

THE LIFE OF GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER

INTRODUCTION

To better comprehend the context in which this rather lengthy panegyric was composed, we should situate it within the broader context of several funeral orations composed by Gregory of Nyssa which are related to the following persons: Basil the Great, Meletios of Antioch, Pulcheria and Flacilla, the latter two women being members of the imperial household of Theodosios. The first two orations are especially helpful in understanding Gregory's **Life of Gregory Thaumaturgos** because they allow insight into how bishops of the early Christian era were offered as outstanding examples for their flocks. Furthermore, their lives and accomplishments often developed into cultus which exerted varying degrees of influence throughout the early Mediterranean world¹.

The opening words to Gregory of Nyssa's **Life** set the tone of this panegyric which most likely was delivered on 17 November in the year 380: "Both our essay and the congregation assembled here have one aspiration, namely, to reflect upon the great Gregory." However, Jean Bernardi quickly points out² that the exact location of the church where this panegyric was pronounced is not exactly clear as the following passage reveals:

After death he [Gregory Thaumaturgos] sojourned in alien tombs and having rejected earthly possessions, he was not buried in his own place. His sole honor was to be completely untainted by greed. (J.54.12-15)

Although this passage indicates the absence of a particular location for the saint's resting place, the panegyric delivered by Gregory of Nyssa most likely took place in the church of Neo-Caesarea³. However, Gregory mentions a precise historical location or

¹William Telfer has written an article which gives account of the cultus belonging to Gregory the Wonderworker down through the centuries: *The Cultus of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus* in **Harvard Theological Review** volume xxix, October 1936 (Cambridge, Mass.), pp.225-344.

²"Il semble bien avoir été prononcé à Neo-Cesaree, aussi le situerions-nous volontiers en 380, année où Grégoire voguait beaucoup. La fête du saint en fut l'occasion, comme nous l'apprennent les premiers mots. On peut hésiter, en ce qui concerne le lieu, entre l'église de la ville et la tombe du héros." **La Predication des Peres Cappadociens** by Jean Bernardi (Paris, 1968), p.308.

³"It has been noted that as much as two centuries may have passed after St. Gregory's death before men began to say that he lay entombed in the episcopal church of Neocaesarea. Yet in the middle of this interval, when Nyssen wrote his Panegyric, there was already in existence a whole cycle of stories current among the peasantry and connecting the thaumaturge with this or that place or custom. It may be safely inferred, therefore, that the cultus-interest...had an

that place in which he was delivering his address:

When in our lifetime the city suffered a severe earthquake and almost every public and private building was completely destroyed, the temple alone remained unscathed and unshaken, thereby testifying to that great man's strength and vigor. (J.28.7-11)

Gregory, who was later attributed with the name of Thaumaturgos or Wonderworker, was most likely born with the name of Theodore and received the name of Gregory at baptism. His date of birth was approximately the year 213 and came from a high-ranking pagan family at Neocaesarea in Pontos or what today is modern Turkey. On his way to visit Berytos (Beirut) in Phoenicia to pursue studies in law, Gregory ended up in Palestinian Caesarea shortly after Origen had settled there from Alexandria. This newly transferred school already had exerted a magnetic attraction throughout the Mediterranean world as a center for Christian education. The youth from Pontos became so enamored by Origen that he remained for five years under his tutelage. Gregory passed his time studying philosophy which, if lived in accord with reason, brings rewards far greater than any conferred by wealth or success. As G.L. Prestige has remarked, the still youthful pupil honors his master by saying that "Gregory's soul was knit to that of Origen as Jonathan's was to David"⁴. At the end of his five year stay with this master of Christian exegesis, the future bishop wrote of him in his panegyric, **Address to Origen**:

Like some spark kindled within my soul there was kindled and blazed forth my love both toward him [Christ], most desirable of all for his beauty unspeakable, the Word holy and altogether lovely, and toward this man [Origen] his friend and prophet...One thing only was dear and affected by me: philosophy and its teacher, this divine man⁵.

This indebtedness to Origen was also stressed by Gregory of Nyssa who acknowledges it in his **Life** written approximately one century later:

A certain man named Origen was associated with him [Gregory] who at the time was the instructor of philosophy for Christians. He was celebrated for his writings, and his position demonstrated not only his love for study and enthusiasm for work, but also his instinctive moderate behavior⁶.

independent and perhaps an earlier genesis among the country people." **The Cultus of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus** by William Telfer, p.308.

⁴ **Fathers and Heretics** (London, 1940), p.51.

⁵ Quoted from **Patrology**, vol. ii, by Johannes Quasten (Utrecht, 1953), p.123.

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa also acknowledges his personal debt to Origen in the Prologue to his

Although Gregory the Wonderworker gained renown for the miracles he had accomplished in his later years which the bishop of Nyssa attempted to record in his sometimes sketchy biography, the former Gregory nevertheless stressed the missionary aspect of his new episcopate in Pontus. Several years after his departure from Caesarea, Gregory was consecrated bishop of his native city by Phaedimos, bishop of Amasea. For example, the **Life** abounds with reputed miracles but Gregory of Nyssa is careful at the beginning of his account to point out that his hero focused upon a radical form of Christian living which served as an example to his flock:

But for anyone contemplating the life above, wealth consists in purity of soul where poverty is wealth, the fatherland is virtue and the city is the kingdom of God which holds earthly honors in contempt. We therefore reject such reverence and do not attribute these praises to the fatherland which belongs to the great Gregory. (J.6.10-14)

Even in this youthful work of Gregory which is full of admiration for his fellow countryman, he is quick to point out the archetypal role or pattern which the bishop of Pontus provided as an incarnation of heavenly life. It is also interesting to observe that the Wonderworker, who was spiritual leader over an earthly city, saw his chief duty as being a witness of that heavenly existence which is the rightful inheritance of baptized Christians. Although the bishop of Nyssa's text is too long to be considered as an actual address, it has the air of an incomplete biography because he omits recounting a number of miracles as the following two remarks indicate:

But all the other great miracles he performed surpass written accounts and reports; however, I will recall one or two attributed to him. (J.44.13-14)

Even until the present the great Gregory's other miracles are remembered, however, we have not added further words in a desire to spare unbelieving ears who may believe that a multitude of words defile the truth. (J.57.5-8)

Having acknowledged the incompleteness of his account, the bishop of Nyssa nevertheless is not afraid to present to his readers the Wonderworker as a model for Christian living who has been trained under the expert tutelage of Origen. As a bishop he had written a "divine revelation" after having experienced a vision of St. John the Evangelist who appeared to him at the request of the Virgin Mary:

Commentary on the Song of Songs: "Although Origen laboriously applied himself to the Song of Songs, we too have desired to publish our efforts." (Brookline, Mass., 1987), p.39.

It is claimed that this vision of a female form told [Gregory] that the evangelist John was exhorted to manifest the mystery of truth to a young man, saying that she was chosen to be the mother of the Lord who she cherished...He was immediately ordered to write down this divine revelation and later proclaim it in the church. (J.17.13-20)

This vision serves as a preface to Gregory the Wonderworker's so-called "short creed" (J.17.24-J.19.5) which is an early confession of orthodox Christian faith assenting to the three divine Persons: the Father ("One God, Father of the living Word"), Jesus Christ (One Lord alone from him who is alone, God from God") and the Holy Spirit ("The Holy Spirit whose life is from God and who was made manifest through the Son as well as to men, perfect image of the perfect Son")⁷.

This confession recorded for posterity by Gregory of Nyssa is important for a number of reasons. For example, he claims that it was revealed by no other person than St. John who is our chief source among the Gospel writers for significant Trinitarian references. What strikes the reader with regard to this "short creed" is reference to the three Greek prepositions *heis*, one, with respect to the Trinity: "One God" (Father), "One Lord" (the Son) and "One Holy Spirit." Towards the end of his confession, the Wonderworker includes the phrase *trias teleia* or "Perfect Trinity." Several scholars have speculated whether this confession was original to Gregory Thaumaturgos or had precedents. For example, Leon Froideveaux has said, "Certes, aucun des symboles asiatiques dont nous connaissons la teneur ne peut être daté avec certitude d'une époque antérieure à celle de saint Grégoire"⁸.

Furthermore, it was only natural for Gregory Thaumaturgos to have inherited some of Origen's trinitarian insights, namely, that he "was willing on occasion to speak of the Son, in Origenist fashion, as a "creature or a thing made" (*ktisma, poiema*). His formal teaching, however, as set out in his creed, was to the effect that 'there is one God, Father of the living Word...perfect begetter of the perfect begotten...impress and image of the Godhead, effective Word...And there is one Holy Spirit, having his subsistence from God and being made manifest by the Son...in whom is manifested God the Father'"⁹.

⁷⁷ Von Luise Abramowski discusses the relationship of Gregory the Wonderworker's creed within the context of Christological and Trinitarian statements of his time in an article entitled *Das Bekenntnis des Gregor Thaumaturgos bei Gregor von Nyssa und das Problem seiner Echtheit* from *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* #87 (Stuttgart, 1976), pp.145-166.

⁸⁸ Cf. an article entitled *Le Symbole de Saint Grégoire le Thaumaturge* in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* #19 (Paris, 1929), p.196.

⁹⁹ *Early Christian Doctrines* by J.N.D. Kelly (New York, 1978), p.133.

On pp.196-7 of his article Froideveaux enumerates three of the most ancient texts such as the one translated by Cassian (c.430), the Apostolic Constitutions utilized by the Syrian church (fourth century) and the second formula of the Council of Antioch (341). By examining each of them, Froideveaux concludes that Gregory did not find his confession originating in Asia; rather, belief in "One God," "One Lord [Christ]" and "One Holy Spirit" was employed by Clement of Alexandria (**The Tutor**, I, 6,41) and Origen (**Commentary on John II**, 10). However, such churchmen as these couched their formulas in philosophical terms familiar to them whereas Gregory the Wonderworker, like the Apostolic Fathers of the second century, was more concerned with "la catechese et la predication"¹⁰. Thus the true inheritance bequeathed to Gregory originated in Rome which was more missionary in character. Despite the origins to the Wonderworker's creed, his words are infused with a sublime simplicity which could appeal to the simple country folk of Pontos.

Gregory's teaching concerning the Son, Jesus Christ, is the most developed aspect of the "short creed" despite mention of the Holy Spirit's role who is not only linked to the Son's divine nature but has a relationship with humankind ("perfect image of the perfect Son, living source of those who are alive, holy provider of sanctity" J.18.16-18). The confession begins by saying "One God, Father of the living Word who consists of wisdom, power and who is the eternal pattern." Note the word *hupistemi* ("consists," "subsists"), a rare word not found in the New Testament but used by Origen in the active sense of giving existence ¹¹. The first few lines are based upon Scripture but the words following these such as "true Son of true Father, unseen [Son] of the immortal [Father], and eternal [Son] of the eternal [Father]" clearly reveal that Gregory was using words and concepts of his time. This original part of his confession indicates that the Wonderworker was influenced by such sources as Cassian, Origen and the Apostolic Constitutions as already mentioned above.

Because Gregory of Nyssa mentions in his panegyric that the Wonderworker was inspired by St. John, we can easily see how he ties in several other closely related themes such Hebrews 4.12 ("the Word of God is living and active"), First Corinthians 1.24 ("Christ, the power and wisdom of God") and Second Corinthians 8.26 ("one God the Father...one Lord Jesus Christ"). These passages are equally used by Origen to identify Christ both as word as wisdom, for example, in his **Commentary on Jeremiah** viii, 2. Furthermore, Gregory follows the Jewish tradition of utilizing such words as *kurios* and *theos* which had applied to God and are now attributed to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, adoption of such terms were helpful in combating the dualistic doctrine belonging to the disciples of Marcion who were successful in the region of Pontos.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.198.

¹¹ **Contra Celsum**, viii, 14.

It is interesting to note that immediately following the "short creed" when its readers are exhorted to "listen to the Church," we find a comparison of this creed with the tablets of the divine law given to Moses on Mount Sinai:

Concerning Moses, Scripture says that when [God] who transcends visible reality and who constitutes the invisible sanctuary within the soul (for darkness, *gnophos*, implies this), it is for teaching the divine mysteries to all the people through his knowledge about God. In the same way the office of this great man contains no perceptible mountain but consists in the loftiness of desire for true teachings which is a dark vision unable to be approached. (J.19.10-17)

Here we have a direct reference to Gregory of Nyssa's **Life of Moses** which develops at length the theme of divine unknowability or darkness. Although this theme is found developed in Gregory's more mature works, the essence of this insight is nevertheless fully developed here:

What now is the meaning of Moses' entry into the darkness and of the vision of God that he enjoyed in it?...as the soul makes progress, and by a greater and more perfect concentration comes to appreciate what the knowledge of truth is, the more it approaches this vision, and so much the more does it see that the divine nature is invisible. It thus leaves all surface appearances, not only those that can be grasped by the senses but also those which the mind itself seems to see, and it keeps on going deeper until by the operation of the spirit it penetrates the invisible and incomprehensible, and it is there that it sees God. The true vision and the true knowledge of what we seek consists precisely in not seeing, in an awareness that our goal transcends all knowledge and is everywhere cut off from us by the darkness of incomprehensibility¹².

The aim or *skopos* of Gregory of Nyssa's panegyric is clearly laid out towards the beginning: "If mention is made of virtuous persons without imparting a desire to imitate them, we lack an appealing example" (J.4.3-4). The Wonderworker is then compared to a

¹²¹² PG#44.376C-377A. Concerning this passage Jean Danielou remarks, "And the darkness is a positive reality that helps us to know God...For here in this obscurity the soul experiences the transcendence of the divine nature, that infinite distance by which God surpasses all creation. Thus the soul finds itself as it were elevated above all created things and at the same time lost in an infinite darkness wherein it loses its contact with things, though it is aware of God despite the total incapacity of its knowledge." **From Glory to Glory** (New York, 1961), p.30.

torch which guides sailors to port. Not only is this torch a simple beacon, but it "illuminates our souls through the memory" (J.4.12), making it clear that the Wonderworker is a pattern of holiness imprinted upon the church's memory much like the Holy Spirit imprinted upon our hearts.

The Wonderworker is depicted as not having a true homeland on earth; rather, "in our opinion, there is one fatherland, one heavenly city" (J.5.5-6). Mention of this transcendent country to which Gregory was so devoted at first seems to stand in contrast to the earthly city where he was bishop. However, the bishop of Nyssa makes a correspondence between material and immaterial realities not so much as to deny the former but to allow the latter to inform it. Membership in this heavenly homeland depends not upon physical birth but "only free choice can create it" (J.5.11-12) as inspired by divine grace.

As with all his other works, this **Life** stresses the role of virtue, *arete*: "our sole companion" (J.6.20-21) whose acquisition "begins with wisdom united to temperance much like a foal over which self-control presides" (J.9.4-5). Even in this composition belonging to his early years, Gregory of Nyssa does not hesitate to employ non-Christian teachings which can have a positive effect upon the Church by referring to the patriarch Abraham as follows:

He studied Chaldean philosophy and became skilled in it...he pondered the stars' position, harmony and motion which acted as a ladder for him to contemplate the good above. If [Abraham] grasped them by his senses, even though they transcended the senses...he surpassed it and moved on to what was loftier. (J.9.8-12)

Compare this appreciation of pagan, or more specifically Greek philosophy, regarding self knowledge with the Wonderworker's own remarks concerning Origen's interest in this area:

Here is the better work of philosophy, that which the most celebrated among the demons¹³ proposes as a wise precept: know yourself...The soul is obliged to look at itself as in a mirror and regarding in it the divine

¹³¹³ With regards to the meaning of "demon" or *daimon* Henri Crouzel remarks concerning this passage: "Il s'agit de l'oracle donne a Socrate par Apollon Pythien, 'divinite' pour un Grec, 'demon' pour un chretien, chacun entendant a sa maniere le mot *daimon*. Si Apollon est pour Gregoire un demon, comment a-t-il pu donner a Socrate de si sages conseils, dans le but de le mener a Dieu? *Mantis* designe un païen par opposition a prophetes." **Origene et la Connaissance Mystique** (Louven, 1961), p.64.

intelligence, if it becomes worthy of this communion, it follows a mysterious way towards this divinization¹⁴.

We find in Gregory of Nyssa's **Life** further reference to the value of so-called pagan philosophy which the Wonderworker had appropriated under the direction of his master, Origen:

Since [Gregory] knew that philosophy concerning the divinity was two-fold, Greek and barbarian, he pondered over conflicting teachings and attempted to confirm each by close attention to their words. (J.9.21-25)

However, the bishop of Nyssa is quick to point out that the Wonderworker was not taken in by "logical, convoluted technical tricks" (J.9.27-28); rather, "he himself had faith which transcends knowledge" [cf. Eph 3.19] (J.10.1)¹⁵. One prime example of such proficiency in non-Christian erudition used by the former Gregory is Moses who "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" [Acts 7.22]. He compares this Old Testament figure with the Wonderworker who "realized the deficiency and insubstantial nature of their teachings since he followed the Gospel" (J.10.10-11).

Keeping in mind reference to that "faith which transcends knowledge," we see that such Christian faith corresponds to God's spiritual nature "which cannot be fathomed by human reasoning and intelligence...and takes its place and fosters it" (J.10.6-7). As Hans Urs Von Balthasar has remarked concerning this passage, "La foi est en definitive la seule connaissance conforme a notre condition, une foi qui est tout autre chose qu'une 'conviction,' laquelle ne serait encore qu'une forme du savoir"¹⁶. If Gregory of Nyssa accentuates the immanence of creative forces as revealed by the Wonderworker's miracles, he certainly does not exclude them as coming under the *theia dunamis* or their divine source:

If a servant's word can move that which is unmovable, to command what lacks sense and to bid what lacks life, then how much greater is the great power of the Lord of all creation whose will is the material, agent and

¹⁴¹⁴ **Panegyric Oration** number xi, PG#10.1084C.

¹⁵¹⁵ Concerning the relationship between faith, Reinhard Hubner remarks, "Aber 'Glaube' hat in diesen Aussagen sicherlich eine sehr viel umfassendere Bedeutung und schließt die ganze neue Heilsordnung, also auch Erlösungsgeschehnisse, Evangelium, Sakrament und christliches Leben ein. 'Glaube' kann auf diese Weise ein weites Bedeutungsfeld haben." **Die Einheit des Lebens Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa** (Leiden, 1974), p.189. With regard to these remarks, Hubner makes several references to the **Life** as follows: 909CD, 912ABC, 913BCD and 944AD.

¹⁶¹⁶ **Presence et Pensee** (Paris, 1943), pp.66-7.

authority over the world and who is in all things and transcends them!
(J.24.7-13)

The source of such power can be mistakenly viewed as belonging to gods as the populace who "gathered to learn about this novel wonder...and who considered him a god who exercised authority" (J.24.18-22). We obtain a better insight into this common, erroneous perception by quoting from one of Gregory of Nyssa's mature works, the **Commentary on the Song of Songs** which makes a clear distinction between that which is sensible and that which is intelligible:

The sensible is grasped by sense, while the intelligible transcends sensible comprehension. The intelligible is infinite and unbounded, while the material is limited, for everything material is determined by quantity and quality. Anything with mass, form, appearance and shape limits our understanding so that the person who examines material creation can perceive nothing beyond these bounds through his imagination¹⁷.

In face of popular acclaim for his miracles, the Wonderworker enters the city "as if he were a lifeless piece of wood," (J.25.6), that is, he was fully taken over by God so as to leave no trace of pride or envy. This state of detachment is called *apatheia*, a word of Stoic origin meaning within a Christian context a state free from passion. It also means a habitual state of grace, that is to say, participation of the soul in the divine life as the following passage from the **Song Commentary** reveal:

For the rays of that true, divine virtue shine forth in a pure life by the outflow of detachment (*apatheia*) and make the invisible visible to us and the inaccessible comprehensible by depicting the sun [i.e., Christ] in the mirror of our souls. (J.90)

Gregory's **Life** enhances these remarks on *apatheia* and its equivalence with virtue which is likened to a house:

You must possess one house which virtue carefully erects and raises to heaven's heights. You should concentrate upon this alone...But persons who conduct their lives according to virtue have no need for such protection. (J.26.6-13)

This example of virtue as a house as witnessed by the person of Gregory Thaumaturgos is then extended to those under his pastoral care, for example, "the poor

¹⁷¹⁷ Brookline, Mass., 1987, p.127 (J.173).

were encouraged to have virtue as their one treasure, a reward which everyone was permitted to abundantly acquire" (J.27.21-22).

The miracles recorded by Gregory of Nyssa in his **Life**, while of hagiographical interest and perhaps amusing, are intended to enhance the Wonderworker's Christian life as opposed to recounting a mere catalog of extraordinary events. They can be better appreciated in light of six Old Testament personages noted for their leadership plus one from the New Testament: Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Solomon, Elias, Samuel and Peter. Clearly Moses is the best representative to the life and miracles of Gregory Thaumaturgos. In brief, a parallel is drawn between both men for the following qualities: secular wisdom (J.10.7-11), separation from "this life's upheavals and confusion" (J.14.18-19), prayer at night and parting water (J.30.11-16) and as a source of inspiration for people to resist hostile forces (J.49.9-14). Also included within the **Life** are Abraham (known for his proficiency in pagan wisdom, J.9.8-12), Joseph (falsely accused of adultery, J.12.13-J.13.2), Solomon (noted for his justice, J.28.24-J.18), Elias (who parted the Jordan River, J.35.7-14), Samuel (who chose a king over Israel, J.36.19-J.37.2) and Peter (whose shadow cured a lame man, J.42.23-J.43.11).

The critical text of **The Life of Gregory the Wonderworker**¹⁸ was prepared by Gunter Heil and is found in **Gregorii Nysseni Sermones**, Pars II, (Leiden, 1990), pp.3-57. The text by J.P. Migne may be found in **Patrologia Graecae**, volume 44 (Paris, 1858), columns 893-957.

THE TEXT

[M.893 & J.3] Both our essay and the congregation assembled here have one aspiration, namely, to reflect upon the great Gregory. For my part, it seems best to

¹⁸¹⁸ The full title in the critical edition reads: "The Life and Miracles of Our Father Gregory the Wonderworker Who is Among the Saints."

consider the fortitude of his virtue and wonderful achievements and by invoking his help, such an outstanding example may assist us in how we should conduct our lives. Indeed, this is a gift from the Spirit who provides a living example and testimony, thereby affirming each person with unflagging dedication. Since the Spirit's power is the foundation which enables such a radiant and admired life to flourish, prayer upholds us when we must speak of it. We should not scorn this praise because this man's memory demonstrates in the present **[J.4]** his witness which had been manifested through his deeds.

If mention is made of virtuous persons without imparting a desire to imitate them, we lack an appealing example. It would be pointless to praise them because ears accustomed to vanity would recoil from listening to such an account. But attention to this report offers an advantage much like a torch which guides sailors to itself who are wandering on the sea in total darkness. In similar fashion I believe that such effort applies to each of you who are attentive to my words. It is clear that a torch which illumines our souls through the memory offers a way to the good for thoughtful persons. We wish that all men desire to attain such praiseworthy and honorable behavior.

Such is the subject of our essay. I can speak boldly and with confidence **[M.896]** whether or not my remarks support the greatness of actual deeds because in any case, praise is equally applicable. If we speak of miracles, they get the attention of our listeners, but if we later recount their greatness, it illumines the glory of what has already been praised. The best tribute we can give a man becomes clear if the capacity of extolling him is more evident.

No person instructed by divine wisdom should seek a contrived form of acclaim from pagan customs since he is praised in a spiritual fashion. We do not judge others by a similar reason about the good nor should we have opinions **[J.5]** with regard to those distinguished persons who live according to this world. They possess a certain surpassing dignity, wealth, lineage, glory, earthly authority, stories from their ancestors related to victories, battles and the evils of war. In our opinion there is one fatherland, one heavenly city founded upon living stones [1Pet 2.5], whose maker and founder is God [Heb 11.10]. This splendid race which enjoys fellowship with God neither has its natural roots in this world nor bears the natural consequences common to its inhabitants; rather, only free choice can create it. The divine voices says, "He [God the Father] has given the power to whomever receives him [Christ] to be children of God" [Jn 1.12]. What can be more splendid than this noble birth? On the other hand, demons are responsible for inventing deceitfully contrived stories. However, they have no place in our [heavenly] fatherland.

Anyone who contemplates heaven and its beauty and sees all creation with the soul's eye has the ability to grasp what we have related concerning our fatherland. Yet instead of the fatherland, we now have a community which we have colonized from that more lofty life because we have forsaken this transitory world. We should consider this community, its city, beauty, rule and the happiness which belongs to its inhabitants. For if these manifestations [J.6] of creation surpass praise, why should we consider what transcends it which no eye can grasp nor can be judged by hearing or the mind [1Cor 2.9]? The divine law of praise excludes by reason of spiritual praise those attributes as nonsense and judges those persons as disgraceful who are so honored because they belong to the earth [cf. Is 11.3 & Jn 7.24, 8.15]. [M.897] If any worldly person is fascinated by material happiness, let him get his praise from individuals who possess either cattle, are greedy with an abundance of fish or who pile one stone on top of another to construct a lovely edifice. But for anyone contemplating the life above, wealth consists in purity of soul where poverty is wealth, the fatherland is virtue and the city is the kingdom of God which holds earthly honors in contempt. We therefore reject such reverence and do not attribute these praises to the fatherland which belongs to the great Gregory. Neither do we claim that they belong to our forefathers knowing that they have no part in such praise. However, we add that what is indeed permanent can never be taken away.

When all assets such as wealth, notoriety, glory, honor, pleasure, enjoyment, acquaintances and friends leave us, our sole companion is virtue which perseveres us from evil and is the only happiness we have left. Let no one insist that I or our predecessors are worthy of claiming the fatherland, but under the pretext [J.7] of contempt for such things, disgrace can deceive us. Who does not know the name "Pontos" ¹⁹ refers to all those remarkable people chosen from the beginning and renowned for virtue? This word "Pontos" also goes under the name of "Euxeinos" ²⁰ which is unique a name used with reference to the earth and sea and applies to the hospitality shown towards strangers. Furthermore, the inhabitants gave this place its name because anyone who visits there is treated courteously and shown great solicitude. This region is fertile for producing every necessity for sustaining life and does not lack goods from other areas because they are imported from overseas.

Such is the case with every nation having citizens who are proud of their land and consider it as superior to other areas, yet in the common judgment of people, the city of the great Gregory enjoys preeminence among its neighboring towns. Even Caesar, ruler of the Romans, honored the city with his own name due to his love and affection for this area by the sea. However, these remarks do not pertain to our intention, namely, to

¹⁹Pontos is that area on the south shore of the Black Sea which is now Turkey.

²⁰The word *euxeinos* means hospitality.

attribute a more worthy honor of having that great man [Gregory] numbered among the saints. Despite the abundance of fruit, the city is exquisitely adorned, even though imported goods contribute to the city's appearance and prestige. [M.900] However, in the context of this essay, I do not mention its ancestors according to the flesh by relating their greatness and worldly pretense. What, then, is the source for such praise? Is it sepulchers, monuments, inscriptions and empty stories about those who elevated themselves over the entire world [J.8] insofar as these attributes cannot make them participate in praise since they have refused that [spiritual] relationship which applies to the soul? They have foolishly deceived themselves by idols, whereas the person who looks to the truth above has associated himself to it through faith.

On the other hand, we omit nothing of our account concerning [Gregory the Wonderworker] to whom these remarks pertain and who dwelt in the city from his birth, and we now praise him because he led a virtuous life. A parent's death deprives a newly born infant of natural care, for a young mind is unable to judge the good, and it is immediately evident from the beginning how this person will later develop. Similarly, a new plant's beauty which first puts out shoots manifests its future loveliness to farmers. This example is analogous to those persons who easily sink down to vain and stupid concerns like so many youths. Thus the first choices we make in life truly reveal the words of David, "The just man will flourish like a palm tree" [Ps 91.13]. This tree alone attains its fullest growth from the earth and does not increase in breadth with the passage of time. Anyone who resembles that shoot flourishes from the beginning by choices in life and right away rises up with lofty foliage. Having forsaken all those activities typical of youth such as equestrian pursuits, hunts, self-embellishment, clothes, dice, [J.9], food, it then behooves such a person to acquire virtue once he has experienced those youthful activities.

Acquisition of virtues begins with wisdom united to temperance much like a foal over which self-control presides. Humility and discretion attend them by holding money in contempt, and does not give birth to pride, disrespect nor contribute to avarice. Similarly, [M.901] the patriarch Abraham studied Chaldean philosophy and became skilled in it ²¹. He also pondered the stars' position, harmony and motion which acted as a ladder for him to contemplate the good above. If [Abraham] grasped them by his senses, even though they transcended the senses, and happened to attain what he sought from pagan wisdom, he surpassed it and moved on to what was loftier.

Thus he [Gregory] became great by his acquaintance and attention to pagan philosophy which augments Greek [wisdom] and leads to an understanding of Christianity. Having forsaken the erroneous religion of their ancestors, he sought the

²¹Cf. **The Migration of Abraham** by Philo, p.176.

truth, for such foreign teaching is not in harmony with regard to Greek beliefs. Since [Gregory] knew that philosophy concerning the divinity was two-fold, Greek and barbarian, he pondered over these conflicting teachings and attempted to confirm each by close attention to their words. He abandoned them to their own devices as though they were engaged in civil war and apprehended the firm position of faith minus logical, convoluted technical tricks; rather, he honored every person who understood them by using simple words **[J.10]** while he himself had faith which transcends knowledge [cf. Eph 3.19]. For if human reason could grasp his words, it would not differ from Greek wisdom which, if they had strength to absorb it, would express their own opinions. Since comprehension of [God's] transcendent nature cannot be fathomed by human reasoning and intelligence, faith takes its place and fosters it. Therefore just as Scripture says that Moses was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" [Acts 7.22], so was that man [Gregory] great who was familiar with Greek education and knowledge. By experience he realized the deficiency and insubstantial nature of their teachings since he followed the Gospel. Before his initiation through a mystical and incorporeal birth, he conducted his life in order to be cleansed of sin's filth.

When he dwelt in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, to which assiduous young men flocked to study philosophy and medicine, the youthful [Gregory] was an irksome sight to his peers because he was adorned with a restraint unlike anyone else in the city, and the esteem surrounding his integrity irritated such corrupt individuals. Because of this, some undisciplined characters sought to make all sorts of excuses if no one went along with them. They maintained that this great man's life was tainted with a certain flaw and hatched a plot to release from prison a harlot notorious **[M.904]** for shameful behavior. But following the conduct of learned and responsible men accustomed to philosophical speculation, [Gregory] approached the woman in a nonchalant and unassuming manner while pretending to agree with everything she said and did. He then said that **[J.11]** she was cheated of her wage and was refused the payment she had sought. When they who acknowledged the quality of his life became outraged at the woman, their anger neither troubled him nor did he claim that this humiliation had slandered his reputation. [Gregory] neither summoned witnesses on his behalf, nor did he repudiate the disgrace by swearing an oath nor respond to the evils brought against him; rather, in a calm, subdued voice he replied as to a friend, "He who paid money to this woman should no longer be distressed at having caused such trouble." When they learned of the harlot's accusation who had sought money from him and he readily accounted for everything, the plot to smear his self-control by accusations of licentious conduct came to an end. Now that this attempt to dishonor him fell back upon them, with God's help the youth's control and the reproach of his comrades became evident. Having received the money, an evil spirit at once tormented her, and she bellowed out a loud animal sound. This woman presented a dreadful sight in the midst of the assembly by tearing out her hair, rolling her eyes and

emitting foam from her mouth. But before the demon suffocated her, she earnestly besought God almighty.

These events are worthy of that great youth and were confirmed right from the beginning of his life. If no further words were added to this miracle, it would alone attribute no small praise with regard to those persons who excel in virtue. For example, a wealthy youth living abroad in a densely populated city freely indulges in pleasures, and his purity turns into disgrace from associating with his peers [J.12] who lack chastity through self-control. He has no solicitous mother [M.905] and father to correct his life through mastery of passions and to make him strive for virtue that he may provide an example of strength for eluding a slanderous woman's evil attack. Can anyone offer a greater reason for praise? How does this commendable instance offer tribute? Why should we be astonished at a person who has subjugated his youthful nature to reason as a tame animal, has mastered all natural passions, rejects jealousy which clings closely to anything beautiful and has transformed himself for the better? He was not moved by his friends' plot for vengeance; although his good deeds were reduced to ridicule, he chose prayer to liberate himself from demonic affliction.

We know about Joseph and the inappropriate conduct of his master's wife who passionately desired his beauty when no witness was present to see her advances [cf. Gen 39.7ff]. But his eye which was fixed upon God saw appearances as evil and submitted to it rather than by allowing himself to be seduced. But this story boasts of something greater. While the rejection of defilement cannot equal that disgrace associated with adulterous actions, what appears as a lesser offense is equally disgraceful. Therefore when no danger from the law is present, Joseph judged pleasure resulting from sin to be more frightening than [J.13] vengeance. He overcame this danger either by a miraculous occurrence or realized that other persons were indeed not responsible for it. What, then is the essence of such an outstanding life?

All training in pagan philosophy transpires in Phirmilianos of Cappadocia which is famous for noble families and their particular style of life. This is also evident by [Gregory's] life whom the church of the Caesarians had honored and whose conduct of living which always was in accord with God was manifest to his friends. The diligence associated with his passion was renowned since he forsook interest in pagan philosophy. A certain man named Origen associated with him who at the time was the instructor of philosophy for Christians. He was celebrated for his writings, and his position demonstrated not only his love for study and enthusiasm for work, but also his instinctive moderate behavior. [Origen] was endowed by such wisdom and did not disdain to put other teachings at the service of theology. Having spent time studying under this teacher, many exhorted [Gregory] during his sojourn to remain with them instead of returning to

his native country. They hoped that he would prefer their land to which, like a merchant, he had brought the wealth of wisdom and knowledge [M.908] and had imported pagan learning which won the favor of distinguished men.

If anyone judges justly, he does scorn that praise which befits the entire city. Neither does he share the enthusiasm of all who have been chosen because their actions outlast any form of human endeavor nor the city's leaders whose goal is to be a distinguished authority and legislator on virtue. But fleeing in every possible way those occasions for vanity and knowing that passion holds in contempt many things because it is in accord [J.14] with an evil life, [Gregory] takes up a quiet life in his homeland much like a ship entering a harbor. Every nation desires such a lifestyle and aspires to facilitate erudition in common gatherings and to earn the fruit of blessed endeavors which the people hold in esteem. That great man [Gregory] realizes that authentic philosophy should be placed at the city's service and does not allow ambition to wound his soul. The praise of those who listen to it is poignant and inflames the soul's vitality by vanity and love of honor.

[Gregory] therefore manifests his erudition through silence and withdraws from the tumultuous crowd and hustle of the city. He retires into solitude that he may converse with God and holds the entire world in disdain by shunning imperial affairs, not scrutinizing magistrates and by turning a deaf ear to official matters. Instead, [Gregory] refines his soul by attending to virtue which directs his life and behavior. This is reminiscent in our times of another Moses who rivals him in the performance of miracles. Both Moses and Gregory separated themselves from this life's upheaval and confusion, each attending to their respective private lives, while a theophany manifested to them the advantage of living purely. While Moses united married life with philosophy [cf. Ex 1.21], Gregory wedded himself to virtue alone. Therefore both men had the same goal in mind: separation from society to contemplate divine mysteries [J.15] with the soul's pure eye. This permitted them to judge what is best for meditating upon virtue and to attain a life free from passion. One gravitated towards a legitimate share of pleasures, whereas the other surmounted it and did not dedicate himself to the transitory pleasure of material creation.

At that time Phaidimos presided over the church of the Amasenians and earnestly applied himself to foresee the future as divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. He invested the great Gregory with leadership so that such a good might not be unfruitful and that his life might not go unnoticed. Having perceived this enticement to the priesthood, [Gregory] strove to conceal it while pursuing another form of solitude. Once he had experienced this trial, the great Phaidimos employed every means available which were unsuccessful in leading him to the priesthood. With many eyes upon him, he took

precautions which were futile in persuading him to assume this office. Both men strove intensely: one desired to make a proper selection and the other wanted to take flight. One knew how to present himself as an offering pleasing to God, whereas the other was apprehensive that the priesthood's responsibility might hinder him from pursuing philosophy. Therefore Phaidimos was divinely inspired to undertake a journey of three days' distance which separated him from Gregory. Instead, he looked to God and said that God had at that time honored both himself and [Gregory]. Clutching Gregory's word instead of his hand, he consecrated him to God although he was not physically present and assigned the city to him. At that time the deceit of innumerable idols gripped the city so that [J.16] both in it and the surrounding area no more than seventeen were present who committed themselves to the faith. Therefore [Gregory] submitted to the yoke of priestly office and once all the religious rites were completed, he was soon obliged to carefully attend to mystery [of faith] after his summons to the priesthood. As the Apostle says [Gal 1.16], he should no longer be attached to flesh and blood but should seek to manifest the hidden things of God and not proclaim it before the truth was revealed in him. At night he beheld the foundation of the faith. Various thoughts troubled him, for certain people perverted true teaching and often obscured it through persuasive, clever attempts.

As he laid awake, there appeared to him in a vision an aged person in human form adorned with solemn raiment and [M.912] whose countenance was striking by great virtue and kindness in addition to the integrity his form. [Gregory] was struck by fear at this sight and rising up from bed, realized who he was and why he came. After quieting his fear, he said in a soft voice that a divine order bade him to appear, the reasons of which were obscure to [Gregory], in order to reveal the truth of correct belief and to encourage him to speak while gazing upon him with both joy and respect. Then the old man suddenly extended his hand and with his finger [J.17] pointed to something which appeared near him which was a splendid female form instead of a male one. Once again [Gregory] was terrified and turned his face away, unable to bear its sight. The vision was especially amazing since the night was gloomy, for it resembled something like a light illuminated by another light. Since he could not look upon this spectacle, he heard from those who appeared to him speaking in detail about what he was seeking. Not only was he revered with regard to true knowledge of faith but recognized the names of each man who appeared when they called each other by their respective names. It is claimed that this vision of a female form told [Gregory] that the evangelist John was exhorted to manifest the mystery of truth to a young man, saying that she was chosen to be the mother of the Lord whom she cherished. He also said that this fitting vision had vanished again from his sight. He was immediately ordered to write down this divine revelation and later proclaim it in the church. In this way it became for others a divinely given legacy through which the people might repulse any evil of heresy. The words of that

revelation are as follows:

One God,
Father of the living Word (who consists of wisdom, power and who is the eternal pattern),
perfect Begetter of who is perfect,
Father of the Only Begotten Son.

[J.18] One Lord
alone from him who is alone,
God from God,
pattern and image of the divinity,
mighty Word,
wisdom which encompasses everything,
true Son of true Father,
unseen [Son] of the unseen [Father],
immortal [Son] of the immortal [Father],
and eternal [Son] of the eternal [Father].

One Holy Spirit
whose life is from God
and who was made manifest through the Son (as well as to men),
perfect image of the perfect Son,
living **[M.913]** source of those who are alive,
holy provider of sanctity
in whom God the Father appeared
who is above all and in all,
and God the Son
who is in all.
Perfect Trinity
to whom belongs glory, eternity and kingship
which can never change.

[J.19] (Thus the Trinity is not created, has anything else which claims to be first, nor is there anything which exists that can be introduced later. Similarly, the Son neither lacks the Father nor does the Spirit lack the Son; rather, the Trinity forever remains immutable and constant.)

Let anyone whoever desires to believe this listen to the Church which proclaims its message and which perseveres these signs of blessedness by that hand even to the present. Is it not evident that these divinely made tablets rival the magnificence of grace? I believe that such tablets are the ones in which are inscribed the intentions of the divine

will. Concerning Moses, Scripture says that when [God] who transcends visible reality and who constitutes the invisible sanctuary within the soul (for darkness implies this ²²), it is for teaching the divine mysteries to all the people through his knowledge about God. In the same way the office of this great man contains no perceptible mountain but consists in the loftiness of desire for true teachings which is a dark vision unable to be approached. The soul is the tablet; in place of letters upon a tablet voices appears which reveal the mysteries for anyone who has undergone initiation.

After that vision had filled him with confidence and courage much like an athlete who competes in a **[J.20]** contest after having acquired stamina from a trainer, he strips himself for the stadium and prepares for the struggle. In similar fashion, so does [Gregory] exercise himself and the assistance of grace which appeared to him anoints his soul and makes it worthy to undergo the contest. (For all the labors and struggles related to the priesthood follow this example where faith overcomes every adverse power). After leaving his solitude, [Gregory] at once hastened to the city where he felt obliged to establish a church for God. He knew that the whole region was under the grip of demons and that the temple of the true God was not yet constructed; the entire city and surrounding area was filled with pagan altars, sacred places and all the people were devoted to images. They adorned the temples and sacred places with images and the madness of idolatry with processions; their defilement gave substance to rites and ceremonies. Just as a noble commander routes the enemy in combat by the strength of his battle order, so does that great man's valor set an example against the demons. How does he accomplish this?

Upon arriving in the city at evening from the countryside, a violent rainstorm forced [Gregory] into **[M.916]** the temple. This place was renowned because one of the demons revered there was accustomed to manifest himself to the temple's custodians, and a certain prophet was empowered to utter oracles. Once [Gregory] entered the temple with several companions, one of the demons was petrified at the invocation of Christ's name. Having purified the air with the figure of the Cross which had been defiled, he spent **[J.21]** the entire night in prayer and singing hymns according to his usual custom. In this way [Gregory] transformed the place into a temple of prayer which had been profaned by unclean sacrifices and images [cf. Is 56.7, Mk 11.17]. After completing night prayer, he resumed at daybreak, but when the temple's custodian began to perform his rites to the demons at sunrise, he claimed that he could not approach the temple because [Gregory] blocked the way. The custodian then attempted to invite demons into the temple using sacrifices of purification and sacred rituals. However, his endeavors were ineffectual because the demons were not accustomed to respond to this enticement. Overcome with a furious rage, the custodian seized that great man and threatened him

²²Cf. **The Life of Moses** by Gregory of Nyssa, VII 1 22,4sqq. and 86,11sqq.

with various forms of intimidation and to bring him to the leaders. He wanted to lay hands upon him and reveal his audacity to the king because a Christian who was hostile to the gods had the effrontery to enter the temple. His admission to temple for performing services was refused, and he could no longer visit places where oracles were made to demons. The custodian's harsh anger was enkindled at [Gregory's] splendid resolve, and he hurled all kinds of threats against the blessing offered by the true God. He alleged to have more fortitude than his opponent and had the privilege of entering those places anytime he wished as well as being able to prove [J.22] this. The temple keeper was so struck with admiration at [Gregory's] ability to perform wonders that he again invoked the demons to enter the temple. Having learned about this, the great man suddenly snatched a piece of the book and gave it to the temple keeper while angrily commanding the demons. The words of this epitaph read as follows: GREGORY TO SATAN: ENTER.

When the temple keeper received this little book to place on the altar according to custom, he offered [M.917] burnt sacrifices and various types of unclean rites and again beheld what he had seen before the demons were ejected from the temple which contained the idols. Having accomplished this, he realized that Gregory was endowed with divine power which made him stronger than the demons. Before leaving the city, he promptly grasped Gregory in order to learn about his secret and about God who had vanquished the demons. When the great man gave a brief account about the mystery of piety, a certain temple guardian approached him who was in all likelihood uninitiated into divine matters. He was inclined to believe that it was too inconsequential for God to appear to men in the flesh. But when Gregory said that these miracles are possible not by reason but by faith, the temple keeper begged to see a miracle which would strengthen him in the faith. Right then and there it is said to everyone's surprise that Gregory performed a great miracle. After the temple guardian found a huge stone which in his eyes seemed unmovable [J.23] by human means but only through the power of faith, Gregory ordered it transferred to another place. That great man at once charged the large stone which seemed endowed with life to move to that place designated by the temple's keeper. Once this was accomplished, the man immediately believed and forsook his entire family, household, wife, children, friends, the priesthood and possessions. In their place he requested to participate in [Gregory's] greatness, accomplishments, divine philosophy and teaching.

Let all these clever, skillful arguments belonging to rhetoric which exaggerate miracles remain silent because words which recount the miracle are insignificant in the face of the event itself. What can anyone say to add to this miracle? How can anyone diminish the admiration of those who have heard about it? One stone from among others frees those who have been enslaved by stones [cf. Acts 17.29; Is 40.18 sqq.]. A stone

heralds faith in God and guides those who do not believe into salvation not by a voice or words proclaiming divine power but as coming from God as Gregory proclaimed. He has both in equal measure; not only what is physical, breathes and is animate but if anyone lacks these qualities, he has them by a servant's command and is not deprived of sensation. What report exists [J.24] of this stone? What perception of power is there for the stone which has been ordered? What is its transcendent power? What kind of limbs and joints does it possess? The temple custodian is looking for all these and similar qualities as manifested through enjoining the stone. He immediately understood the demon's power to deceive human nature and despised it; having turned to the true God whom [M.920] creation serves, he realized the Lord's might. If a servant's word can move that which is unmovable, to command what lacks sense and to bid what lacks life, then how much greater is the great power of the Lord of all creation whose will is the material, agent and authority over the world and who is in all things and transcends them!

Thus that great man [Gregory] prevailed against the demons' strength and paraded the temple guardian as a victory trophy, a sight which filled the people with awe. With faith and courage he triumphantly entered the city not with chariots, horses, asses and boasting in the number of supporters but attended by the full array of virtues. The town's entire populace gathered to learn about this the novel wonder, and everyone desired to see that man called Gregory. They considered him a god who exercised authority and did whatever [J.25] he wished against the demons in order to subject them. Having vanquished their patron to his authority and despising the honor which was formerly theirs, he changed their way of life and everything which pertained to it.

Such was the judgment of all who welcomed [Gregory] into the city since everyone who observed him attentively thought he passed by as if he were a lifeless piece of wood. He did not acknowledge anyone while advancing straight to the city; rather, his appearance was so startling that it surpassed their report. His first entry into the great metropolis lacked precedent when, for example, the populace surged about him. Instead, he proceeded in a solitary fashion and seemed withdrawn while not turning to those who thronged about him. This sight seemed more wondrous than what he had done with regard to the stone. Therefore [Gregory] was one of those few people who had accepted the faith before assuming office, and the entire city which accompanied him acknowledged the honor of his priesthood upon his entry.

As soon as [Gregory] began the study of philosophy, he freed himself of a burden, and life's necessities did not affect him such as land, place or home. Instead, he possessed everything such as virtue, faith of the fatherland, residence and wealth. Such was his entry into the city. [M.921] [Gregory] found no rest, including his own church, nor did the people fear him [J.26]. [Gregory] was burdened in this manner and once he

found shelter, the teacher who was at a loss said to them, "Why do you doubt the protection offered by God since it is essential to refresh the body? Does God's house seem little to you if 'in him we live, move and have our being [Acts 17.28]?' Does the cover of heaven seem constricted, and do you seek any other shelter? You must possess one house which virtue carefully erects and raises to heaven's heights. You should concentrate upon this alone, nor should you neglect it because the protection of earthly walls are of no advantage for those who live in virtue; rather, let the need for such protection be for those who have been defiled by evil and who cover their secret, shameful deeds. But persons who conduct their lives according to virtue have no need for such protection."

Having addressed these words to those assembled, a certain man of noble lineage and wealth called Mousonios, one of the few wealthy persons in the city, expressed a desire to have the people welcome this man into their own temples. By surpassing others, he might obtain their favor. Thus [Mousonios] exhorted them to welcome that great man with the honor of entering the temple. In this way he might be more esteemed during his life, and later generations might remember his dignity. While many hastened to request various favors from [Gregory] and sought him out as a worthy person by reason of prior experience, he warmly greeted them and received homage from those who had earlier welcomed him.

If history offers any unsubstantiated claims about [Gregory], our account [J.27] pays little attention to such fabrications in light of his accomplishments. Those who judge honestly must not magnify through their inventiveness insignificant testimony with regard to the miracles of him whom we hold in memory. Instead, remembrance of his deeds should offer perfect praise since innate beauty adorns his person without any form of embellishment. After several persons have received preliminary instruction before the end of day, they hastened to a first meeting at sunset so that the multitude of people might worthily comprise a body of believers. At daybreak men, women, children, the old and young, and whoever was afflicted by demons or bodily affliction gathered at the door. In their midst [Gregory], who shared [M.924] the Spirit's power, was in the process of amiably preaching, reflecting, admonishing, teaching and curing.

His preaching greatly influenced the people because in his person both those who saw and heard him were united, and through both he illumined the people by revealing God's power. Both those who heard and saw him were struck with wonder at the miracles he performed among the sick. The sorrowful person was consoled, the youth was corrected and the old person was healed by his appealing words. Slaves were taught to be obedient to their masters, those who ruled were urged to respect their subjects and the poor were encouraged to have virtue as their one treasure, a reward which everyone

was permitted to abundantly acquire. [Gregory] admonished everyone endowed with wealth to dispense it and not hoard it; that women act in a becoming manner, that children fulfill their obligation, that fathers discharge their duties in an appropriate manner and that everyone carry out their respective obligations **[J.28]**. In this way the Spirit might help everyone and urge them to construct the temple which remains to the present day by contributing support through money and material. That great man immediately established the church by using his own priesthood as a foundation through divine inspiration and with this help, he soon fulfilled this task. When in our lifetime the city suffered a severe earthquake and almost every public and private dwelling was completely destroyed, the temple alone remained unscathed and unshaken, thereby testifying to that great man's strength and vigor.

Later on [Gregory] often gave witness to the power which God bestowed upon him. All the inhabitants of the city and surrounding areas were therefore astounded at such wonders which were reminiscent of the Apostles. They believed his words and actions came from God's power, for the court which was responsible for settling temporal controversies among the people considered his testimony to be more reliable. He resolved judgments and delicate situations by taking counsel with them. As a result, good order and common peace influenced each situation, and much progress was made in the good while no evil frustrated harmony in both private and public spheres. None of his decrees were recalled as being inopportune so that according to the saying, all our robes were known by their hems.

Divine Scripture shows that Solomon enacted many decrees **[M.925]** on behalf of those under his domain, and in one instance, a particular individual suffered from another's actions. When, for example, [Solomon] **[J.29]** was judging between two mothers and no injustice could be proven, each woman had a different view towards the child's death, and he knew how to investigate the hidden truth through deliberation **[3Kg 3.16-28]**. Since their iniquity lacked witnesses and each woman lied while being suspicious of the truth, he employed a shrewd threat in order to reveal his intentions. [Solomon] ordered a sword to cut the child into two equal halves and each part be given to the two women, a judgment which revealed the truth of the situation. One woman gladly accepted the judgment and urged the executioner while the other moved by a mother's instinct and acknowledged herself to be defeated, begged that the child be spared, for if the child were spared in any way possible, she would be deeply grateful. The king employed this means to determine the truth with regard to the woman who spontaneously succumbed and to whom he granted the decision of victory. In this way he thought that the real mother who condemned the killing would reveal the other woman who urged its death. In light of this, what shall we say about the great Gregory's judgment?

Two brothers of the same age who were at odds over their father's inheritance struggled over the claim to one lake, and neither allowed the other to have it as their common possession. When the lord and master came to this disputed place, he used those laws in his power to arbitrate reconciliation **[J.30]** and ordered that the young men should live in harmony and peace. In this way, he hoped to establish an honorable peace to end this mutual dissension. Such an advantage always applies to both the living and departed, whereas pleasure is temporary; judgement for iniquity is eternal, and in all likelihood that man's words settled the turmoil of youth. But since his injunction was ineffectual, one young man became enraged and greatly desired to possess the lake. He summoned an army from the surrounding area, and with the help of many hands eager to commit murder, these troops composed of young men were ready for doing battle. The time of combat was set for the following day which would break out among the two opposing sides when the man of God came to the edge of the lake. He passed the night in vigil and like Moses, performed a miracle at the water not by breaking it into two parts with a blow of a rod [Ex 14.16], but at dawn he made the lake to completely dry up so no water remained in the hollows which before his prayer had spread out like a sea. By divine power he again passed judgement before returning home while his decree against the youths' efforts dissolved their love for strife. But when he was absent, they no longer prepared war against each other; peace ensued, and once again he exhibited his nature to the brothers. After the signs of that divine manifestation became clear, what was formerly a lake was now filled with an abundance of water. What was once deep and filled with water has been transformed into a pasture, meadow, field and arable land.

I believe that this judgement which takes precedence is in accord **[J.31]** with the famous Solomon, for what is that action done according to virtue? It is to save the infant nourished at its mother's breasts and whose rescue depended upon its natural mother and the woman who cared nothing for its life. Such is the case of two young men concerned with defending themselves and caring little for life, in the prime of youth they roused themselves to such a frenzy which demanded bloodshed. This terrible spectacle soon resulted in arming themselves against each other with deadly intent for the purpose of either killing each other or that at least one man be tarnished with fratricide. In recounting the story of these men inflamed with the same wrath, each antagonist had death in mind while they were embroiled in mutual anger. Who, then, has already determined against them the vote of death under an evil command through prayer and has again effected reconciliation after changing zeal for slaughter into peace? How much greater should be our amazement concerning this judgement once the sinister deed among these companions has been discovered! For the miracle which suddenly changed navigable water into dry land and produced fruitful land instead of the sea should, I think, silence us instead of making observations which cannot equal such a marvel. What have

we learned of the miracle through this story in order draw a suitable comparison? Joshua, son of Nun, made the river Jordan cease its flow only when [J.32] the ark was in the water [Jos 3], but after the people and ark passed through, the usual flow of water returned. Also the Red Sea receded, revealing its bottom when the wind pushed away its waves, but in this instance, the army passed through dry land [M.929] in the sea's depths [Ex 14.21]. A short time later the parted water appeared and drowned [the Egyptians]. Hence the miracle which once occurred in time was also witnessed by the one [Gregory] performed, that is, with regard to the lake mentioned above.

The inhabitants who live in that region call a certain wild, savage river "Lukos" due to the harm it inflicts ²³ and because many springs violently rush down from the mountains to Armenia. The depths overflow all the river's banks due to winter torrents and carry away everything as though it flowed as a single force from the mountains. But in the flat country through which the water runs banks on each side of the river often hem it in on each side, and in certain parts the force of the water overflows the banks submerging everything in its path. In this way it embraces any area which has not yet been covered and threatens the inhabitants of this area either through the tempests at night or [J.33] the fields by floods at day. Not only do plants and cattle perish in the water, but the danger unexpectedly inundates the inhabitants, thereby inflicting their houses with shipwreck. The wonders accomplished by that great man are well known and acknowledged by every nation such as dwellers near that part of the river, including women and children. Everyone besought [Gregory] to relieve their hopeless situation because with God everything is possible in situations where human intentions are powerless. No human will and force can pick up a stone and cast it to another place, and if any other responsibility may be attributed to having caused such evils, they cannot resist its force.

The people earnestly besought [Gregory's] mercy and by seeing the calamity in person, he might learn it was impossible for them to relocate because death by the water's onrush always posed a threat. When [Gregory] arrived at this place--for he never was sluggish when it came time to do good--neither chariot, horse nor any other mode of transportation was necessary; rather, he traveled the entire way using a cane for support and philosophized with friends on the road about a loftier form of life. He always discoursed about what was most important and considered attention to other affairs as being of less significance. Therefore the flood's transgression receded from those who were en route, and he saw the disaster produced by an onrush of water which formed a deep pit. [Gregory] then said to [M.932] those about him, "No one, [J.34] my brothers, can restrain the force of water; only God's power can contain it. As the prophet says to God, 'I have placed a bound which shall not be transgressed' [Ps 103.9]. Nature's

²³*Lukos* means "wolf."

elements are subservient only to the Lord where they remain forever in those places suitable for their collection. Since God has set bounds to water, its insolence alone has submitted to his power."

In this fashion [Gregory] spoke to the crowd and inspired by the divine nature, he loudly besought God's help. He then waved the staff which he carried in his hand over the demolished river bank. The wet, spongy earth easily relented before his heavy staff and outstretched hand. Then he entreated God to provide something like a bar for defense against the waters' insolence and showed by this deed that God accomplished everything through him. A short time later the staff which had struck the river banks turned into a tree and checked the flowing which until now is a visible testimony for the inhabitants. Whenever the Lukos River becomes full with rain and winter floods according to its usual custom and flows with frightful, devastating force, the swelling water withdraws at the tree's roots while just reaching to its top branches. As if it feared to approach the tree, the water bends around this place.

Such was the great Gregory's power through whom God had performed miracles. For just as natural elements [J.35] are subject to him and submit to his injunctions so that the lake is transformed into a fertile field, so does his staff afford a pledge of safety against the torrents in these deserted places. Down to the present day the inhabitants of the place which had been rescued call the tree "The Staff" as a memorial to Gregory's magnanimity and power. What comparison can we make which rivals such prophetic miracles? Shall I speak of that section of the Jordan River which Elias struck with his sheepskin cloak to make a passage and after him, Elias who inherited his cloak and spirit [4Kg 2.8 & 14]? But only at a time of need these prophets parted the [M.933] the flowing water of the Jordan in order to make a path on dry land for other persons. That river Lukos whose insolence Gregory had diverted became a miracle for all times and bore witness to the faith of this great man who had accomplished such a wondrous deed. What had occurred did not surprise those who saw it, but did astonish those inhabitants living by the water who were rescued. If one may be bold, this miracle which restrained the water--for the water receded in imitation of the prophets--showed [Gregory's] magnanimity which assured the inhabitants' [J.36] deliverance, and event which was well remembered.

After the story of these miracles which were believed to be done through the power of faith in Christ had reached the surrounding areas, everyone desired to share in that faith testified by such wonders. Its report reached everywhere, and enthusiasm for the goodness of his priesthood deeply affected everyone. As a result, faith increased and flourished, and a delegation from the city approached [Gregory], asking that he might come and assume the office of priest. Komana was this city's name where the people

wished the great man to reside as their guest. Once among them and when he was talking with them, rather, he inflamed their zeal about the mystery of what he had accomplished and recounted, it was time for the delegation to designate men for church offices. Since they saw that the great Gregory was already invested with this office, he was regarded to be fully qualified. But the votes were divided and some opted for another candidate. That great holy man pondered this matter, an instance which paralleled Samuel who did not chose a king because of physical beauty [J.37] and prominence but sought a royal soul even if his physique happened to be unattractive [1Kg 16.7]. In similar fashion each man hastened to cast a vote for a candidate who had been overlooked, provided that before the declaration this man might carefully and virtuously conduct his life as a priest.

When each man cast his vote and praised their candidate's honor, they were exhorted to consider nominees noted for more superficial behavior, for a candidate known for a more exalted life [M.936] could be found from among persons who was more respected than themselves. One of those who presided at the voting was recognized for his arrogance and contempt for the decision of that great man and made reference to those renowned for their speech, worthiness and appearance. They decided to chose for such a dignified position persons more notorious for vulgar behavior. They made the following taunt: "If you order that we pass over persons picked from the city, we will accept a man from the crowd for the office of priesthood. Then you must summon Alexander the charcoal maker to preside as priest. Once this change is made and if it is acceptable, we and the entire city will agree to cast our votes."

Such words were intended to slander [Gregory's] reputation through this treacherous vote which anticipated injustice by finding him to be at fault. Although that great man was vexed by these words concerning Alexander who was referred to as being a candidate, with God's help he remarked, "Just who [J.38] is this Alexander whom you mention?" Then one of those present scorned him [Alexander] in their midst, for he was clothed in vile rags, was not sound in body, and revealed his occupation by his hands, face and rest of his body which was clothed as a charcoal maker. Such ridicule was directed at Alexander who stood in their midst whose demeanor astonished them all. Untrained eyes derided the sight of such a man in dire poverty and unbecoming bodily appearance as though he delighted in this appearance. He did not attain this way of life by forced poverty but was a man of philosophy. Such an appearance was characteristic of this manner of life and better adapted for pursuing success by many who considered this life as nothing and desired a loftier, true mode of life. With his attention focused upon virtue, he strove to remain unobserved and concealed under the guise of a disreputable demeanor. Otherwise, the radiance of youth was an obstacle for the practice of self-control and would reveal his physical beauty by flaunting his natural attributes. He knew that for many persons such conduct [J.39] was an occasion of grave offense. [M.937]

Because this was not imprudent nor gave an occasion for offense to hostile eyes, he willingly maintained the guise of a charcoal maker. By it he trained his body for virtue and covered his beauty with the filth of a charcoal maker, and dispensed the payment received from his labors in order to fulfill the commandments.

After having lead [Alexander] from the council and subjected him to diligent scrutiny, they handed him over to his friends once they completed their objective. The council later learned from testimony concerning his priesthood which attested to his virtuous life. This evidence had the benefit of restraining the assembly until the attendants finished the proceedings after which they gave Alexander a bath in order to cleanse him from his filth and clothed him with that great man's [Gregory] garments. These orders were designed to fulfill their intentions. Everyone now marveled at Alexander's appearance and were well disposed towards him. The teacher said to them, "Nothing new has happened. If you judge the good only by deceptive eyes and by senses, perception concerning truth is unreliable which does not allow one to see into the mind's depths. However, the devil hates love of piety which indeed is a vessel of election [Acts 9.15] veiled by ignorance [J.40] and which a man lacks who has not been purified from such influence." Having spoken these words [Alexander] promoted the man to the priesthood by performing the customary rites with the help of [divine] grace. Everyone gazed upon the new priest and asked him to address the church. At once Alexander showed himself at the beginning of his administration to have a true opinion about Gregory, for the words of his intelligence were full and unaffected by flowery speech. However, certain arrogant youths from Attica derided his lack of eloquence because Attica is noted for its simple way of speaking. They claimed that this restraint came from a divine vision when an incredible beauty illumined a flock of doves. One of them said that Alexander had ridiculed this vision upon hearing it.

What should we admire in these two men? Which man remains undisturbed by the vote of more worthy persons and is not troubled by the testimony of distinguished persons? Instead, the wealth hidden in the charcoal maker who at once by God's grace became a witness to right judgement and behaved like an orator. In my opinion, each man seems to be in competition with regard to holding first place in the execution of miracles. Both men had an aversion for fame which was a most effective sign of a [M.940] constant, lofty spirit in their disregard for all worldly appearances, whether with regard to what is more splendid or their inclination towards humility and obscurity. By attributing homage to virtue alone and by considering only a life which has rejected evil, anything according to [J.41] this life is judged to be worthy of either esteem or dishonor. [Gregory] has indeed manifested what he had accomplished. By seeking God's blessing he neither considers affluence, honor nor the splendor of this world to be praiseworthy because divine Scripture does not enumerate them as being worthwhile [cf. Mt 5.3, Gal

5.22, Eph 5.9, Phil 4.8, 2Pt 1.5]. Therefore refusing to pursue power does not by itself deserve praise and wonder; instead, he surpasses himself in those qualities which are evident to all. For [Gregory] rejected only the worthless vote and did not include the others which by necessity included evil and produced no good. However, he did not consent to evil and found goodness in both; he gave no room to wickedness and strived for only what was good. In order that the great man's kindness may influence the city, he rejected their offense done through ignorance, thereby manifesting his own personal goodness.

Because the Spirit prospered every decision of that great man, it would be timely to give an account of his journey so that the grace bestowed upon one man might inspire everyone. It was clear that [Gregory] had a special zeal for learning in addition to consoling persons in need. Once two Hebrew men either seeing gain or wishing to disgrace someone who could be **[J.42]** easily deceived, closely watched his arrival. One of them pretended to be dead by lying on his back in the road while the other feigned sounds of lamentation. He cried out to that great man who was passing by, "Suddenly death forced this miserable, naked man to lie down without preparations for burial." He besought the great man not to neglect the reverence due but to take pity on his poverty and to look upon the extreme condition of his body. After imploring [Gregory], he did not delay to donate his double cloak and continued on his way. After he passed by, the two men mocked him while the imposter changed his lamentation to derision and exhorted his friend to rise, laughing aloud over the pleasure of their deception at having made a dishonest **[M.941]** gain. However, the man who shared the same pretence did not realize [Gregory's] words. He spoke louder and touched with his foot the friend lying down who did not speak nor feel the blow; instead, he just laid there in the same position which he had used as a ruse. This man was certainly dead, and had the same covering used for a truly dead person which they had used to dupe the great [Gregory]. Indeed the man of God who freely gave away his cloak was not deceived.

If this depressing experience seems to be the work of that great man's faith and power, no one should be astounded at the great Peter. All his accomplishments revealed his power, for example, that lame man who ran and leapt among the people. **[J.43]** The shadow of [Peter's] body healed his infirmities because the sun had smote him until the Apostle passed by [Acts 5.15]. On the other hand, Ananias held in contempt the Apostle's power and was condemned to death [Acts 5.1-6]. In my opinion, his punishment was intended as a warning for the people not to subject themselves to the same type of penalty. Therefore the person who imitates Peter through many miracles which were performed out of compassion shows the greatness of his power, whereas the person who attempts to cheat the Spirit has made the truth bear witness against himself cf. Mt 12.31]. I believe that once a person is purged of falsehood, he must transform it into the truth. In

this way the truth becomes fully evident because everything that great man [Gregory] said was authentic, and whatever he accepted as true was certainly not false. Thus certain Jews scorned that great man's power and revealed their folly to others, namely, that they should not be treacherous which God might use against them for denouncing such insolence.

After these events an outdoor meeting took place in that region, and everyone admired the way [Gregory] presented his teaching. A certain youth cried out to the assembly that they should not speak about his own teacher but tear apart his words because he was under the sway of some other [demonic] power. When the assembly adjourned, the youth was lead to the great man who was compelled to say that this lad had not yet been purified from demonic influence. Taking the linen vestment off [J.44] his shoulders, he blew at the youth. Immediately the young man became afraid, cried out, fell down, cast himself about and suffered all sorts of demonic afflictions. Then the holy man extended his hand and once the demon ceased his violence, the boy returned to health and no longer maligned the holy man. [M.944] The great healing miracle accomplished by this holy man should not be taken lightly; rather, his breath puts demons to flight and heals bodily afflictions through the power of his linen [i.e., priestly] vestment. But all the other great miracles he performed surpass written accounts and reports; however, I will recall one or two attributed to him.

In every place, city and neighboring area to which the divine preaching extended, it changed pagan altars to the devout faith of [Gregory's] teaching. It overturned sacred places and their idols and liberated people from the iniquity of images and the pollution of burnt sacrifices. Once defilement from blood upon altars and the desecration of animal sacrifices were washed away, all such places were transformed into fervent houses of prayer in Christ's name. The Roman emperor at that time was overcome with furor and jealousy because families abandoned false worship, whereas [J.45] the Christian mystery [i.e., faith] expanded and proliferated everywhere through those persons who were always devoted to its preaching and who grew in numbers [cf. Acts 2.47, 5.14, 6.7]. Presumably the [emperor's] ferocity could resist divine power, withstand the preaching of the mystery and wanted to restore pagan worship in those churches which accepted [Gregory's] preaching. Because of this, he sent decrees to the leaders of the people which threatened terrible punishment unless under various guises and that anyone worshipping the name of Christ should despise it. Being constrained in this manner by fear and threats of intimidation, they would return to the same servitude of demons which belonged to their fathers.

Thus the tyrant's fearful, sacrilegious edict which reached every part of the empire was imposed upon the leaders. Such force employed against the people of these regions

could not be resisted due to its absolute cruelty and enmity towards the faith. A more terrifying edict was enacted for the people to abjure the faith or to punish them by all sorts of threats of death. Also, public or private activity was prohibited for the purpose assailing and punishing anyone who embraced the faith. Not only did these threats assume the form of frightening words but threatened people with the terror of imprisonment which [M.945] held out the prospect of dreadful peril. For example, swords, fire, beasts, pits and racks were used as instruments against bodily limbs including upright wooden seats with blades and fire. People were [J.46] forced to stand in them in order to be horribly lacerated by nails, not to mention a countless number of bodily tortures devised against them. The persecutors outdid each other in zeal in order to demonstrate their expertise. Some were informers, exposed people, looked for those in hiding, whereas others took flight. Many who saw their faith sought to share it under the pretext of piety and provoked those who had embraced the faith.

Once the people were thoroughly confused and became powerless through mutual suspicion, such fearful circumstances turned sons against their fathers and fathers against their sons. Families were divided against each other with regard to worship; a son embracing Greek religion betrayed his parents; a father in apostasy denounced his son for the faith, and a brother fought the same accusation judging as his duty to seek vengeance upon a family member who espoused the faith. As a result, many inhabitants deserted their homes. Many buildings of those who had been cast into chains were converted for public use (for prisons could not contain the multitude of those punished for their faith). All places and assemblies, both public and private, were overcome by such misfortunes instead of their usual gaiety when, for example, some were seized and others were either mocked or wept bitterly. Pity was not shown to infants, elders lacked respect, and no modesty was demonstrated for virtue; instead, persons of every age who accepted the faith were taken captives as in battle. Neither were women spared these torments due to their natural frailty; rather, one cruel law prevailed with equal force against everyone [J.47] that they submit to idols without distinction. Then that great man realized human nature's frailty because many could not struggle to death for the faith. In a short time he became a sign for the church to ward off terrible assaults and was more than an able leader to save by means of flight those souls instead of having them stand in the line of battle and so desert the faith. He could persuasively sway many men not to endanger their souls and to save their faith by taking flight while he was an example of such escape for them to avoid danger. At the same time especially fervent persons, as though their leader had been captured, deserted faith's battle line and [M.948] were anxious for him who their enemies had apprehended.

But [Gregory] behaved as though he had captured a deserted hill and right from the beginning had as a companion the temple keeper who accepted the faith and who now

served as a deacon. However, the persecutors closely followed their many footsteps and learned of his hiding place. Some kept guard in a circle at the hill's base so that no one could flee while others scrutinized every part of it. Once they caught sight of the great man, they planned to make a surprise attack. But after **[J.48]** exhorting his band to remain firm and constant in their faith and to entrust their salvation to God, [Gregory] extended his hands in prayer. His persecutors dared not approach since he repelled them by fear, thereby giving an example of that faith which he charged upon his own deacon while looking to heaven with unswerving eyes and hands held aloft. The persecutors scurried all over the place and diligently searched every bush, rocky promontory and cavern. But upon returning to the foot of the hill in fear of discovering him, they fled to the area below which was under their control. They could neither find him because the great man was not in those places which had been reconnoitered and could see nothing except two trees standing a short distance from each other. When an informer who had been separated from the search party came across the great man and his friends in prayer, the divine protection which the persecutors had believed to be present in the trees, one of those fleeing who previously had been a persecutor fell down and believed in the report. They therefore remained a long time in this deserted place because the war which against the faith was severely waged came to an end for those who adhered to the word of piety. They all turned in flight since the faith of that great man prevented the pursuers from capturing him. Then venting their rage against those who were left behind, they searched everywhere among the people including men **[J.49]**, women and children who venerated the name of Christ. The persecutors dragged them to the city and threw them into chains making accusations instead of other outrages so that with regard to public affairs, no courts of justice could assemble except those officially permitted. Thus every type of torment and rack was devised against anyone who embraced the faith.

[M.949] Then it became clear to all that anything the great man wished was granted through divine help. He protected his people by making them take flight and offered a common defense on behalf of those who had contended for the faith. Just as we hear of Moses who, when he was some distance from the Amalekites' army, inspired his people to fight the enemy, in similar fashion [Gregory] fixed his soul's eye upon what had been accomplished and invoked God's help on behalf of those who fought by confessing their faith. After he and his friends prayed to God according to their usual practice, distress and fear immediately overcame those present. Being urged by both the sight and report much like an approaching sound, he remained motionless for a long time in their midst. Once this phenomenon happened which had a good effect, [Gregory] regained his composure and praised God with a clear voice. He added that song of victory and thanksgiving which we often hear David saying, "Blessed be God who did not give us **[J.50]** as prey to their teeth" [Ps 123.6]. They gazed upon him with astonishment and wished to know about this great wonder which appeared at the hour of tribulation, that is,

a youth who defeated the devil in a struggle over piety. [Gregory] clarified this example for those persons who could not grasp the situation, claiming that at the time a certain young man of noble lineage was recognized for having obtained [divine] help and so became leader of the people. This person's name was Troadios who received the crown of martyrdom after many trials which he bore bravely. The deacon was astounded at this story and did not dare to renounce the faith at their request because he realized that it surpassed human nature. He was some distance from the city when no one informed about him and urged his friends to speak about what had been accomplished in that place. He then implored the teacher to inspect this with his own eyes and not thwart the miracle which had been done in their area. He claimed that he was afraid of associating with murderous men and (often from an adversary's abuse) suffered a lack of counsel. The deacon who confided in the help of his prayers then said, "Because you commended me to God, the enemy's terror will never assault me." As a companion he besought God's help through prayer, and the way of faith was clear of obstacles for him to make a conversion.

At evening [Gregory] arrived in the city exhausted from the journey [M.952] and intended to heal [J.51] his fatigue by taking a bath. A certain murderous demon happened to control this place and because his destructive power was effective at night, no one dared to take a bath after sunset. [The deacon] ordered the attendant to open the door that he may refresh himself with a bath. The attendant said that no one at that hour dared to turn his feet away from the water but after evening the demon exerted his power and inflicted many unsuspecting persons with deadly afflictions. Instead of refreshing themselves, they were afflicted by lamentations, sepulchers and wailing. Having been warned of such events, [the deacon] did not give up out of greed but urged the attendant to let him enter. His greed did not incur danger along with the ignorance of the guest but after handing over the key, he left the bath. Once he had stripped himself inside, the demon inflicted him with all sorts of horrible assaults. Various phantoms revealed his nature under the guise of fire and smoke both in human and beastly forms. They struck his eyes and resounded in his ears while the demon let out deep breathes while circling his body. However, he made the sign [of the Cross] and calling upon the name of Christ, safely exited the building.

Later he [the deacon] entered the interior and confronted more troublesome spectacles since the demon had changed his face into a more fearful sight. The building was overwhelmed with trembling, and the foundation was torn apart to expose flames with sparks [J.52] emanating from the water. Again the sign [of the Cross] acted as his shield, and through the name of Christ and with help from the teacher's prayers, these fearful sights and incidents suddenly vanished. Once the water returned to its normal state he hastily exited and again the demon blocked the door, but the sign [of the Cross]

proved effective, making the demon vanish immediately from the door. After these experiences, the demon supposedly cried out in a human voice that he [the deacon] should not credit himself with that power which made danger to evaporate, for his voice which protected him had acted as a shield. As we have mentioned earlier, such an obstacle terrorized those who dared to enter the water during the evening since no one was found to be alive. Knowing that the martyrs had conducted themselves bravely in the city, he related his personal experience to the great man who was in solitude, telling what had transpired through [M.953] those miracles which he saw and heard. His personal experience of deep faith had given witness to the power which he manifested towards the demon. He returned to the teacher and gave both him and his companions protection so that through the priests everyone might commend themselves to God. Even to the present the entire church held this incidence of Gregory's intercession in special memory.

With God's help the tyranny was dissolved and peace returned to the populace through which allowed them to freely be at God's service. This peace descended upon the city and having permeated throughout the entire region, [J.53] it permitted everyone to attend to divine matters, and they decreed a feast for those who had contended for the faith. When the martyrs' bodies were transferred to another location, the inhabitants rejoiced at this yearly anniversary and held a festival in the martyrs' honor. This clearly demonstrated the great man's wisdom because having suddenly transformed all his people with a new way of living. As a skilled charioteer he firmly yoked them to the reigns of divine knowledge and care so that in a short they might rejoice under faith's yoke. Because he saw the naive, untrained crowd persisting in corporeal pleasures by the deception of idols, he wished to give a special precept for their guidance. In this way they might look to God instead of revering idols through celebrating the saints' memory. Thus with the passage of time, spontaneously they might turn to a more worthy, conscientious manner of life once instructed in the faith. After having accomplished this, corporeal pleasure might be directed aright to a spiritual form of joy.

Having zealously directed the church's affairs in this fashion before his death, [Gregory] wished to see everyone converted from idolatry to the faith which saves. He had foreseen his own death and eagerly searched all the cities and surrounding areas wishing to learn if there were any persons who had been deprived of the faith. Since he knew that no more than seventy persons persisted in the ancient error [J.54], he angrily said to God that the number of those who had been saved was not complete. However, this was worthy of God's kindness because those who had remained idolaters later became Christians when another person was appointed to succeed his governing of the church. He prayed for those who now believed to grow in perfection and for the conversion of unbelievers [M.956] that they might turn towards God, claiming that these

blessings assuaged the threat of the grave. For the living Lord did not wish to be invoked in certain places, and although [Gregory] passed his life in foreign places, he was not ashamed to be buried in this place of sojourn. He exclaimed, "Let it be said that after this life Gregory did not live in a given place. After death he sojourned in alien tombs and having rejected earthly possessions, he was not buried in his own place. His sole honor was to be completely untainted by greed."

Because the entire people which had been in the clutch of Greek vanity was led to know the truth, we should admire every report which had been written down. No one should doubt by considering the means by which this change from falsehood to truth came about. The earlier period of [Gregory's] priesthood lacked other miracles which I will not explain here.

The city in the demons' grip held a celebration in accord with [J.55] certain paternal rites, and everyone flocked to it. Those who assembled filled the theater, and the throng overflowed all the seats desiring to see the orchestra playing instruments. The stage was full with a tumult, and the wonderworkers could not perform due to the confusion of the pressing mass which not only impeded enjoyment of the music but gave no chance for men to perform their wonders. Then the crowd cried out together in the name of that demon for whom they celebrated the feast, imploring that he grant them some open space. When their voice reached on high and the entire city were as one mouth by which their prayers reached the demon--their prayer was "Zeus, make a place for us"--that great man heard them invoking the demon in whose name the city begged for a place and said that their request for a place would soon be granted. The judgement of his angry voice was as a plague which halted that religious celebration, and suddenly wailing permeated the chorus which turned their singing into mourning and their pleasures into misfortunes; instead of flutes and applause, laments filled the city. At once ill fortune inflicted the people, and fire consumed their houses so that [M.957] the temples to which they fled in hope of being cured of pestilence were utterly destroyed. Fountains, springs and aqueducts were useless [J.56] for those consumed by the thirst of the plague since water could not quench their burning [thirst]. Both before and after drinking water they all were gripped by distress, and many fled to tombs which no longer granted mercy to the living. Evil did not unexpectedly afflict people; instead, a phantom drew near to the temple which was about to bring certain ruin. The cause of their plight was clear because invocation of the demon had a wicked intent to fulfill their vain prayers, namely, to have an open space for the city. However, the great man stopped evil's advance by his entreaties through whom God was revealed and proclaimed, for he alone must be truly revered as God who has power over all things.

When that phantom's appearance at the temple suddenly caused despair, those in

danger had one defense, namely, that the great Gregory enter the temple and ward off by prayer this evil which had penetrated the building. Those who were first saved quickly spread word of his fame because their previous vain practices were completely ineffectual. The great priest considered such behavior as oracles, purifications, and devotion to idols and led every member of his flock to salvation. The salvation of souls was the payment received from those who had been rescued. Because this incident revealed the priest's piety, there was no further delay in establishing the mystery for those instructed through works with regard to faith's power. Thus for such persons their cure from illness was all the more stronger. By accepting the mystery, their reason's health was restored, and they became strengthened in faith through corporeal afflictions [J.57]. Thus all who had been seized by the idols' deception converted to the name of Christ; some were lead to the truth by illness and others held faith in Christ as a protection against the plague.

Even until the present the great Gregory's other miracles are remembered, however, we have not added further words in a desire to spare unbelieving ears who may believe that a multitude of words defile the truth.