

0329-0390 – Gregorius Nazianzenus – In laudem Athanasii

Oration XXI

On the Great Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria

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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.

of its delivery; in which case it must have been very shortly after S. Gregory's arrival in the city. Since, however, no allusion is made to this, it seems, on the whole, more likely that it should be assigned to A.D. 380. The sermon takes high rank, even among S. Gregory's discourses, as the model of an ecclesiastical panegyric. It lacks, however, the charm of personal affection and intimate acquaintance with the inner life, which is characteristic of the orations concerned with his own relatives and friends.

1. IN praising Athanasius, I shall be praising virtue. To speak of him and to praise virtue are identical, because he had, or, to speak more truly, has embraced virtue in its entirety. For all who have lived according to God still live unto God, though they have departed hence. For this reason, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, since He is the God, not of the dead, but of the living.³²⁷² Again, in praising virtue, I shall be praising God, who gives virtue to men and lifts them up, or lifts them up again, to Himself by the enlightenment which is akin to Himself.³²⁷³ For many and great as are our blessings—none can say how many and how great—which we have and shall have from God, this is the greatest and kindest of all, our inclination and relationship to Him. For God is to intelligible things what the sun is to the things of sense. The one lightens the visible, the other the invisible, world. The one makes our bodily eyes to see the sun, the other makes our intellectual natures to see God. And, as that, which bestows on the things which see and are seen the power of seeing and being seen, is itself the most beautiful of visible things; so God, who creates, for those who think, and that which is thought of, the power of thinking and being thought of, is Himself the highest of the objects of thought, in Whom every desire finds its bourn, beyond Whom it can no further go. For not even the most philosophic, the most piercing, the most curious intellect has, or can ever have, a more exalted object. For this is the utmost of things desirable, and they who arrive at it find an entire rest from speculation.

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2. Whoever has been permitted to escape by reason and contemplation from matter and this fleshly cloud or veil (whichever it should be called) and to hold communion with God, and be associated, as far as man's nature can attain, with the purest Light, blessed is he, both from his ascent from hence, and for his deification there, which is conferred by true philosophy, and by rising superior to the dualism of matter, through the unity which is perceived in the Trinity. And whosoever has been depraved by being knit to the flesh, and so far oppressed by the clay that he cannot look at the rays of truth, nor rise above things below, though he is born from above, and called to things above, I hold him to be miserable in his blindness, even though he may abound in things of this world; and all the more, because he is the sport of his abundance, and is persuaded by it that something else is beautiful instead of that which is really beautiful, reaping, as the poor fruit of his poor opinion, the sentence of darkness, or the seeing Him to be fire, Whom he did not recognize as light.

³²⁷² S. Matt. xxii. 32.

³²⁷³ 1 John i. 5.

3. Such has been the philosophy of few, both nowadays and of old—for few are the men of God, though all are His handiwork,—among lawgivers, generals, priests, Prophets, Evangelists, Apostles, shepherds, teachers, and all the spiritual host and band—and, among them all, of him whom now we praise. And whom do I mean by these? Men like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, David, to some extent Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, the Prophets before the captivity, those after the captivity, and, though last in order, first in truth, those who were concerned with Christ's Incarnation or taking of our nature, the lamp³²⁷⁴ before the Light, the voice before the Word, the mediator before the Mediator, the mediator between the old covenant and the new, the famous John, the disciples of Christ, those after Christ, who were set over the people, or illustrious in word, or conspicuous for miracles, or made perfect through their blood.

4. With some of these Athanasius vied, by some he was slightly excelled, and others, if it is not bold to say so, he surpassed: some he made his models in mental power, others in activity, others in meekness, others in zeal, others in dangers, others in most respects, others in all, gathering from one and another various forms of beauty (like men who paint figures of ideal excellence), and combining them in his single soul, he made one perfect form of virtue out of all, excelling in action men of intellectual capacity, in intellect men of action; or, if you will, surpassing in intellect men renowned for intellect, in action those of the greatest active power; outstripping those who had moderate reputation in both respects, by his eminence in either, and those who stood highest in one or other, by his powers in both; and, if it is a great thing for those who have received an example, so to use it as to attach themselves to virtue, he has no inferior title to fame, who for our advantage has set an example to those who come after him.

5. To speak of and admire him fully, would perhaps be too long a task for the present purpose of my discourse, and would take the form of a history rather than of a panegyric: a history which it has been the object of my desires to commit to writing for the pleasure and instruction of posterity, as he himself wrote the life of the divine Antony,³²⁷⁵ and set forth, in the form of a narrative, the laws of the monastic life. Accordingly, after entering into a few of the many details of his history, such as memory suggests at the moment as most noteworthy, in order both to satisfy my own longing and fulfil the duty which befits the festival, we will leave the many others to those who know them. For indeed, it is neither pious nor safe, while the lives of the ungodly are honoured by recollection, to pass by in silence those who have lived piously, especially in a city which could hardly be saved by many examples of virtue, making sport, as it does, of Divine things, no less than of the horse-race and the theatre.

³²⁷⁴ S. John i. 23; v. 35.

³²⁷⁵ *Antony*, "the founder of asceticism," the most celebrated of the monks and hermits of the Thebaid desert. His life by S. Athanasius is certainly genuine, and even if, as some suspect, interpolations have been inserted, its substantial integrity is undoubted. (Newman, Ch. of the Fathers, p. 176.)



6. He was brought up, from the first, in religious habits and practices, after a brief study of literature and philosophy, so that he might not be utterly unskilled in such subjects, or ignorant of matters which he had determined to despise. For his generous and eager soul could not brook being occupied in vanities, like unskilled athletes, who beat the air instead of their antagonists and lose the prize. From meditating on every book of the Old and New Testament, with a depth such as none else has applied even to one of them, he grew rich in contemplation, rich in splendour of life, combining them in wondrous sort by that golden bond which few can weave; using life as the guide of contemplation, contemplation as the seal of life. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and, so to say, its first swathing band; but, when wisdom has burst the bonds of fear and risen up to love, it makes us friends of God, and sons instead of bondsmen.

7. Thus brought up and trained, as even now those should be who are to preside over the people, and take the direction of the mighty body of Christ,³²⁷⁶ according to the will and foreknowledge of God, which lays long before the foundations of great deeds, he was invested with this important ministry, and made one of those who draw near to the God Who draws near to us, and deemed worthy of the holy office and rank, and, after passing through the entire series of orders, he was (to make my story short) entrusted with the chief rule over the people, in other words, the charge of the whole world: nor can I say whether he received the priesthood as the reward of virtue, or to be the fountain and life of the Church. For she, like Ishmael,³²⁷⁷ fainting from her thirst for the truth, needed to be given to drink, or, like Elijah,³²⁷⁸ to be refreshed from the brook, when the land was parched by drought; and, when but faintly breathing, to be restored to life and left as a seed to Israel,³²⁷⁹ that we might not become like Sodom and Gomorrah,³²⁸⁰ whose destruction by the rain of fire and brimstone is only more notorious than their wickedness. Therefore, when we were cast down, a horn of salvation was raised up for us,³²⁸¹ and a chief corner stone,³²⁸² knitting us to itself and to one another, was laid in due season, or a fire³²⁸³ to purify our base and evil matter,³²⁸⁴ or a farmer's fan³²⁸⁵ to winnow the light from the weighty in doctrine, or a sword to cut out the roots of wickedness; and so the Word finds him as his own ally, and the Spirit takes possession of one who will breathe on His behalf.

³²⁷⁶ *Body of Christ, i.e., the Church, His mystical body.*

³²⁷⁷ Gen. xxi. 19.

³²⁷⁸ 1 Kings xvii. 4.

³²⁷⁹ Isai. i. 9.

³²⁸⁰ Gen. xix. 24.

³²⁸¹ S. Luke i. 69.

³²⁸² Isai. xxviii. 16.

³²⁸³ Mal. iii. 2, 3.

³²⁸⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

³²⁸⁵ S. Matt. iii. 12.

8. Thus, and for these reasons, by the vote of the whole people, not in the evil fashion which has since prevailed, nor by means of bloodshed and oppression, but in an apostolic and spiritual manner, he is led up to the throne³²⁸⁶ of Saint Mark, to succeed him in piety, no less than in office; in the latter indeed at a great distance from him, in the former, which is the genuine right of succession, following him closely. For unity in doctrine deserves unity in office; and a rival teacher sets up a rival throne; the one is a successor in reality, the other but in name. For it is not the intruder, but he whose rights are intruded upon, who is the successor, not the lawbreaker, but the lawfully appointed, not the man of contrary opinions, but the man of the same faith; if this is not what we mean by successor, he succeeds in the same sense as disease to health, darkness to light, storm to calm, and frenzy to sound sense.

9. The duties of his office he discharged in the same spirit as that in which he had been preferred to it. For he did not at once, after taking possession of his throne, like men who have unexpectedly seized upon some sovereignty or inheritance, grow insolent from intoxication. This is the conduct of illegitimate and intrusive priests, who are unworthy of their vocation; whose preparation for the priesthood has cost them nothing, who have endured no inconvenience for the sake of virtue, who only begin to study religion when appointed to teach it, and undertake the cleansing of others before being cleansed themselves; yesterday sacrilegious, to-day sacerdotal; yesterday excluded from the sanctuary,³²⁸⁷ to-day its officiants; proficient in vice, novices in piety; the product of the favour of man, not of the grace of the Spirit; who, having run through the whole gamut of violence, at last tyrannize over even piety; who, instead of gaining credit for their office by their character, need for their character the credit of their office, thus subverting the due relation between them; who ought to offer more sacrifices³²⁸⁸ for themselves than for the ignorances of the people;³²⁸⁹ who inevitably fall into one of two errors, either, from their own need of indulgence, being excessively indulgent, and so even teaching, instead of checking, vice, or cloaking their own sins under the harshness of their rule. Both these extremes he avoided; he was sublime in action, lowly in mind; inaccessible in virtue, most accessible in intercourse; gentle, free from anger, sympathetic, sweet in words, sweeter in disposition; angelic in appearance, more angelic in mind; calm in rebuke, persuasive in praise, without spoiling the good effect of either by excess, but rebuking with the tenderness of a father, praising with the dignity of a ruler, his tenderness was not dissipated, nor his severity sour; for the one was reasonable, the other prudent, and both truly wise; his disposition

³²⁸⁶ *The throne, etc.*, as Patriarch of Alexandria. The date of his consecration is A.D. 326.

³²⁸⁷ *The Sanctuary*, or “the Sacraments.” Exod. xxvi. 33.

³²⁸⁸ *To offer more sacrifices, i.e.*, These priests are not only “men which have infirmity,” who need to offer for their own sins, as well as for those of the people; but because they are even more sinful than their flocks, they need a greater and more frequent atonement.

³²⁸⁹ Heb. vii. 27; ix. 7.

sufficed for the training of his spiritual children, with very little need of words; his words with very little need of the rod,³²⁹⁰ and his moderate use of the rod with still less for the knife.

10. But why should I paint for you the portrait of the man? St. Paul³²⁹¹ has sketched him by anticipation. This he does, when he sings the praises of the great High-priest, who hath passed through the heavens³²⁹² (for I will venture to say even this, since Scripture³²⁹³ can call those who live according to Christ by the name of Christs):³²⁹⁴ and again when by the rules in his letter to Timothy,³²⁹⁵ he gives a model for future Bishops: for if you will apply the law as a test to him who deserves these praises, you will clearly perceive his perfect exactness. Come then to aid me in my panegyric; for I am labouring heavily in my speech, and though I desire to pass by point after point, they seize upon me one after another, and I can find no surpassing excellence in a form which is in all respects well proportioned and beautiful; for each as it occurs to me seems fairer than the rest and so takes by storm my speech. Come then I pray, you who have been his admirers and witnesses, divide among yourselves his excellences, contend bravely with one another, men and women alike, young men and maidens, old men and children, priests and people, solitaries and cenobites,³²⁹⁶ men of simple or of exact life, contemplatives or practically minded. Let one praise him in his fastings and prayers as if he had been disembodied and immaterial, another his unweariedness and zeal for vigils and psalmody, another his patronage of the needy, another his dauntlessness towards the powerful, or his condescension to the lowly. Let the virgins celebrate the friend of the Bridegroom;³²⁹⁷ those under the yoke³²⁹⁸ their restrainer, hermits him who lent wings to their course, cenobites their lawgiver, simple folk their guide, contemplatives the divine, the joyous their bridle, the unfortunate their consolation, the hoary-headed their staff, youths their instructor, the poor their resource, the wealthy their steward. Even the widows will, methinks, praise their protector, even the orphans their father, even the poor their benefactor, strangers their entertainer, brethren the man of brotherly love, the sick their physician, in whatever sickness or treatment you will, the healthy the guard of health, yea all men him who made himself all things to all men that he might gain almost, if not quite, all.

11. On these grounds, as I have said, I leave others, who have leisure to admire the minor details of his character, to admire and extol him. I call them minor details only in comparing him

³²⁹⁰ 1 Cor. iv. 21.

³²⁹¹ *St. Paul.* To whom here the Ep. to the Hebrews is assigned.

³²⁹² Heb. iv. 14.

³²⁹³ Ps. cv. 15.

³²⁹⁴ *Christs.* i.e., Ps. cv. 15. "Touch not Mine anointed." (LXX.) and Vulg. "my Christs."

³²⁹⁵ 1 Tim. iii. 2 et seq.

³²⁹⁶ Cenobites *μυγάδες.* Cf. Orat. ii. 29; xliiii. 62.

³²⁹⁷ S. John iii. 29.

³²⁹⁸ *Under the yoke,* i.e. "Married." Cf. Orat. xlii. 11.

and his character with his own standard, for that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious, even though it be exceeding splendid by reason of the glory that surpasseth,³²⁹⁹ as we are told; for indeed the minor points of his excellence would suffice to win celebrity for others. But since it would be intolerable for me to leave the word and serve³³⁰⁰ less important details, I must turn to that which is his chief characteristic; and God alone, on Whose behalf I am speaking, can enable me to say anything worthy of a soul so noble and so mighty in the word.

12. In the palmy days of the Church, when all was well, the present elaborate, far-fetched and artificial treatment of Theology had not made its way into the schools of divinity, but playing with pebbles which deceive the eye by the quickness of their changes, or dancing before an audience with varied and effeminate contortions, were looked upon as all one with speaking or hearing of God in a way unusual or frivolous. But since the Sextuses³³⁰¹ and Pyrrhos, and the antithetic style, like a dire and malignant disease, have infected our churches, and babbling is reputed culture, and, as the book of the Acts³³⁰² says of the Athenians, we spend our time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. O what Jeremiah³³⁰³ will bewail our confusion and blind madness; he alone could utter lamentations befitting our misfortunes.

13. The beginning of this madness was Arius (whose name is derived from frenzy³³⁰⁴), who paid the penalty of his unbridled tongue by his death in a profane spot,³³⁰⁵ brought about by prayer not by disease, when he like Judas³³⁰⁶ burst asunder³³⁰⁷ for his similar treachery to the Word. Then others, catching the infection, organized an art of impiety, and, confining Deity to the Unbegotten, expelled from Deity not only the Begotten, but also the Proceeding one, and honoured the Trinity with communion in name³³⁰⁸ alone, or even refused to retain this for it. Not so that blessed one, Who was indeed a man of God and a mighty trumpet of truth: but being aware that to contract³³⁰⁹

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³²⁹⁹ 2 Cor. iii. 10.

³³⁰⁰ Acts vi. 2.

³³⁰¹ *Sextuses*. Sextus Empiricus (cent. 3 A.D.) a leader of the later Sceptic school. Pyrrho of Elis (cent. 4 B.C.) was the founder of the earlier.

³³⁰² Acts xvii. 21.

³³⁰³ Lam. i. 1.

³³⁰⁴ *Frenzy*. Cf. Orat. ii. 37; xxxiv. 8.

³³⁰⁵ *A profane spot*, lit. “profane places”—plural as contrasted with the ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, Lev. vi. 16. etc., etc.: in which the priests must eat of the sacrifices. The meaning of the phrase is “Arius died excommunicated”—indeed on the eve of the day on which the Emperor Constantine had ordered him to be restored to communion.

³³⁰⁶ *Like Judas*. Cf. Epiph. Hær. 68. 7; Socr. i. 38. Theodoret i. 4.

³³⁰⁷ Acts i. 18.

³³⁰⁸ *In name*, etc., i.e., They used the name Trinity, although it was rendered meaningless by their false doctrine as to the inequality of the Three Blessed Persons.

³³⁰⁹ *To contract*, etc. On this whole passage cf. Orat. ii. 36, 37, notes.

the Three Persons to a numerical Unity is heretical, and the innovation of Sabellius, who first devised a contraction of Deity; and that to sever the Three Persons by a distinction of nature, is an unnatural mutilation of Deity; he both happily preserved the Unity, which belongs to the Godhead, and religiously taught the Trinity, which refers³³¹⁰ to Personality, neither confounding the Three Persons in the Unity, nor dividing the Substance among the Three Persons, but abiding within the bounds of piety, by avoiding excessive inclination or opposition to either side.

14. And therefore, first in the holy Synod of Nicæa,³³¹¹ the gathering of the three hundred and eighteen chosen men, united by the Holy Ghost, as far as in him lay, he stayed the disease. Though not yet ranked among the Bishops, he held the first rank among the members of the Council, for preference was given to virtue just as much as to office. Afterwards, when the flame had been fanned by the blasts of the evil one, and had spread very widely (hence came the tragedies of which almost the whole earth and sea are full), the fight raged fiercely around him who was the noble champion of the Word. For the assault is hottest upon the point of resistance, while various dangers surround it on every side: for impiety is skilful in designing evils, and excessively daring in taking them in hand: and how would they spare men, who had not spared the Godhead? Yet one of the assaults was the most dangerous of all: and I myself contribute somewhat to this scene; yea, let me plead for the innocence of my dear fatherland, for the wickedness was not due to the land that bore them, but to the men who undertook it. For holy indeed is that land, and everywhere noted for its piety, but these men are unworthy of the Church which bore them, and ye have heard of a briar growing in a vine;³³¹² and the traitor³³¹³ was Judas, one of the disciples.

15. There are some who do not excuse even my namesake³³¹⁴ from blame; who, living at Alexandria at the time for the sake of culture, although he had been most kindly treated by him, as if the dearest of his children, and received his special confidence, yet joined in the revolutionary plot against his father and patron: for, though others took the active part in it, the hand of Absalom³³¹⁵ was with them, as the saying goes. If any of you had heard of the hand which was produced by fraud against the Saint, and the corpse³³¹⁶ of the living man, and the unjust banishment, he knows what I mean. But this I will gladly forget. For on doubtful points, I am disposed to think we ought

³³¹⁰ Which refers, etc., or “which consists in personal relations.” Cf. on ἰδιότης. Orat. xliiii. 30. note.

³³¹¹ Nicæa, A.D. 325. Athanasius was present as theological assistant to Alexander of Alexandria.

³³¹² Isai. v. 2 (LXX.); vii. 23, v. 1. “in a vineyard.”

³³¹³ S. Luke vi. 16.

³³¹⁴ Namesake. Gregory, a Cappadocian, nominated to the see of Alexandria, by the Arian Bishops at Antioch, after the banishment of Athanasius, A.D. 340.

³³¹⁵ ἡ χεὶρ Ἀβεσσαλώμ. “The hand of Absalom,” prob. a misquotation of 2 Sam. xiv. 19. “The hand of Joab.” 2 Sam. xv. 5.

³³¹⁶ Corpse, etc. Athanasius was charged with having murdered Arsenius, and his enemies produced a hand which, they said, had belonged to the dead man.

to incline to the charitable side, and acquit rather than condemn the accused. For a bad man would speedily condemn even a good man, while a good man would not be ready to condemn even a bad one. For one who is not ready to do ill, is not inclined even to suspect it. I come now to what is matter of fact, not of report, what is vouched for as truth instead of unverified suspicion.

16. There was a monster³³¹⁷ from Cappadocia, born on our farthest confines, of low birth, and lower mind, whose blood was not perfectly free, but mongrel, as we know that of mules to be; at first, dependent on the table of others, whose price was a barley cake, who had learnt to say and do everything with an eye to his stomach, and, at last, after sneaking into public life, and filling its lowest offices, such as that of contractor for swine's flesh, the soldiers' rations, and then having proved himself a scoundrel for the sake of greed in this public trust, and been stripped to the skin, contrived to escape, and after passing, as exiles do, from country to country and city to city, last of all, in an evil hour for the Christian community, like one of the plagues of Egypt, he reached Alexandria. There, his wanderings being stayed, he began his villany. Good for nothing in all other respects, without culture, without fluency in conversation, without even the form and pretence of reverence, his skill in working villany and confusion was unequalled.

17. His acts of insolence towards the saint you all know in full detail. Often were the righteous given into the hands of the wicked,³³¹⁸ not that the latter might be honoured, but that the former might be tested: and though the wicked come, as it is written, to an awful death,³³¹⁹ nevertheless for the present the godly are a laughing stock, while the goodness of God and the great treasures of what is in store for each of them hereafter are concealed. Then indeed word and deed and thought will be weighed in the just balances of God, as He arises to judge the earth,³³²⁰ gathering together counsel and works, and revealing what He had kept sealed up.³³²¹ Of this let the words and sufferings of Job convince thee, who was a truthful, blameless, just, godfearing man, with all those other qualities which are testified of him, and yet was smitten with such a succession of remarkable visitations, at the hands of him who begged for power over him, that, although many have often suffered in the whole course of time, and some even have, as is probable, been grievously afflicted, yet none can be compared with him in misfortunes. For he not only suffered, without being allowed space to mourn for his losses in their rapid succession, the loss of his money, his possessions, his large and fair family, blessings for which all men care; but was at last smitten with an incurable disease horrible to look upon, and, to crown his misfortunes, had a wife whose only comfort was evil counsel. For his surpassing troubles were those of his soul added to those of the body.³³²² He

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³³¹⁷ *Monster.* George of Cappadocia, Arian intruder into the see of Alexandria, A.D. 356–361.

³³¹⁸ Job ix. 24.

³³¹⁹ Ib. ix. 23.

³³²⁰ Ps. lxxxii. 8.

³³²¹ Dan. xii. 9.

³³²² Job ii. 7 et seq.

had also among his friends truly miserable comforters,³³²³ as he calls them, who could not help him. For when they saw his suffering, in ignorance of its hidden meaning, they supposed his disaster to be the punishment of vice and not the touchstone of virtue. And they not only thought this, but were not even ashamed to reproach him with his lot,³³²⁴ at a time when, even if he had been suffering for vice, they ought to have treated his grief with words of consolation.

18. Such was the lot of Job: such at first sight his history. In reality it was a contest between virtue and envy:³³²⁵ the one straining every nerve to overcome the good, the other enduring everything, that it might abide unsubdued; the one striving to smooth the way for vice, by means of the chastisement of the upright, the other to retain its hold upon the good, even if they do exceed others in misfortunes. What then of Him who answered Job out of the whirlwind and cloud,³³²⁶ Who is slow to chastise and swift to help, Who suffers not utterly the rod of the wicked to come into the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous should learn iniquity?³³²⁷ At the end of the contests He declares the victory of the athlete in a splendid proclamation and lays bare the secret of his calamities, saying: “Thinkest thou that I have dealt with thee for any other purpose than the manifestation of thy righteousness?”³³²⁸ This is the balm for his wounds, this is the crown of the contest, this the reward for his patience. For perhaps his subsequent prosperity was small, great as it may seem to some, and ordained for the sake of small minds, even though he received again twice as much as he had lost.

19. In this case then it is not wonderful, if George had the advantage of Athanasius; nay it would be more wonderful, if the righteous were not tried in the fire of contumely; nor is this very wonderful, as it would have been had the flames availed for more than this. Then he was in retirement, and arranged his exile most excellently, for he betook himself to the holy and divine homes³³²⁹ of contemplation in Egypt, where, secluding themselves from the world, and welcoming the desert, men live to God more than all who exist in the body. Some struggle on in an utterly monastic and solitary life, speaking to themselves alone and to God,³³³⁰ and all the world they know is what meets their eyes in the desert. Others, cherishing the law of love in community, are at once Solitaries and Cœnobites, dead to all other men and to the eddies of public affairs which whirl us and are whirled about themselves and make sport of us in their sudden changes, being the world

³³²³ Ib. xvi. 2.

³³²⁴ *His lot*, lit. “the dreadful (thing)” i.e. “reproach him, as having brought his sufferings upon himself”—or “reproach him with impiety”—the cause of his sufferings.

³³²⁵ *Envy*, i.e., of the devil. Wisdom ii. 24. Cf. § 32 of this Oration.

³³²⁶ Job xxxviii. 1.

³³²⁷ Ps. cxxv. 3.

³³²⁸ Job xl. 3 (LXX.).

³³²⁹ *Homes*, etc. The monasteries of lower Egypt and the Thebaid. This was A.D. 356.

³³³⁰ 1 Cor. xiv. 28.

to one another and whetting the edge of their love in emulation. During his intercourse with them, the great Athanasius, who was always the mediator and reconciler of all other men, like Him Who made peace through His blood³³³¹ between things which were at variance, reconciled the solitary with the community life: by showing that the Priesthood is capable of contemplation, and that contemplation is in need of a spiritual guide.

20. Thus he combined the two, and so united the partisans of both calm action and of active calm, as to convince them that the monastic life is characterised by steadfastness of disposition rather than by bodily retirement. Accordingly the great David was a man of at once the most active and most solitary life, if any one thinks the verse, I am in solitude, till I pass away,³³³² of value and authority in the exposition of this subject. Therefore, though they surpass all others in virtue, they fell further short of his mind than others fell short of their own, and while contributing little to the perfection of his priesthood, they gained in return greater assistance in contemplation. Whatever he thought, was a law for them, whatever on the contrary he disapproved, they abjured: his decisions were to them the tables of Moses,³³³³ and they paid him more reverence than is due from men to the Saints. Aye, and when men came to hunt the Saint like a wild beast, and, after searching for him everywhere, failed to find him, they vouchsafed these emissaries not a single word, and offered their necks to the sword, as risking their lives for Christ's sake, and considering the most cruel sufferings on behalf of Athanasius to be an important step to contemplation, and far more divine and sublime than the long fasts and hard lying and mortifications in which they constantly revel.

21. Such were his surroundings when he approved the wise counsel of Solomon that there is a time to every purpose:³³³⁴ so he hid himself for a while, escaping during the time of war, to show himself when the time of peace came, as it did soon afterwards. Meanwhile George, there being absolutely no one to resist him, overran Egypt, and desolated Syria, in the might of ungodliness. He seized upon the East also as far as he could, ever attracting the weak, as torrents roll down objects in their course, and assailing the unstable or faint-hearted. He won over also the simplicity of the Emperor, for thus I must term his instability, though I respect his pious motives. For, to say the truth, he had zeal, but not according to knowledge.³³³⁵ He purchased those in authority who were lovers of money rather than lovers of Christ—for he was well supplied with the funds for the poor, which he embezzled—especially the effeminate and unmanly men,³³³⁶ of doubtful sex, but of manifest impiety; to whom, I know not how or why, Emperors of the Romans entrusted authority over men, though their proper function was the charge of women. In this lay the power of that

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³³³¹ Col. i. 20.

³³³² Ps. cxli. 10 (LXX.).

³³³³ Exod. xxxii. 15; xxxiv. 1.

³³³⁴ Eccles. iii. 1.

³³³⁵ Rom. x. 2.

³³³⁶ *Unmanly men*, the Eunuchs, the chamberlains of Constantius.

servant³³³⁷ of the wicked one, that sower of tares, that forerunner of Antichrist; foremost in speech of the orators of his time among the Bishops; if any one likes to call him an orator who was not so much an impious, as he was a hostile and contentious reasoner,—his name I will gladly pass by: he was the hand of his party, perverting the truth by the gold subscribed for pious uses, which the wicked made an instrument of their impiety.

22. The crowning feat of this faction was the council which sat first at Seleucia, the city of the holy and illustrious virgin Thekla, and afterwards at this mighty city, thus connecting their names, no longer with noble associations, but with these of deepest disgrace; whether we must call that council, which subverted and disturbed everything, a tower of Chalane,³³³⁸ which deservedly confounded the tongues—would that theirs had been confounded for their harmony in evil!—or a Sanhedrim of Caiaphas³³³⁹ where Christ was condemned, or some other like name. The ancient and pious doctrine which defended the Trinity was abolished, by setting up a³³⁴⁰ palisade and battering down the Consubstantial: opening the door to impiety by means of what is written, using as their pretext, their reverence for Scripture and for the use of approved terms, but really introducing unscriptural Arianism. For the phrase “like, according to the Scriptures,” was a bait to the simple, concealing the hook of impiety, a figure seeming to look in the direction of all who passed by, a boot fitting either foot, a winnowing with every wind,³³⁴¹ gaining authority from the newly written villany and device against the truth. For they were wise to do evil, but to do good they had no knowledge.³³⁴²

23. Hence came their pretended condemnation³³⁴³ of the heretics, whom they renounced in words, in order to gain plausibility for their efforts, but in reality furthered; charging them not with unbounded impiety, but with exaggerated language. Hence came the profane judges of the Saints, and the new combination, and public view and discussion of mysterious questions, and the illegal enquiry into the actions of life, and the hired informers, and the purchased sentences. Some were



³³³⁷ *Servant*, etc., probably Acacius.

³³³⁸ Gen. xi. 4.

³³³⁹ S. John xi. 47 *et seq.*

³³⁴⁰ χάρακα lit. “a pale”—one of the many which formed the palisade. Perhaps there is play on the word χαρακτήρα “a letter” in reference to the insertion of the letter iota in the Nicene formula—which then became Homoiousion, i.e., “Like in substance.” This action on the part of the Semi-Arians (who formed the majority of the Council of Seleucia A.D. 359), was the first step to the Homoion of the Acacian party, who prevailed at the council of Constantinople, A.D. 360, and professed great devotion to the use of Scriptural terms.

³³⁴¹ Eccles. v. 9.

³³⁴² Jer. iv. 22.

³³⁴³ *Condemnation*, i.e., of Aetius, who was banished by Constantius after the Council.

unjustly deposed³³⁴⁴ from their sees, others intruded, and among other necessary qualifications, made to sign the bonds of iniquity: the ink was ready, the informer at hand. This the majority even of us, who were not overcome, had to endure, not falling in mind, though prevailed upon to sign,³³⁴⁵ and so uniting with men who were in both respects wicked, and involving ourselves in the smoke,³³⁴⁶ if not in the flame. Over this I have often wept, when contemplating the confusion of impiety at that time, and the persecution of the orthodox teaching which now arose at the hands of the patrons of the Word.

24. For in reality, as the Scripture says, the shepherds became brutish,³³⁴⁷ and many shepherds destroyed My vineyard, and defiled my pleasant portion,³³⁴⁸ I mean the Church of God, which has been gathered together by the sweat and blood of many toilers and victims both before and after Christ, aye, even the great sufferings of God for us. For with very few exceptions, and these either men who from their insignificance were disregarded, or from their virtue manfully resisted, being left unto Israel,³³⁴⁹ as was ordained, for a seed and root,³³⁵⁰ to blossom and come to life again amid the streams of the Spirit, everyone³³⁵¹ yielded to the influences of the time, distinguished only by the fact that some did so earlier, some later, that some became the champions and leaders of impiety, while such others were assigned a lower rank, as had been shaken by fear, enslaved by need, fascinated by flattery, or beguiled in ignorance; the last being the least guilty, if indeed we can allow even this to be a valid excuse for men entrusted with the leadership of the people. For just as the force of lions and other animals, or of men and of women, or of old and of young men is not the same, but there is a considerable difference due to age or species—so it is also with rulers and their subjects. For while we might pardon laymen in such a case, and often they escape, because not put to the test, yet how can we excuse a teacher, whose duty it is, unless he is falsely so-called, to correct the ignorance of others. For is it not absurd, while no one, however great his boorishness and want of education, is allowed to be ignorant of the Roman law, and while there is no law in favour of sins of ignorance, that the teachers of the mysteries of salvation should be ignorant of the first principles of salvation, however simple and shallow their minds may be in regard to other subjects. But, even granting indulgence to them who erred in ignorance, what can be said for the rest, who lay claim to subtlety of intellect, and yet yielded to the court-party for the reasons I have mentioned, and after playing the part of piety for a long while, failed in the hour of trial.

³³⁴⁴ *Deposed.* Cyril of Jerusalem, Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil of Ancyra and others.

³³⁴⁵ *To sign,* etc. Cf. Orat. xviii. 18.

³³⁴⁶ *The smoke,* etc. Cf. Orat. xvi. 6; Ps. xviii. 9; cv. 32.

³³⁴⁷ Jer. x. 21.

³³⁴⁸ Ib. ii. 10.

³³⁴⁹ Isai. i. 9.

³³⁵⁰ Ib. xxxvii. 31 (LXX.).

³³⁵¹ *Everyone.* This was the time of which S. Jerome wrote “Ingenuit totus orbis, et miratus est se Arianum esse.”

25. “Yet once more,”³³⁵² I hear the Scripture say that the heaven and the earth shall be shaken, inasmuch as this has befallen them before, signifying, as I suppose, a manifest renovation of all things. And we must believe S. Paul when he says³³⁵³ that this last shaking is none other than the second coming of Christ, and the transformation and changing of the universe to a condition of stability which cannot be shaken. And I imagine that this present shaking, in which³³⁵⁴ the contemplatives and lovers of God, who before the time exercise their heavenly citizenship, are shaken from us, is of no less consequence than any of former days. For, however peaceful and moderate in other respects these men are, yet they cannot bear to carry their reasonableness so far as to be traitors to the cause of God for quietness’ sake: nay on this point they are excessively warlike and sturdy in fight; such is the heat of their zeal, that they would sooner proceed to excess in disturbance, than fail to notice anything that is amiss. And no small portion of the people is breaking away with them, flying away, as a flock of birds does, with those who lead the flight, and even now does not cease to fly with them.

26. Such was Athanasius to us, when present, the pillar of the Church; and such, even when he retired before the insults of the wicked. For those who have plotted the capture of some strong fort, when they see no other easy means of approaching or taking it, betake themselves to arts, and then, after seducing the commander by money or guile, without any effort possess themselves of the stronghold, or, if you will, as those who plotted against Samson first cut off his hair,³³⁵⁵ in which his strength lay, and then seized upon the judge, and made sport of him at will, to requite him for his former power: so did our foreign foes, after getting rid of our source of strength, and shearing off the glory of the Church, revel in like manner in utterances and deeds of impiety. Then the supporter³³⁵⁶ and patron of the hostile shepherd³³⁵⁷ died, crowning³³⁵⁸ his reign, which had not been evil, with an evil close, and unprofitably repenting, as they say, with his last breath, when each man, in view of the higher judgement seat, is a prudent judge of his own conduct. For of these three evils, which were unworthy of his reign, he said that he was conscious, the murder of his kinsmen, the proclamation of the Apostate, and the innovation upon the faith; and with these words he is said to have departed. Thus there was once more authority to teach the word of truth, and those who had suffered violence had now undisturbed freedom of speech, while jealousy was whetting the weapons of its wrath. Thus it was with the people of Alexandria, who, with their usual impatience of the insolent, could not brook the excesses of the man, and therefore marked his wickedness by an


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³³⁵² Hagg. ii. 7; Heb. xii. 26.

³³⁵³ Heb. xii. 27.

³³⁵⁴ *In which*, etc. This sentence probably alludes to the excessive zeal of the monks of Nazianzus.

³³⁵⁵ Judges xvi. 19.

³³⁵⁶ *The Supporter*, Constantius, who died A.D. 360.

³³⁵⁷ *The hostile shepherd*, George.

³³⁵⁸ *Crowning*, Clémencet renders “Appointing an evil head over an empire which was not evil,” sc. Julian the Apostate.

unusual death, and his death by an unusual ignominy. For you know that camel,³³⁵⁹ and its strange burden, and the new form of elevation, and the first and, I think, the only procession, with which to this day the insolent are threatened.

27. But when from this hurricane of unrighteousness, this corrupter of godliness, this precursor of the wicked one, such satisfaction had been exacted, in a way I cannot praise, for we must consider not what he ought to have suffered, but what we ought³³⁶⁰ to do: exacted however it was, as the result of the public anger and excitement: and thereupon, our champion was restored from his illustrious banishment, for so I term his exile on behalf of, and under the blessing of, the Trinity, amid such delight of the people of the city and of almost all Egypt, that they ran together from every side, from the furthest limits of the country, simply to hear the voice of Athanasius, or feast their eyes upon the sight of him, nay even, as we are told of the Apostles, that they might be hallowed by the shadow³³⁶¹ and unsubstantial image of his body: so that, many as are the honours, and welcomes bestowed on frequent occasions in the course of time upon various individuals, not only upon public rulers and bishops, but also upon the most illustrious of private citizens, not one has been recorded more numerous attended or more brilliant than this. And only one honour can be compared with it by Athanasius himself, which had been conferred upon him on his former entrance into the city, when returning from the same exile for the same reasons.

28. With reference to this honour there was also current some such report as the following; for I will take leave to mention it, even though it be superfluous, as a kind of flavouring to my speech, or a flower scattered in honour of his entry. After that entry, a certain officer, who had been twice Consul, was riding into the city; he was one of us, among the most noted of Cappadocians. I am sure that you know that I mean Philagrius, who won upon our affections far beyond any one else, and was honoured as much as he was loved, if I may thus briefly set forth all his distinctions: who had been for a second time entrusted with the government of the city, at the request of the citizens, by the decision of the Emperor. Then one of the common people present, thinking the crowd enormous, like an ocean whose bound no eye can see, is reported to have said to one of his comrades and friends—as often happens in such a case—“Tell me, my good fellow, have you ever before seen the people pour out in such numbers and so enthusiastically to do honour to any one man?” “No!” said the young man, “and I fancy that not even Constantius himself would be so treated;” indicating, by the mention of the Emperor, the climax of possible honour. “Do you speak of that,” said the other with a sweet and merry laugh, “as something wonderfully great? I can scarcely believe that even the great Athanasius would be welcomed like this,” adding at the same time one

³³⁵⁹ *Camel.* On the death of Constantius, the pagans of Alexandria murdered George, and carried his mangled body through the streets on the back of a camel.

³³⁶⁰ *We ought,* etc. S. Gregory seems to imply that the deed had been done by Christians. Historical writers and Julian's letter to the people make it clear that this was not really the case.

³³⁶¹ Acts v. 15.

of our native oaths in confirmation of his words. Now the point of what he said, as I suppose you also plainly see, is this, that he set the subject of our eulogy before the Emperor himself.

29. So great was the reverence of all for the man, and so amazing even now seems the reception which I have described. For if divided according to birth, age and profession, (and the city is most usually arranged in this way, when a public honour is bestowed on anyone) how can I set forth in words that mighty spectacle? They formed one river, and it were indeed a poet's task to describe that Nile, of really golden stream and rich in crops, flowing back again from the city to the Chæreum, a day's journey, I take it, and more. Permit me to revel a while longer in my description: for I am going there, and it is not easy to bring back even my words from that ceremony. He rode upon a colt, almost, blame me not for folly, as my Jesus did upon that other colt,³³⁶² whether it were the people of the Gentiles, whom He mounts in kindness, by setting it free from the bonds of ignorance, or something else, which the Scripture sets forth. He was welcomed with branches of trees, and garments with many flowers and of varied hue were torn off and strewn before him and under his feet: there alone was all that was glorious and costly and peerless treated with dishonour. Like, once more, to the entry of Christ were those that went before with shouts and followed with dances; only the crowd which sung his praises was not of children only, but every tongue was harmonious, as men contended only to outdo one another. I pass by the universal cheers, and the pouring forth of unguents, and the nightlong festivities, and the whole city gleaming with light, and the feasting in public and at home, and all the means of testifying to a city's joy, which were then in lavish and incredible profusion bestowed upon him. Thus did this marvellous man, with such a concourse, regain his own city.

30. He lived then as becomes the rulers of such a people, but did he fail to teach as he lived? Were his contests out of harmony with his teaching? Were his dangers less than those of men who have contended for any truth? Were his honours inferior to the objects for which he contended? Did he after his reception in any way disgrace that reception? By no means. Everything was harmonious, as an air upon a single lyre, and in the same key; his life, his teaching, his struggles, his dangers, his return, and his conduct after his return. For immediately on his restoration to his Church, he was not like those who are blinded by unrestrained passion, who, under the dominion of their anger, thrust away or strike at once whatever comes in their way, even though it might well be spared. But, thinking this to be a special time for him to consult his reputation, since one who is ill-treated is usually restrained, and one who has the power to requite a wrong is ungoverned, he treated so mildly and gently those who had injured him, that even they themselves, if I may say so, did not find his restoration distasteful.

31. He cleansed the temple of those who made merchandise of God, and trafficked in the things of Christ, imitating Christ³³⁶³ in this also; only it was with persuasive words, not with a twisted scourge that this was wrought. He reconciled also those who were at variance, both with one

³³⁶² S. Luke xix. 35.

³³⁶³ S. John ii. 15.

another and with him, without the aid of any coadjutor. Those who had been wronged he set free from oppression, making no distinction as to whether they were of his own or of the opposite party. He restored too the teaching which had been overthrown: the Trinity was once more boldly spoken of, and set upon the lampstand, flashing with the brilliant light of the One Godhead into the souls of all. He legislated again for the whole world, and brought all minds under his influence, by letters to some, by invitations to others, instructing some, who visited him uninvited, and proposing as the single law to all—*Good will*.³³⁶⁴ For this alone was able to conduct them to the true issue. In brief, he exemplified the virtues of two celebrated stones—for to those who assailed him he was adamant, and to those at variance a magnet, which by some secret natural power draws iron to itself, and influences the hardest of substances.

32. But yet it was not likely that envy could brook all this, or see the Church restored again to the same glory and health as in former days, by the speedy healing over, as in the body, of the wounds of separation. Therefore it was, that he raised up against Athanasius the Emperor, a rebel like himself,³³⁶⁵ and his peer in villany, inferior to him only from lack of time, the first of Christian Emperors to rage against Christ, bringing forth all at once the basilisk of impiety with which he had long been in labour, when he obtained an opportunity, and shewing himself, at the time when he was proclaimed Emperor, to be a traitor to the Emperor who had entrusted him with the empire, and a traitor double dyed to the God who had saved him. He devised the most inhuman of all the persecutions by blending speciousness with cruelty, in his envy of the honour won by the martyrs in their struggles; and so he called in question their repute for courage, by making verbal twists and quibbles a part of his character, or to speak the real truth, devoting himself to them with an eagerness born of his natural disposition, and imitating in varied craft the Evil one who dwelt within him. The subjugation of the whole race of Christians he thought a simple task; but found it a great one to overcome Athanasius and the power of his teaching over us. For he saw that no success could be gained in the plot against us, because of this man's resistance and opposition; the places of the Christians cut down being at once filled up, surprising though it seems, by the accession of Gentiles and the prudence of Athanasius. In full view therefore of this, the crafty perverter and persecutor, clinging no longer to his cloak of illiberal sophistry, laid bare his wickedness and openly banished the Bishop from the city. For the illustrious warrior must needs conquer in three struggles³³⁶⁶ and thus make good his perfect title to fame.

33. Brief was the interval before Justice pronounced sentence, and handed over the offender³³⁶⁷ to the Persians: sending him forth an ambitious monarch—and bringing him back a corpse for which no one even felt pity; which, as I have heard, was not allowed to rest in the grave, but was

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³³⁶⁴ τὸ βούλεσθαι, lit. "to will"—i.e. be willing to listen to, and understand the interests for which others were contending, in a conciliatory spirit—for the sake of truth, not of victory.

³³⁶⁵ *He...a rebel like himself.* Envy, personifying the Evil one. Cf. supra § 18.

³³⁶⁶ *In three struggles.* He was thrice banished. A.D. 336 by Constantine, A.D. 356 under Constantius, and A.D. 362 by Julian.

³³⁶⁷ *The offender,* Julian.

shaken out and thrown up by the earth which he had shaken: a prelude—I take it—to his future chastisement. Then another king³³⁶⁸ arose,³³⁶⁹ not shameless in countenance like the former, nor an oppressor of Israel with cruel tasks and taskmasters, but most pious and gentle. In order to lay the best of foundations for his empire, and begin, as is right, by an act of justice, he recalled from exile all the Bishops, but in the first place him who stood first in virtue and had conspicuously championed the cause of piety. Further, he inquired into the truth of our faith which had been torn asunder, confused, and parcelled out into various opinions and portions by many; with the intention, if it were possible, of reducing the whole world to harmony and union by the co-operation of the Spirit: and, should he fail in this, of attaching himself to the best party, so as to aid and be aided by it, thus giving token of the exceeding loftiness and magnificence of his ideas on questions of the greatest moment. Here too was shown in a very high degree the simple-mindedness of Athanasius, and the steadfastness of his faith in Christ. For, when all the rest who sympathised with us were divided into three parties, and many were faltering in their conception of the Son, and still more in that of the Holy Ghost, (a point on which to be only slightly in error was to be orthodox) and few indeed were sound upon both points, he was the first and only one, or with the concurrence of but a few, to venture to confess in writing, with entire clearness and distinctness, the Unity of Godhead and Essence of the Three Persons, and thus to attain in later days, under the influence of inspiration, to the same faith in regard to the Holy Ghost, as had been bestowed at an earlier time on most of the Fathers in regard to the Son. This confession, a truly royal and magnificent gift, he presented to the Emperor, opposing to the unwritten innovation, a written account³³⁷⁰ the orthodox faith, so that an emperor might be overcome by an emperor, reason by reason, treatise by treatise.

34. This confession was, it seems, greeted with respect by all, both in West and East, who were capable of life; some cherishing piety within their own bosoms, if we may credit what they say, but advancing no further, like a still-born child which dies within its mother's womb; others kindling to some extent, as it were, sparks, so far as to escape the difficulties of the time, arising either from the more fervent of the orthodox, or the devotion of the people; while others spoke the truth with boldness, on whose side I would be, for I dare make no further boast; no longer consulting my own fearfulness—in other words, the views of men more unsound than myself (for this we have done enough and to spare, without either gaining anything from others, or guarding from injury that which was our own, just as bad stewards do) but bringing forth to light my offspring, nourishing it with eagerness, and exposing it, in its constant growth, to the eyes of all.

35. This, however, is less admirable than his conduct. What wonder that he, who had already made actual ventures on behalf of the truth, should confess it in writing? Yet this point I will add to what has been said, as it seems to me especially wonderful and cannot with impunity be passed

³³⁶⁸ *Another king*—the Emperor Jovian.

³³⁶⁹ Exod. i. 8.

³³⁷⁰ *A written account.* A synodal letter drawn up in council, probably at Alexandria, and conveyed and presented to Jovian at Antioch by S. Athanasius.

over in a time so fertile in disagreements as this. For his action, if we take note of him, will afford instruction even to the men of this day. For as, in the case of one and the same quantity of water, there is separated from it, not only the residue which is left behind by the hand when drawing it, but also those drops, once contained in the hand, which trickle out through the fingers; so also there is a separation between us and, not only those who hold aloof in their impiety, but also those who are most pious, and that both in regard to such doctrines as are of small consequence (a matter of less moment) and also in regard to expressions intended to bear the same meaning. We use in an orthodox sense the terms one Essence and three Hypostases, the one to denote the nature of the Godhead, the other the properties³³⁷¹ of the Three; the Italians³³⁷² mean the same, but, owing to the scantiness of their vocabulary, and its poverty of terms, they are unable to distinguish between Essence and Hypostases, and therefore introduce the term Persons, to avoid being understood to assert three Essences. The result, were it not piteous, would be laughable. This slight difference of sound was taken to indicate a difference of faith. Then, Sabellianism was suspected in the doctrine of Three Persons, Arianism in that of Three Hypostases, both being the offspring of a contentious spirit. And then, from the gradual but constant growth of irritation (the unfailing result of contentiousness) there was a danger of the whole world being torn asunder in the strife about syllables. Seeing and hearing this, our blessed one, true man of God and great steward of souls as he was, felt it inconsistent with his duty to overlook so absurd and unreasonable a rending of the word, and applied his medicine to the disease. In what manner? He conferred in his gentle and sympathetic way with both parties, and after he had carefully weighed the meaning of their expressions, and found that they had the same sense, and were in nowise different in doctrine, by permitting each party to use its own terms, he bound them³³⁷³ together in unity of action.

36. This in itself was more profitable than the long course of labours and teaching on which all writers enlarge, for in it somewhat of ambition mingled, and consequently, perhaps, somewhat of novelty in expressions. This again was of more value than his many vigils and acts of discipline,³³⁷⁴ the advantage of which is limited to those who perform them. This was worthy of our hero's famous banishments and flights; for the object, in view of which he chose to endure such sufferings, he still pursued when the sufferings were past. Nor did he cease to cherish the same ardour in others, praising some, gently rebuking others; rousing the sluggishness of these, restraining the passion of those; in some cases eager to prevent a fall, in others devising means of recovery after a fall; simple in disposition, manifold in the arts of government; clever in argument, more clever still in mind; condescending to the more lowly, outsoaring the more lofty; hospitable,³³⁷⁵

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³³⁷¹ *Properties*. Cf. Orat. xliii. 30. note.

³³⁷² *The Italians*, etc. Cf. Newman's Arians, pp. 376–384. S. Athanasius' Orations against the Arians, Ed. Bright, p. lxxxi. Pelav. de Trin. IV. ii. 5–10 and iv.

³³⁷³ *Bound them*, etc. At the Council of Alexandria, A.D. 362. Newman's Arians, pp. 364, sqq.

³³⁷⁴ *Acts of discipline*. χαμυνιῶν, "lying on the ground."

³³⁷⁵ *Hospitable*, etc., titles given to Zeus, and other Greek gods.

protector of suppliants, averted of evils, really combining in himself alone the whole of the attributes parcelled out by the sons of Greece among their deities. Further he was the patron of the wedded and virgin state alike, both peaceable and a peacemaker, and attendant upon those who are passing from hence. Oh, how many a title does his virtue afford me, if I would detail its many-sided excellence.

37. After such a course, as taught and teacher, that his life and habits form the ideal of an Episcopate, and his teaching the law of orthodoxy, what reward does he win for his piety? It is not indeed right to pass this by. In a good old age he closed his life,³³⁷⁶ and was gathered to his fathers, the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and Martyrs, who contended for the truth. To be brief in my epitaph, the honours at his departure surpassed even those of his return from exile; the object of many tears, his glory, stored up in the minds of all, outshines all its visible tokens. Yet, O thou dear and holy one, who didst thyself, with all thy fair renown, so especially illustrate the due proportions of speech and of silence, do thou stay here my words, falling short as they do of thy true meed of praise, though they have claimed the full exercise of all my powers. And mayest thou cast upon us from above a propitious glance, and conduct this people in its perfect worship of the perfect Trinity, which, as Father, Son, Holy Ghost, we contemplate and adore. And mayest thou, if my lot be peaceful, possess and aid me in my pastoral charge, or if it pass through struggles, uphold me, or take me to thee, and set me with thyself and those like thee (though I have asked a great thing) in Christ Himself, our Lord, to whom be all glory, honour, and power for evermore. Amen.

Introduction to the “Theological” Orations.

“It has been said with truth,” says the writer of the Article on Gregory of Nazianzus in the Dictionary of Christian Biography, “that these discourses would lose their chief charm in a translation....Critics have rivalled each other in the praises they have heaped upon them, but no praise is so high as that of the many Theologians who have found in them their own best thoughts. A Critic who cannot be accused of partiality towards Gregory has given in a few words perhaps the truest estimate of them: ‘A solidity of thought, the concentration of all that is spread through the writings of Hilary, Basil, and Athanasius, a flow of softened eloquence which does not halt or lose itself for a moment, an argument nervous without dryness on the one hand, and without useless ornament on the other, give these five Discourses a place to themselves among the monuments of this fine Genius, who was not always in the same degree free from grandiloquence and affectation.

³³⁷⁶ *Closed his life* A.D. 373.