a divine gift, and that a good marriage is brought about by the Lord. Even those without are of the same mind; if they say that a man can win no fairer prize than a good wife, nor a worse one than her opposite.³²⁰³ But we can mention none who has been in this respect more fortunate than he. For I think that, had anyone from the ends of the earth and from every race of men attempted to bring about the best of marriages, he could not have found a better or more harmonious one than this. For the most excellent of men and of women were so united that their marriage was a union of virtue rather than of bodies: since, while they excelled all others, they could not excel each other, because in virtue they were quite equally matched.

8. She indeed who was given to Adam as a help meet for him, because it was not good for man to be alone,³²⁰⁴ instead of an assistant became an enemy, and instead of a yoke-fellow, an opponent, and beguiling the man by means of pleasure, estranged him through the tree of knowledge from the tree of life. But she who was given by God to my father became not only, as is less wonderful, his assistant, but even his leader, drawing him on by her influence in deed and word to the highest excellence; judging it best in all other respects to be overruled by her husband according to the law of marriage, but not being ashamed, in regard of piety, even to offer herself as his teacher. Admirable indeed as was this conduct of hers, it was still more admirable that he should readily acquiesce in it. She is a woman who while others have been honoured and extolled for natural and artificial beauty, has acknowledged but one kind of beauty, that of the soul, and the preservation, or the restoration as far as possible, of the Divine image. Pigments and devices for adornment she has rejected as worthy of women on the stage. The only genuine form of noble birth she recognized is piety, and the knowledge of whence we are sprung and whither we are tending. The only safe and inviolable form of wealth is, she considered, to strip oneself of wealth for God and the poor, and especially for those of our own kin who are unfortunate; and such help only as is necessary, she held to be rather a reminder, than a relief of their distress, while a more liberal beneficence brings stable honour and most perfect consolation. Some women have excelled in thrifty management, others in piety, while she, difficult as it is to unite the two virtues, has surpassed all in both of them, both by her eminence in each, and by the fact that she alone has combined them



³²⁰¹ *Reward.* Faith is, as Clémencet remarks, “the gift of God”—but cf. S. John vii. 17.

³²⁰² Prov. xxxi. 10, 7.

³²⁰³ Hesiod: Works and Days, 700.

³²⁰⁴ Gen. ii. 18.

together. To as great a degree has she, by her care and skill, secured the prosperity of her household, according to the injunctions and laws of Solomon as to the valiant woman, as if she had had no knowledge of piety; and she applied herself to God and Divine things as closely as if absolutely released from household cares, allowing neither branch of her duty to interfere with the other, but rather making each of them support the other.

9. What time or place for prayer ever escaped her? To this she was drawn before all other things in the day; or rather, who had such hope of receiving an immediate answer to her requests? Who paid such reverence to the hand and countenance of the priests? Or honoured all kinds of philosophy? Who reduced the flesh by more constant fast and vigil? Or stood like a pillar at the night long and daily psalmody? Who had a greater love for virginity, though patient of the marriage bond herself? Who was a better patron of the orphan and the widow? Who aided as much in the alleviation of the misfortunes of the mourner? These things, small as they are, and perhaps contemptible in the eyes of some, because not easily attainable by most people (for that which is unattainable comes, through envy, to be thought not even credible), are in my eyes most honourable, since they were the discoveries of her faith and the undertakings of her spiritual fervour. So also in the holy assemblies, or places, her voice was never to be heard except³²⁰⁵ in the necessary responses of the service.

10. And if it was a great thing for the altar never to have had an iron tool lifted upon it,³²⁰⁶ and that no chisel should be seen or heard, with greater reason, since everything dedicated to God ought to be natural and free from artificiality, it was also surely a great thing that she revered the sanctuary by her silence; that she never turned her back to the venerable table, nor spat upon the divine pavement; that she never grasped the hand or kissed the lips of any heathen woman, however honourable in other respects, or closely related she might be; nor would she ever share the salt, I say not willingly but even under compulsion, of those who came from the profane and unholy table; nor could she bear, against the law of conscience, to pass by or look upon a polluted house; nor to have her ears or tongue, which had received and uttered divine things, defiled by Grecian tales or theatrical songs, on the ground that what is unholy is unbecoming to holy things; and what is still more wonderful, she never so far yielded to the external signs of grief, although greatly moved even by the misfortunes of strangers, as to allow a sound of woe to burst forth before the Eucharist, or a tear to fall from the eye mystically sealed, or any trace of mourning to be left on the occasion of a festival, however frequent her own sorrows might be; inasmuch as the God-loving soul should subject every human experience to the things of God.

11. I pass by in silence what is still more ineffable, of which God is witness, and those of the faithful handmaidens to whom she has confided such things. That which concerns myself is perhaps

³²⁰⁵ *Except, etc.* Lit., “except the necessary and mystical (i.e., liturgical) [words].”

³²⁰⁶ Deut. xxvii. 5.



undeserving of mention, since I have proved unworthy of the hope cherished in regard to me: yet it was on her part a great undertaking to promise me to God before my birth, with no fear of the future, and to dedicate me immediately after I was born. Through God's goodness has it been that she has not utterly failed in her prayer, and that the auspicious sacrifice was not rejected. Some of these things were already in existence, others were in the future, growing up by means of gradual additions. And as the sun which most pleasantly casts its morning rays, becomes at midday hotter and more brilliant, so also did she, who from the first gave no slight evidence of piety, shine forth at last with fuller light. Then indeed he, who had established her in his house, had at home no slight spur to piety, possessed, by her origin and descent, of the love of God and Christ, and having received virtue as her patrimony; not, as he had been, cut out of the wild olive and grafted into the good olive, yet unable to bear, in the excess of her faith, to be unequally yoked; for, though surpassing all others in endurance and fortitude, she could not brook this, the being but half united to God, because of the estrangement of him who was a part of herself, and the failure to add to the bodily union, a close connexion in the spirit: on this account, she fell before God night and day, entreating for the salvation of her head with many fastings and tears, and assiduously devoting herself to her husband, and influencing him in many ways, by means of reproaches, admonitions, attentions, estrangements, and above all by her own character with its fervour for piety, by which the soul is specially prevailed upon and softened, and willingly submits to virtuous pressure. The drop³²⁰⁷ of water constantly striking the rock was destined to hollow it, and at length attain its longing, as the sequel shows.

12. These were the objects of her prayers and hopes, in the fervour of faith rather than of youth. Indeed, none was as confident of things present as she of things hoped for, from her experience of the generosity of God. For the salvation of my father there was a concurrence of the gradual conviction³²⁰⁸ of his reason, and the vision of dreams which God often bestows upon a soul worthy of salvation. What was the vision? This is to me the most pleasing part of the story. He thought that he was singing, as he had never done before, though his wife was frequent in her supplications and prayers, this verse from the psalms of holy David: I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord.³²⁰⁹ The psalm was a strange one to him, and along with its words the desire came to him. As soon as she heard it, having thus obtained her prayer, she seized the opportunity, replying that the vision would bring the greatest pleasure, if accompanied by its fulfilment, and, manifesting by her joy the greatness of the benefit, she urged forward his salvation, before anything could intervene to hinder the call, and dissipate the object of her longing. At that very time it happened that a number of Bishops were hastening to Nicæa, to oppose the madness of Arius, since the wickedness of dividing the Godhead had just arisen; so my father yielded himself to God and to the heralds of the truth, and confessed his desire, and requested from them the common

³²⁰⁷ *The drop.* A familiar proverb. Choerilus, 9.

³²⁰⁸ *Conviction.* Lit., "healing."

³²⁰⁹ Ps. cxxii. 1.

salvation, one of them being the celebrated Leontius, at that time our own metropolitan. It would be a great wrong to grace, were I to pass by in silence the wonder which then was bestowed upon him by grace. The witnesses of the wonder³²¹⁰ are not few. The teachers of accuracy were spiritually at fault, and the grace was a forecast of the future, and the formula of the priesthood was mingled with the admission of the catechumen. O involuntary initiation! bending his knee, he received the form of admission to the state of a catechumen in such wise, that many, not only of the highest, but even of the lowest, intellect, prophesied the future, being assured by no indistinct signs of what was to be.

13. After a short interval, wonder succeeded wonder. I will commend the account of it to the ears of the faithful, for to profane minds nothing that is good is trustworthy. He was approaching that regeneration by water and the Spirit, by which we confess to God the formation and completion of the Christlike man, and the transformation and reformation from the earthy to the Spirit. He was approaching the laver with warm desire and bright hope, after all the purgation possible, and a far greater purification of soul and body than that of the men who were to receive the tables from Moses. Their purification extended only to their dress, and a slight restriction of the belly, and a temporary continence.³²¹¹ The whole of his past life had been a preparation for the enlightenment, and a preliminary purification making sure the gift, in order that perfection might be entrusted to purity, and that the blessing might incur no risk in a soul which was confident in its possession of the grace. And as he was ascending out of the water, there flashed around him a light and a glory worthy of the disposition with which he approached the gift of faith;³²¹² this was manifest even to some others, who for the time concealed the wonder, from fear of speaking of a sight which each one thought had been only his own, but shortly afterwards communicated it to one another. To the baptiser³²¹³ and initiator, however, it was so clear and visible, that he could not even hold back the mystery, but publicly cried out that he was anointing with the Spirit his own successor.

14. Nor indeed would anyone disbelieve this who has heard and knows that Moses, when little in the eyes of men, and not yet of any account, was called from the bush which burned but was not consumed, or rather by Him who appeared in the bush,³²¹⁴ and was encouraged by that first wonder:

259

³²¹⁰ *The wonder.* S. Gregory the elder ought, according to the rite of admission to the ranks of the Catechumens, to have remained standing, and in that position have had his ears anointed. He fell upon his knees and the Bishop, in forgetfulness, pronounced over him the form of ordination to the Priesthood.

³²¹¹ Exod. xix. 10, 15.

³²¹² *The gift of faith.* One of the questions in some ancient rites of administering Holy Baptism was, "What seekest thou of the Church?" to which the answer was "Faith."

³²¹³ *The baptiser.* The Bishop of Nazianzus—not Leontius of Cæsarea, who had much to do with Gregory's instruction and had, possibly, admitted him to the order of Catechumens.

³²¹⁴ Exod. iii. 4.

Moses, I say, for whom the sea was divided,³²¹⁵ and manna rained down,³²¹⁶ and the rock poured out a fountain,³²¹⁷ and the pillar of fire and cloud led the way in turn, and the stretching out of his hands gained a victory, and the representation of the cross overcame tens of thousands. Isaiah, again, who beheld the glory of the Seraphim,³²¹⁸ and after him Jeremiah, who was entrusted with great power against nations and kings;³²¹⁹ the one heard the divine voice and was cleansed by a live coal for his prophetic office, and the other was known before his formation and sanctified before his birth. Paul, also, while yet a persecutor, who became the great herald of the truth and teacher of the Gentiles in faith,³²²⁰ was surrounded by a light³²²¹ and acknowledged Him whom he was persecuting, and was entrusted with his great ministry, and filled every ear and mind with the gospel.

15. Why need I count up all those who have been called to Himself by God and associated with such wonders as confirmed him in his piety? Nor was it the case that after such and so incredible and startling beginnings, any of the former things was put to shame by his subsequent conduct, as happens with those who very soon acquire a distaste for what is good, and so neglect all further progress, if they do not utterly relapse into vice. This cannot be said of him, for he was most consistent with himself and his early days, and kept in harmony his life before the priesthood with its excellence, and his life after it with what had gone before, since it would have been unbecoming to begin in one way and end in another, or to advance to a different end from that which he had in view at first. He was next entrusted with the priesthood, not with the facility and disorder of the present day, but after a brief interval, in order to add to his own cleansing the skill and power to cleanse others; for this is the law of spiritual sequence. And when he had been entrusted with it, the grace was the more glorified, being really the grace of God, and not of men, and not, as the preacher³²²² says, an independent impulse and purpose³²²³ of spirit.

16. He received a woodland and rustic church, the pastoral care and oversight of which had not been bestowed from a distance, but it had been cared for by one of his predecessors of admirable and angelic disposition, and a more simple man than our present rulers of the people; but, after he had been speedily taken to God, it had, in consequence of the loss of its leader, for the most part grown careless and run wild; accordingly, he at first strove without harshness to soften the habits of the people, both by words of pastoral knowledge, and by setting himself before them as an example, like a spiritual statue, polished into the beauty of all excellent conduct. He next, by

³²¹⁵ Ib. xiv. 22.

³²¹⁶ Ib. xvi. 4.

³²¹⁷ Ib. xvii. 6.

³²¹⁸ Isai. vi. 1 et seq.

³²¹⁹ Jer. i. 10.

³²²⁰ 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11.

³²²¹ Acts ix. 3.

³²²² Eccles. i. 17; LXX.

³²²³ *Purpose*, etc. A.V. "Vexation of Spirit." R.V. "Striving after wind."

constant meditation on the divine words, though a late student of such matters, gathered together so much wisdom within a short time that he was in no wise excelled by those who had spent the greatest toil upon them, and received this special grace from God, that he became the father and teacher of orthodoxy—not, like our modern wise men, yielding to the spirit of the age, nor defending our faith by indefinite and sophistical language, as if they had no fixity of faith, or were adulterating the truth; but, he was more pious than those who possessed rhetorical power, more skilled in rhetoric than those who were upright in mind; or rather, while he took the second place as an orator, he surpassed all in piety. He acknowledged One God worshipped in Trinity, and Three, Who are united in One Godhead; neither Sabellianising³²²⁴ as to the One, nor Arianising as to the Three; either by contracting and so atheistically annihilating the Godhead, or by tearing It asunder by distinctions of unequal greatness or nature. For, seeing that Its every quality is incomprehensible and beyond the power of our intellect, how can we either perceive or express by definition on such a subject, that which is beyond our ken? How can the immeasurable be measured, and the Godhead be reduced to the condition of finite things, and measured by degrees³²²⁵ of greater or less?

260

17. What else must we say of this great man of God, the true Divine, under the influence, in regard to these subjects, of the Holy Ghost, but that through his perception of these points, he, like the great Noah, the father of this second world, made this church to be called the new Jerusalem, and a second ark borne up upon the waters; since it both surmounted the deluge of souls, and the insults of the heretics, and excelled all others in reputation no less than it fell behind them in numbers; and has had the same fortune as the sacred Bethlehem, which can without contradiction be at once said to be a little city and the metropolis of the world, since it is the nurse and mother of Christ, Who both made and overcame the world.

18. To give a proof of what I say. When a tumult of the over-zealous part of the Church was raised against us, and we had been decoyed by a document³²²⁶ and artful terms into association with evil, he alone was believed to have an unwounded mind, and a soul unstained by ink, even when he had been imposed upon in his simplicity, and failed from his guilelessness of soul to be on his guard against guile. He it was alone, or rather first of all, who by his zeal for piety reconciled to himself and the rest of the church the faction opposed to us, which was the last to leave us, the first to return, owing to both their reverence for the man and the purity of his doctrine, so that the serious storm in the churches was allayed, and the hurricane reduced to a breeze under the influence of his

³²²⁴ *Sabellianising*, etc. Cf. II. 36, 37 (notes).

³²²⁵ *Degrees*. The heretics asserted that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost were arranged in this order according to a real difference in rank.

³²²⁶ *A document*. Benoît (I. p. 179) gives reasons for believing that this was the creed of the council of Antioch, A.D. 363—which accepted the Creed of Nicæa, but explained it in terms capable of a semiarian construction. The “over zealous part” were the monks.

prayers and admonitions; while, if I may make a boastful remark, I was his partner³²²⁷ in piety and activity, aiding him in every effort on behalf of what is good, accompanying and running beside him, and being permitted on this occasion to contribute a very great share of the toil. Here my account of these matters, which is a little premature, must come to an end.

19. Who could enumerate the full tale of his excellences, or, if he wished to pass by most of them, discover without difficulty what can be omitted? For each trait, as it occurs to the mind, seems superior to what has gone before; it takes possession of me, and I feel more at a loss to know what I ought to pass by, than other panegyrist are as to what they ought to say. So that the abundance of material is to some extent a hindrance to me, and my mind is itself put to the test in its efforts to test his qualities, and its inability, where all are equal, to find one which surpasses the rest. So that, just as when we see a pebble falling into still water, it becomes the centre and starting-point of circle after circle, each by its continuous agitation breaking up that which lies outside of it; this is exactly the case with myself. For as soon as one thing enters my mind, another follows and displaces it; and I am wearied out in making a choice, as what I have already grasped is ever retiring in favour of that which follows in its train.

20. Who was more anxious than he for the common weal? Who more wise in domestic affairs, since God, who orders all things in due variation, assigned to him a house and suitable fortune? Who was more sympathetic in mind, more bounteous in hand, towards the poor, that most dishonoured portion of the nature to which equal honour is due? For he actually treated his own property as if it were another's, of which he was but the steward, relieving poverty as far as he could, and expending not only his superfluities but his necessities—a manifest proof of love for the poor, giving a portion, not only to seven, according to the injunction of Solomon,³²²⁸ but if an eighth came forward, not even in his case being niggardly, but more pleased to dispose of his wealth than we know others are to acquire it; taking away the yoke and election (which means, as I think, all meanness in testing as to whether the recipient is worthy or not) and word of murmuring³²²⁹ in benevolence. This is what most men do: they give indeed, but without that readiness, which is a greater and more perfect thing than the mere offering. For he thought it much better³²³⁰ to be generous even to the undeserving for the sake of the deserving, than from fear of the undeserving to deprive those who were deserving. And this seems to be the duty of casting our bread upon the waters,³²³¹ since it will not be swept away or perish in the eyes of the just Investigator, but will arrive yonder where all that is ours is laid up, and will meet with us in due time, even though we think it not.

261

³²²⁷ *Partner*. S. Gregory had a considerable share in the explanations which made clear his father's real orthodoxy, and re-established peace. Orat. vi. was pronounced by him on the occasion.

³²²⁸ Eccles. xi. 2.

³²²⁹ Isai. lviii. 9. (LXX.).

³²³⁰ *Better*. Clémencet compares Dem. De Corona.

³²³¹ Eccles. xi. 1.

21. But what is best and greatest of all, his magnanimity was accompanied by freedom from ambition. Its extent and character I will proceed to show. In considering their wealth to be common to all, and in liberality in bestowing it, he and his consort rivalled each other in their struggles after excellence; but he intrusted the greater part of this bounty to her hand, as being a most excellent and trusty steward of such matters. What a woman she is? Not even the Atlantic Ocean, or if there be a greater one, could meet her drafts upon it. So great and so boundless is her love of liberality. In the contrary sense she has rivalled the horse-leech³²³² of Solomon, by her insatiable longing for progress, overcoming the tendency to backsliding, and unable to satisfy her zeal for benevolence. She not only considered all the property which they originally possessed, and what accrued to them later, as unable to suffice her own longing, but she would, as I have often heard her say, have gladly sold herself and her children into slavery, had there been any means of doing so, to expend the proceeds upon the poor. Thus entirely did she give the rein to her generosity. This is, I imagine, far more convincing than any instance of it could be. Magnanimity in regard to money may be found without difficulty in the case of others, whether it be dissipated in the public rivalries of the state, or lent to God through the poor, the only mode of treasuring it up for those who spend it: but it is not easy to discover a man who has renounced the consequent reputation. For it is desire for reputation which supplies to most men their readiness to spend. And where the bounty must be secret, there the disposition to it is less keen.

22. So bounteous was his hand—further details I leave to those who knew him, so that if anything of the kind is borne witness to in regard to myself, it proceeds from that fountain, and is a portion of that stream. Who was more under the Divine guidance in admitting men to the sanctuary,³²³³ or in resenting dishonour done to it, or in cleansing the holy table with awe from the unholy? Who with such unbiassed judgment, and with the scales of justice, either decided a suit, or hated vice, or honoured virtue, or promoted the most excellent? Who was so compassionate for the sinner, or sympathetic towards those who were running well? Who better knew the right time for using the rod and the staff,³²³⁴ yet relied most upon the staff? Whose eyes were more upon the faithful in the land,³²³⁵ especially upon those who, in the monastic and unwedded life, have despised the earth and the things of earth?

23. Who did more to rebuke pride and foster lowliness? And that in no assumed or external way, as most of those who now make profession of virtue, and are in appearance as elegant as the most mindless women, who, for lack of beauty of their own, take refuge in pigments, and are, if I may say so, splendidly made up, uncomely in their comeliness, and more ugly than they originally were. For his lowliness was no matter of dress, but of spiritual disposition: nor was it expressed by a bent neck, or lowered voice, or downcast look, or length of beard, or close-shaven head, or

³²³² Prov. xxx. 15.

³²³³ *To the Sanctuary*, i.e., To the Priesthood.

³²³⁴ Ps. xxiii. 5. *Rod and Staff*, i.e., Punishment and support.

³²³⁵ Ps. ci. 6.

measured gait, which can be adopted for a while, but are very quickly exposed, for nothing which is affected can be permanent. No! he was ever most lofty in life, most lowly in mind; inaccessible in virtue, most accessible in intercourse. His dress had in it nothing remarkable, avoiding equally magnificence and sordidness, while his internal brilliancy was supereminent. The disease and insatiability of the belly, he, if anyone, held in check, but without ostentation; so that he might be kept down without being puffed up, from having encouraged a new vice by his pursuit of reputation. For he held that doing and saying everything by which fame among externs might be won, is the characteristic of the politician, whose chief happiness is found in the present life: but that the spiritual and Christian man should look to one object alone, his salvation, and think much of what may contribute to this, but detest as of no value what does not; and accordingly despise what is visible, but be occupied with interior perfection alone, and estimate most highly whatever promotes his own improvement, and attracts others through himself to that which is supremely good.

24. But what was most excellent and most characteristic, though least generally recognized, was his simplicity, and freedom from guile and resentment. For among men of ancient and modern days, each is supposed to have had some special success, as each chanced to have received from God some particular virtue: Job unconquered patience in misfortune,³²³⁶ Moses³²³⁷ and David³²³⁸ meekness, Samuel prophecy, seeing into the future,³²³⁹ Phineas zeal,³²⁴⁰ for which he has a name, Peter and Paul eagerness in preaching,³²⁴¹ the sons of Zebedee magniloquence, whence also they were entitled Sons of thunder.³²⁴² But why should I enumerate them all, speaking as I do among those who know this? Now the specially distinguishing mark of Stephen and of my father was the absence of malice. For not even when in peril did Stephen hate his assailants, but was stoned while praying for those who were stoning him³²⁴³ as a disciple of Christ, on Whose behalf he was allowed to suffer, and so, in his long-suffering, bearing for God a nobler fruit than his death: my father, in allowing no interval between assault and forgiveness, so that he was almost robbed of pain itself by the speed of pardon.

25. We both believe in and hear of the dregs³²⁴⁴ of the anger of God, the residuum of His dealings with those who deserve it: For the Lord is a God of vengeance.³²⁴⁵ For although He is disposed

³²³⁶ Job i. 21.
³²³⁷ Numb. xii. 3.
³²³⁸ Ps. cxxxii. 1 (LXX).
³²³⁹ 1 Sam. ix. 9.
³²⁴⁰ Numb. xxxv. 7.
³²⁴¹ Gal. ii. 7.
³²⁴² S. Mark iii. 17.
³²⁴³ Acts vii. 59.
³²⁴⁴ *Dregs*. Cf. Orat. xvi. 4.
³²⁴⁵ Ps. lxxv. 8; xciv. 1.

by His kindness to gentleness rather than severity, yet He does not absolutely pardon sinners, lest they should be made worse by His goodness. Yet my father kept no grudge against those who provoked him, indeed he was absolutely uninfluenced by anger, although in spiritual things exceedingly overcome by zeal: except when he had been prepared and armed and set in hostile array against that which was advancing to injure him. So that this sweet disposition of his would not, as the saying goes, have been stirred by tens of thousands. For the wrath which he had was not like that of the serpent,³²⁴⁶ smouldering within, ready to defend itself, eager to burst forth, and longing to strike back at once on being disturbed; but like the sting of the bee, which does not bring death with its stroke; while his kindness was superhuman. The wheel and scourge were often threatened, and those who could apply them stood near; and the danger ended in being pinched on the ear, patted on the face, or buffeted on the temple: thus he mitigated the threat. His dress and sandals were dragged off, and the scoundrel was felled to the ground: then his anger was directed not against his assailant, but against his eager succourer, as a minister of evil. How could anyone be more conclusively proved to be good, and worthy to offer the gifts to God? For often, instead of being himself roused, he made excuses for the man who assailed him, blushing for his faults as if they had been his own.

26. The dew would more easily resist the morning rays of the sun, than any remains of anger continue in him; but as soon as he had spoken, his indignation departed with his words, leaving behind only his love for what is good, and never outlasting the sun; nor did he cherish anger which destroys even the prudent, or show any bodily trace of vice within, nay, even when roused, he preserved calmness. The result of this was most unusual, not that he was the only one to give rebuke, but the only one to be both loved and admired by those whom he reproved, from the victory which his goodness gained over warmth of feeling; and it was felt to be more serviceable to be punished by a just man than besmeared by a bad one, for in one case the severity becomes pleasant for its utility, in the other the kindness is suspected because of the evil of the man's character. But though his soul and character were so simple and divine, his piety nevertheless inspired the insolent with awe: or rather, the cause of their respect was the simplicity which they despised. For it was impossible to him to utter either prayer or curse without the immediate bestowal of permanent blessing or transient pain. The one proceeded from his inmost soul, the other merely rested upon his lips as a paternal reproof. Many indeed of those who had injured him incurred neither lingering requital nor, as the poet³²⁴⁷ says, "vengeance which dogs men's steps;" but at the very moment of their passion they were struck and converted, came forward, knelt before him, and were pardoned, going away gloriously vanquished, and amended both by the chastisement and the forgiveness. Indeed, a forgiving spirit often has great saving power, checking the wrongdoer by the sense of shame, and bringing him back from fear to love, a far more secure state of mind. In chastisement some were tossed by oxen oppressed by the yoke, which suddenly attacked them,

³²⁴⁶ Ib. lviii. 4. (LXX.).

³²⁴⁷ *The poet.* Pindar.

though they had never done anything of the kind before; others were thrown and trampled upon by most obedient and quiet horses; others seized by intolerable fevers, and apparitions of their daring deeds; others being punished in different ways, and learning obedience from the things which they suffered.

27. Such and so remarkable being his gentleness, did he yield the palm to others in industry and practical virtue? By no means. Gentle as he was, he possessed, if any one did, an energy corresponding to his gentleness. For although, for the most part, the two virtues of benevolence and severity are at variance and opposed to each other, the one being gentle but without practical qualities, the other practical but unsympathetic, in his case there was a wonderful combination of the two, his action being as energetic as that of a severe man, but combined with gentleness; while his readiness to yield seemed unpractical but was accompanied with energy, in his patronage, his freedom of speech, and every kind of official duty. He united the wisdom of the serpent, in regard to evil, with the harmlessness of the dove, in regard to good, neither allowing the wisdom to degenerate into knavery, nor the simplicity into silliness, but as far as in him lay, he combined the two in one perfect form of virtue. Such being his birth, such his exercise of the priestly office, such the reputation which he won at the hands of all, what wonder if he was thought worthy of the miracles by which God establishes true religion?

28. One of the wonders which concern him was that he suffered from sickness and bodily pain. But what wonder is it for even holy men to be distressed, either for the cleansing of their clay, slight though it may be, or a touchstone of virtue and test of philosophy, or for the education of the weaker, who learn from their example to be patient instead of giving way under their misfortunes? Well, he was sick, the time was the holy and illustrious Easter, the queen of days, the brilliant night which dissipates the darkness of sin, upon which with abundant light we keep the feast of our salvation, putting ourselves to death along with the Light once put to death for us, and rising again with Him who rose. This was the time of his sufferings. Of what kind they were, I will briefly explain. His whole frame was on fire with an excessive, burning fever, his strength had failed, he was unable to take food, his sleep had departed from him, he was in the greatest distress, and agitated by palpitations. Within his mouth, the palate and the whole of the upper surface was so completely and painfully ulcerated, that it was difficult and dangerous to swallow even water. The skill of physicians, the prayers, most earnest though they were, of his friends, and every possible attention were alike of no avail. He himself in this desperate condition, while his breath came short and fast, had no perception of present things, but was entirely absent, immersed in the objects he had long desired, now made ready for him. We were in the temple, mingling supplications with the sacred rites, for, in despair of all others, we had betaken ourselves to the Great Physician, to the power of that night, and to the last succour, with the intention, shall I say, of keeping a feast, or of mourning; of holding festival, or paying funeral honours to one no longer here? O those tears! which were shed at that time by all the people. O voices, and cries, and hymns blended with the psalmody! From the temple they sought the priest, from the sacred rite the celebrant, from God their worthy

ruler, with my Miriam³²⁴⁸ to lead them and strike the timbrel³²⁴⁹ not of triumph, but of supplication; learning then for the first time to be put to shame by misfortune, and calling at once upon the people and upon God; upon the former to sympathize with her distress, and to be lavish of their tears, upon the latter, to listen to her petitions, as, with the inventive genius of suffering, she rehearsed before Him all His wonders of old time.

29. What then was the response of Him who was the God of that night and of the sick man? A shudder comes over me as I proceed with my story. And though you, my hearers, may shudder, do not disbelieve: for that would be impious, when I am the speaker, and in reference to him. The time of the mystery was come, and the reverend station and order, when silence is kept for the solemn rites; and then he was raised up by Him who quickeneth the dead, and by the holy night. At first he moved slightly, then more decidedly; then in a feeble and indistinct voice he called by name one of the servants who was in attendance upon him, and bade him come, and bring his clothes, and support him with his hand. He came in alarm, and gladly waited upon him, while he, leaning upon his hand as upon a staff, imitates Moses upon the mount, arranges his feeble hands in prayer, and in union with, or on behalf of,³²⁵⁰ his people eagerly celebrates the mysteries, in such few words as his strength allowed, but, as it seems to me, with a most perfect intention. What a miracle! In the sanctuary without a sanctuary, sacrificing without an altar, a priest far from the sacred rites: yet all these were present to him in the power of the spirit, recognised by him, though unseen by those who were there. Then, after adding the customary words of thanksgiving, and after blessing the people, he retired again to his bed, and after taking a little food, and enjoying a sleep, he recalled his spirit, and, his health being gradually recovered, on the new day³²⁵¹ of the feast, as we call the first Sunday after the festival of the Resurrection, he entered the temple and inaugurated his life which had been preserved, with the full complement of clergy, and offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving. To me this seems no less remarkable than the miracle in the case of Hezekiah,³²⁵² who was glorified by God in his sickness and prayers with an extension of life, and this was signified by the return of the shadow of the degrees,³²⁵³ according to the request of the king who was restored, whom God honoured at once by the favour and the sign, assuring him of the extension of his days by the extension of the day.

30. The same miracle occurred in the case of my mother not long afterwards. I do not think it would be proper to pass by this either: for we shall both pay the meed of honour which is due to

264

³²⁴⁸ *My Miriam.* S. Nonna.

³²⁴⁹ Exod. xv. 20.

³²⁵⁰ *On behalf of,* or perhaps "at the head of." The passage does not mean that he actually celebrated the Holy Mysteries, but that he used some of the prayers of the service, and united himself in intention with the service being at the time performed in the church, and invoked the Divine blessing upon his people in his absence.

³²⁵¹ *The new day.* On this feast (in another year) Orat. xlv. was preached.

³²⁵² 2 Kings xx. 1 et seq.

³²⁵³ Isai. xxxviii. 8.

her, if to anyone at all, and gratify him, by her being associated with him in our recital. She, who had always been strong and vigorous and free from disease all her life, was herself attacked by sickness. In consequence of much distress, not to prolong my story, caused above all by inability to eat, her life was for many days in danger, and no remedy for the disease could be found. How did God sustain her? Not by raining down manna, as for Israel of old³²⁵⁴ or opening the rock, in order to give drink to His thirsting people,³²⁵⁵ or feasting her by means of ravens, as Elijah,³²⁵⁶ or feeding her by a prophet carried through the air, as He did to Daniel when a-hungred in the den.³²⁵⁷ But how? She thought she saw me, who was her favourite, for not even in her dreams did she prefer any other of us, coming up to her suddenly at night, with a basket of pure white loaves, which I blessed and crossed as I was wont to do, and then fed and strengthened her, and she became stronger. The nocturnal vision was a real action. For, in consequence, she became more herself and of better hope, as is manifest by a clear and evident token. Next morning, when I paid her an early visit, I saw at once that she was brighter, and when I asked, as usual, what kind of a night she had passed, and if she wished for anything, she replied, "My child, you most readily and kindly fed me, and then you ask how I am. I am very well and at ease." Her maids too made signs to me to offer no resistance, and to accept her answer at once, lest she should be thrown back into despondency, if the truth were laid bare. I will add one more instance common to them both.

31. I was on a voyage from Alexandria to Greece over the Parthenian Sea. The voyage was quite unseasonable, undertaken in an Æginetan vessel, under the impulse of eager desire; for what specially induced me was that I had fallen in with a crew who were well known to me. After making some way on the voyage, a terrible storm came upon us, and such an one as my shipmates said they had but seldom seen before. While we were all in fear of a common death, spiritual death was what I was most afraid of; for I was in danger of departing in misery, being unbaptised, and I longed for the spiritual water among the waters of death. On this account I cried and begged and besought a slight respite. My shipmates, even in their common danger, joined in my cries, as not even my own relatives would have done, kindly souls as they were, having learned sympathy from their dangers. In this my condition, my parents felt for me, my danger having been communicated to them by a nightly vision, and they aided me from the land, soothing the waves by prayer, as I afterwards learned by calculating the time, after I had landed. This was also shown me in a wholesome sleep, of which I had experience during a slight lull of the tempest. I seemed to be holding a Fury, of fearful aspect, boding danger; for the night presented her clearly to my eyes. Another of my shipmates, a boy most kindly disposed and dear to me, and exceedingly anxious on my behalf, in my then present condition, thought he saw my mother walk upon the sea, and seize and drag the ship to land with no great exertion. We had confidence in the vision, for the sea began

³²⁵⁴ Exod. xvi. 14; xvii. 6.

³²⁵⁵ Ps. lxxviii. 24, 15.

³²⁵⁶ 1 Kings xvii. 6.

³²⁵⁷ Dan. xiv. 33 (sc. Hist. of Bel. v. 33).

to grow calm, and we soon reached Rhodes after the intervention of no great discomfort. We ourselves became an offering in consequence of that peril; for we promised ourselves if we were saved, to God, and, when we had been saved, gave ourselves to Him.

32. Such were their common experiences. But I imagine that some of those who have had an accurate knowledge of his life must have been for a long while wondering why we have dwelt upon these points, as if we thought them his only title to renown, and postponed the mention of the difficulties of his times, against which he conspicuously arrayed himself, as though we were either ignorant of them, or thought them to be of no great consequence. Come, then, we will proceed to speak upon this topic. The first, and I think the last, evil of our day, was the Emperor who apostatised from God and from reason, and thought it a small matter to conquer the Persians, but a great one to subject to himself the Christians; and so, together with the demons who led and prevailed upon him, he failed in no form of impiety, but by means of persuasions, threats, and sophistries, strove to draw men to him, and even added to his various artifices the use of force. His design, however, was exposed, whether he strove to conceal persecution under sophistical devices, or manifestly made use of his authority—namely by one means or the other—either by cozening or by violence, to get us into his power. Who can be found who more utterly despised or defeated him? One sign, among many others, of his contempt, is the mission to our sacred buildings of the police and their commissary, with the intention of taking either voluntary or forcible possession of them: he had attacked many others, and came hither with like intent, demanding the surrender of the temple according to the Imperial decree, but was so far from succeeding in any of his wishes that, had he not speedily given way before my father, either from his own good sense or according to some advice given to him, he would have had to retire with his feet mangled, with such wrath and zeal did the priest boil against him in defence of his shrine. And who had a manifestly greater share in bringing about his end, both in public, by the prayers and united supplications which he directed against the accursed one, without regard to the [dangers of] the time; and in private, arraying against him his nightly armoury, of sleeping on the ground, by which he wore away his aged and tender frame, and of tears, with whose fountains he watered the ground for almost a whole year, directing these practices to the Searcher of hearts alone, while he tried to escape our notice, in his retiring piety of which I have spoken. And he would have been utterly unobserved, had I not once suddenly rushed into his room, and noticing the tokens of his lying upon the ground, inquired of his attendants what they meant, and so learned the mystery of the night.

33. A further story of the same period and the same courage. The city of Cæsarea was in an uproar about the election of a bishop; for one³²⁵⁸ had just departed, and another must be found, amidst heated partisanship not easily to be soothed. For the city was naturally exposed to party spirit, owing to the fervour of its faith, and the rivalry was increased by the illustrious position of the see. Such was the state of affairs; several Bishops had arrived to consecrate the Bishop; the populace was divided into several parties, each with its own candidate, as is usual in such cases,

³²⁵⁸ One, i.e. Dianius.

owing to the influences of private friendship or devotion to God; but at last the whole people came to an agreement, and, with the aid of a band of soldiers at that time quartered there, seized one of³²⁵⁹ their leading citizens, a man of excellent life, but not yet sealed with the divine baptism, brought him against his will to the sanctuary, and setting him before the Bishops, begged, with entreaties mingled with violence, that he might be consecrated and proclaimed, not in the best of order, but with all sincerity and ardour. Nor is it possible to say whom time pointed out as more illustrious and religious than he was. What then took place, as the result of the uproar? Their³²⁶⁰ resistance was overcome, they purified him, they proclaimed him, they enthroned him, by external action, rather than by spiritual judgment and disposition, as the sequel shows. They were glad to retire and regain freedom of judgment, and agreed upon a plan—I do not know that it was inspired by the Spirit—to hold nothing which had been done to be valid, and the institution to have been void, pleading violence on the part of him who had had no less violence done to himself, and laying hold of certain words which had been uttered on the occasion with greater vigour than wisdom. But the great high-priest and just examiner of actions was not carried away by this plan of theirs, and did not approve of their judgment, but remained as uninfluenced and unmoved as if no pressure at all had been put upon him. For he saw that, the violence having been common, if they brought any charge against him, they were themselves liable to a counter-charge, or, if they acquitted him, they themselves might be acquitted, or rather with still more justice, they were unable to secure their own acquittal, even by acquitting him: for if they were deserving of excuse, so assuredly was he, and if he was not, much less were they: for it would have been far better to have at the time run the risk of resistance to the last extremity, than afterwards to enter into designs against him, especially at such a juncture, when it was better to put an end to existing enmities than to devise new ones. For the state of affairs was as follows.

266

34. The Emperor³²⁶¹ had come, raging against the Christians; he was angry at the election and threatened the elect, and the city stood in imminent peril³²⁶² as to whether, after that day it should cease to exist, or escape and be treated with some degree of mercy. The innovation in regard to the election was a new ground of exasperation, in addition to the destruction of the temple of Fortune in a time of prosperity, and was looked upon as an invasion of his rights. The governor of the province also was eager to turn the opportunity to his own account, and was ill disposed to the new bishop, with whom he had never had friendly relations, in consequence of their different political views. Accordingly he sent letters to summon the consecrators to invalidate the election, and in no gentle terms, for they were threatened as if by command of the Emperor. Hereupon, when the letter reached him, without fear or delay, he replied—consider the courage and spirit of his answer—“Most excellent governor, we have one Censor of all our actions, and one Emperor, against

³²⁵⁹ *One of*, etc., Eusebius.

³²⁶⁰ *Their*, i.e., of the Bishops.

³²⁶¹ *The Emperor*, Julian.

³²⁶² *In imminent peril*, lit. “on a razor’s edge.” Homer Il. x. 173.

whom his enemies are in arms. He will review the present consecration, which we have legitimately performed according to His will. In regard to any other matter, you may, if you will, use violence with the greatest ease against us. But no one can prevent us from vindicating the legitimacy and justice of our action in this case; unless you should make a law on this point, you, who have no right to interfere in our affairs.” This letter excited the admiration of its recipient, although he was for a while annoyed at it, as we have been told by many who know the facts well. It also stayed the action of the Emperor, and delivered the city from peril, and ourselves, it is not amiss to add, from disgrace. This was the work of the occupant of an unimportant and suffragan see. Is not a presidency of this kind far preferable to a title derived from a superior see, and a power which is based upon action rather than upon a name.

35. Who is so distant from this world of ours, as to be ignorant of what is last in order, but the first and greatest proof of his power? The same city was again in an uproar for the same reason, in consequence of the sudden removal of the Bishop chosen with such honourable violence, who had now departed to God, on Whose behalf he had nobly and bravely contended in the persecutions. The heat of the disturbance was in proportion to its unreasonableness. The man of eminence was not unknown, but was more conspicuous than the sun amidst the stars, in the eyes not only of all others, but especially of that select and most pure portion of the people, whose business is in the sanctuary, and the Nazarites³²⁶³ amongst us, to whom such appointments should, if not entirely, as much as possible belong, and so the church would be free from harm, instead of to the most opulent and powerful, or the violent and unreasonable portion of the people, and especially the most corrupt of them. Indeed, I am almost inclined to believe that the civil government is more orderly than ours, to which divine grace is attributed, and that such matters are better regulated by fear than by reason. For what man in his senses could ever have approached another, to the neglect of your divine³²⁶⁴ and sacred person, who have been beautified by the hands of the Lord, the unwedded, the destitute of property and almost of flesh and blood, who in your words come next to the Word Himself, who are wise among philosophers, superior to the world among worldlings, my companion and workfellow, and to speak more daringly, the sharer with me of a common soul, the partaker of my life and education. Would that I could speak at liberty and describe you before others without being obliged by your presence, in dwelling upon such topics, to pass over the greater part of them, lest I should incur the suspicion of flattery. But, as I began by saying, the Spirit must needs have known him as His own; yet he was the mark of envy, at the hands of those whom I am ashamed to mention, and would that it were not possible to hear their names from others who studiously ridicule our affairs. Let us pass this by like a rock in the midstream of a river, and treat with respectful silence a subject which ought to be forgotten, as we pass on to the remainder of our subject.

36. The things of the Spirit were exactly known to the man of the Spirit, and he felt that he must take up no submissive position, nor side with factions and prejudices which depend upon

³²⁶³ *Nazarites*, i.e., “the monks.”

³²⁶⁴ *Your divine*, etc., addressed to S. Basil.



favour rather than upon God, but must make the advantage of the Church and the common salvation his sole object. Accordingly he wrote, gave advice, strove to unite the people and the clergy, whether ministering in the sanctuary or not, gave his testimony, his decision and his vote, even in his absence, and assumed, in virtue of his gray hairs, the exercise of authority among strangers no less than among his own flock. At last, since it was necessary that the consecration should be canonical, and there was³²⁶⁵ lacking one of the proper number of Bishops for the proclamation, he tore himself from his couch, exhausted as he was by age and disease, and manfully went to the city, or rather was borne, with his body dead though just breathing, persuaded that, if anything were to happen to him, this devotion would be a noble winding-sheet. Hereupon once more there was a prodigy, not unworthy of credit. He received strength from his toil, new life from his zeal, presided at the function, took his place in the conflict, enthroned the Bishop, and was conducted home, no longer borne upon a bier, but in a divine ark. His long-suffering, over whose praises I have already lingered, was in this case further exhibited. For his colleagues were annoyed at the shame of being overcome, and at the public influence of the old man, and allowed their annoyance to show itself in abuse of him; but such was the strength of his endurance that he was superior even to this, finding in modesty a most powerful ally, and refusing to bandy abuse with them. For he felt that it would be a terrible thing, after really gaining the victory, to be vanquished by the tongue. In consequence, he so won upon them by his long-suffering, that, when time had lent its aid to his judgment, they exchanged their annoyance for admiration, and knelt before him to ask his pardon, in shame for their previous conduct, and flinging away their hatred, submitted to him as their patriarch, lawgiver, and judge.

37. From the same zeal proceeded his opposition to the heretics, when, with the aid of the Emperor's impiety, they made their expedition, in the hope of overpowering us also, and adding us to the number of the others whom they had, in almost all cases, succeeded in enslaving. For in this he afforded us no slight assistance, both in himself, and by hounding us on like well-bred dogs against these most savage beasts, through his training in piety. On one point I blame you both, and pray do not take amiss my plainspeaking, if I should annoy you by expressing the cause of my pain. When I was disgusted at the evils of life, and longing, if anyone of our day has longed, for solitude, and eager, as speedily as possible, to escape to some haven of safety, from the surge and dust of public life, it was you who, somehow or other seized and gave me up by the noble title of the priesthood to this base and treacherous mart of souls. In consequence, evils have already befallen me, and others are yet to be anticipated. For past experience renders a man somewhat distrustful of the future, in spite of the better suggestions of reason to the contrary.

38. Another of his excellences I must not leave unnoticed. In general, he was a man of great endurance, and superior to his robe of flesh: but during the pain of his last sickness, a serious addition to the risks and burdens of old age, his weakness was common to him and all other men; but this fitting sequel to the other marvels, so far from being common, was peculiarly his own. He

³²⁶⁵ *There was lacking.* The Council of Nicæa ordered that a Bishop should be consecrated by at least three Bishops.

was at no time free from the anguish of pain, but often in the day, sometimes in the hour, his only relief was the liturgy, to which the pain yielded, as if to an edict of banishment. At last, after a life of almost a hundred years, exceeding David's limit of our age,³²⁶⁶ forty-five of these, the average life of man, having been spent in the priesthood, he brought it to a close in a good old age. And in what manner? With the words and forms of prayer, leaving behind no trace of vice, and many recollections of virtue. The reverence felt for him was thus greater than falls to the lot of man, both on the lips and in the hearts of all. Nor is it easy to find anyone who recollects him, and does not, as the Scripture says, lay his hand upon his mouth³²⁶⁷ and salute his memory. Such was his life, and such its completion and perfection.

39. And since some living memorial of his munificence ought to be left behind, what other is required than this temple, which he reared for God and for us, with very little contribution from the people in addition to the expenditure of his private fortune? An exploit which should not be buried in silence, since in size it is superior to most others, in beauty absolutely to all. It surrounds itself with eight regular equilaterals, and is raised aloft by the beauty of two stories of pillars and porticos, while the statues placed upon them are true to the life; its vault flashes down upon us from above, and it dazzles our eyes with abundant sources of light on every side, being indeed the dwelling-place of light. It is surrounded by excrescent equiangular ambulatories of most splendid material, with a wide area in the midst, while its doors and vestibules shed around it the lustre of their gracefulness, and offer from a distance their welcome to those who are drawing nigh. I have not yet mentioned the external ornament, the beauty and size of the squared and dove-tailed stonework, whether it be of marble in the bases and capitals, which divide the angles, or from our own quarries, which are in no wise inferior to those abroad; nor of the belts of many shapes and colours, projecting or inlaid from the foundation to the roof-tree, which robs the spectator by limiting his view. How could anyone with due brevity describe a work which cost so much time and toil and skill: or will it suffice to say that amid all the works, private and public, which adorn other cities, this has of itself been able to secure us celebrity among the majority of mankind? When for such a temple a priest was needed, he also at his own expense provided one, whether worthy of the temple or no, it is not for me to say. And when sacrifices were required, he supplied them also, in the misfortunes of his son, and his patience under trials, that God might receive at his hands a reasonable whole burnt offering and spiritual priesthood, to be honourably consumed, instead of the sacrifice of the Law.

40. What sayest thou, my father? Is this sufficient, and dost thou find an ample recompense for all thy toils, which thou didst undergo for my learning, in this eulogy of farewell or of entombment? And dost thou, as of old, impose silence on my tongue, and bid me stop in due time, and so avoid excess? Or dost thou require some addition? I know thou bidst me cease, for I have said enough. Yet suffer me to add this. Make known to us where thou art in glory, and the light



268

³²⁶⁶ Ps. xc. 10.

³²⁶⁷ Job xl. 4.

which encircles thee, and receive into the same abode thy partner soon to follow thee, and the children whom thou hadst laid to rest before thee, and me also, after no further, or but a slight addition to the ills of this life: and before reaching that abode receive me in this sweet stone,³²⁶⁸ which thou didst erect for both of us, to the honour even here of thy consecrated namesake, and excuse me from the care both of the people which I have already resigned,³²⁶⁹ and of that which for thy sake I have since accepted: and mayest thou guide and free from peril, as I earnestly entreat, the whole flock and all the clergy, whose father thou art said to be, but especially him who was overpowered by thy paternal and spiritual coercion, so that he may not entirely consider that act of tyranny obnoxious to blame.

41. And what do you think of us, O judge of my words and motions? If we have spoken adequately, and to the satisfaction of your desire, confirm it by your decision, and we accept it: for your decision is entirely the decision of God. But if it falls far short of his glory and of your hope, my ally is not far to seek. Let fall thy voice, which is awaited by his merits like a seasonable shower. And indeed he has upon you the highest claims, those of a pastor upon a pastor and of a father upon his son in grace. What wonder if he, who has³²⁷⁰ through your voice thundered throughout the world, should himself have some enjoyment of it? What more is needed? Only to unite with our spiritual Sarah, the consort and fellow-traveller through life of our great father Abraham, in the last Christian offices.

42. The nature of God, my mother, is not the same as that of men; indeed, to speak generally, the nature of divine things is not the same as that of earthly things. They possess unchangeableness and immortality, and absolute being with its consequences, for sure are the properties of things sure. But how is it with what is ours? It is in a state of flux and corruption, constantly undergoing some fresh change. Life and death, as they are called, apparently so different, are in a sense resolved into, and successive to, each other. For the one takes its rise from the corruption which is our mother, runs its course through the corruption which is the displacement of all that is present, and comes to an end in the corruption which is the dissolution of this life; while the other, which is able to set us free from the ills of this life, and oftentimes translates us to the life above, is not in my opinion accurately called death, and is more dreadful in name than in reality; so that we are in danger of irrationally being afraid of what is not fearful, and courting as preferable what we really ought to fear. There is one life, to look to life. There is one death, sin, for it is the destruction of the soul. But all else, of which some are proud, is a dream-vision, making sport of realities, and a series of phantasms which lead the soul astray. If this be our condition, mother, we shall neither be proud of life, nor greatly hurt, by death. What grievance can we find in being transferred hence

³²⁶⁸ *Stone*, i.e. the tomb in which his father was buried.

³²⁶⁹ *Which I have resigned*, i.e., Sasima. *Accepted*, i.e., Nazianzus.

³²⁷⁰ *He who has*. S. Gregory the elder was the principal mover in S. Basil's election and consecration.



to the true life? In being freed from the vicissitudes, the agitation, the disgust, and all the vile tribute we must pay to this life, to find ourselves, amid stable things, which know no flux, while as lesser lights, we circle round the great light?³²⁷¹

43. Does the sense of separation cause you pain? Let hope cheer you. Is widowhood grievous to you? Yet it is not so to him. And what is the good of love, if it gives itself easy things, and assigns the more difficult to its neighbour? And why should it be grievous at all, to one who is soon to pass away? The appointed day is at hand, the pain will not last long. Let us not, by ignoble reasonings, make a burden of things which are really light. We have endured a great loss—because the privilege we enjoyed was great. Loss is common to all, such a privilege to few. Let us rise superior to the one thought by the consolation of the other. For it is more reasonable, that that which is better should win the day. You have borne, in a most brave, Christian spirit, the loss of children, who were still in their prime and qualified for life; bear also the laying aside of his aged body by one who was weary of life, although his vigor of mind preserved for him his senses unimpaired. Do you want some one to care for you? Where is your Isaac, whom he left behind for you, to take his place in all respects? Ask of him small things, the support of his hand and service, and requite him with greater things, a mother's blessing and prayers, and the consequent freedom. Are you vexed at being admonished? I praise you for it. For you have admonished many whom your long life has brought under your notice. What I have said can have no application to you, who are so truly wise; but let it be a general medicine of consolation for mourners, so that they may know that they are mortals following mortals to the grave.

Oration XXI.

On the Great Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.

The reference in §22 to “the Council which sat first at Seleucia..and afterwards at this mighty city,” leaves no room for doubting that the Oration was delivered at Constantinople. Further local colour is found in the allusions of §5. We are assured by the panegyric on S. Cyprian (Orat. xxiv. 1) that it was already the custom of the Church of Constantinople to observe annual festivals in honour of the Saints: and at present two days are kept by the Eastern Church, viz., Jan. 18th, as the day of the actual death of S. Athanasius, and May 2d, in memory of the translation of his remains to the church of S. Sophia at Constantinople. Probably, therefore, this Oration was delivered on the former day, on which Assemani holds that S. Athanasius died. Papebroke and (with some hesitation) Dr. Bright pronounce in favour of May 2d. Tillemont supposes that A.D. 379 is the year

³²⁷¹ Gen. i. 16.