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Oration XLII

The Last Farewell in the Presence of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops.

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THIS Oration was delivered during the Second Œcumenical Council, held at Constantinople A.D. 381. Historical as well as personal motives render the occasion of the deepest interest. The audience consisted of the one hundred and fifty Bishops of the Eastern Church who took part in the Council, and of the speaker's own flock, the orthodox Christians of Constantinople. He had by his own exertions gathered that flock together, after it had been ravaged by heretical teachers. He had won the admiration and affection of its members, by his courageous championship of the Faith, his lucid teaching, and his fatherly care for their spiritual needs. He had been, against his will, enthroned with acclamation in the highest ecclesiastical position in the Eastern Church, and called to preside over the Synod of its assembled Bishops. Finding himself unable to guide the deliberations of the Council in regard to a question of the highest importance, and perceiving that he himself and his position were made by some of the Bishops a fresh cause of dissension, he felt bound to resign his high office, and endeavour by this personal sacrifice to restore peace to the Church. His language is worthy of the occasion. Obligated to deal with the topics which had caused dissension, he handles them with gentle and discriminating tact; he speaks with great self-restraint in his own defence; he sets forth with tenderest feeling the common experiences of himself and his flock; he gives with dignity and clearness his last public exposition of the Faith; and finally, in language of exquisite beauty, spoken with the quivering tones of an aged man, he bids a tender farewell to his flock, his cathedral, and his throne, with all their affecting associations. It was an occasion whose pathos is unsurpassed in history. Orator and audience were alike deeply moved, and the emotion has been renewed in all those who have read his words, and realised the scene of their delivery.

1. WHAT think ye of our affairs, dear shepherds and fellow-shepherds: whose feet are beautiful, for you bring glad tidings of peace and of the good things⁴²⁷⁸ with which ye have come; beautiful again in our eyes, to whom ye have come in season, not to convert a wandering sheep,⁴²⁷⁹ but to converse with a pilgrim shepherd? What think ye of this our pilgrimage? And of its fruit, or rather of that of the Spirit⁴²⁸⁰ within us,⁴²⁸¹ by Whom we are ever moved,⁴²⁸² and specially have now been

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⁴²⁷⁸ Isai. lii. 7; Rom. x. 15.

⁴²⁷⁹ S. Matt. xviii. 12.

⁴²⁸⁰ Gal. v. 22.

⁴²⁸¹ 2 Tim. i. 14.

⁴²⁸² Acts xvii. 28.

moved, desiring to have, and perhaps having, nothing of our own? Do you of yourselves understand and perceive—and are you kindly critics of our actions? Or must we, like those from whom a reckoning is demanded as to their military command, or civil government, or administration of the exchequer, publicly and in person submit to you the accounts of our administration? Not indeed that we are ashamed of being judged, for we are ourselves judges in turn, and both with the same charity. But the law is an ancient one: for even Paul communicated to the Apostles his Gospel:⁴²⁸³ not for the sake of ostentation, for the Spirit is far removed from all ostentation, but in order to establish his success and correct his failure, if indeed there were any such in his words or actions, as he declares when writing of himself. Since even the Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the prophets,⁴²⁸⁴ according to the order of the Spirit who regulates and divides all things well. And do not wonder that, while he rendered his account privately and to some, I do so publicly, and to all. For my need is greater than his, of being aided by the freedom of my censors, if I am proved to have failed in my duty, lest I should run, or have run, in vain.⁴²⁸⁵ And the only possible mode of self-defence is speech in the presence of men who know the facts.

2. What then is my defence?⁴²⁸⁶ If it be false, you must convict me, but if true, you on behalf of whom⁴²⁸⁷ and in whose presence I speak, must bear witness to it. For you are my defence, my witnesses, and my crown of rejoicing,⁴²⁸⁸ if I also may venture to boast myself a little in the Apostle's language. This flock was, when it was small and poor, as far as appearances went, nay, not even a flock, but a slight trace and relic of a flock, without order, or shepherd, or bounds, with neither right to pasturage, nor the defence of a fold, wandering upon the mountains and in caves and dens of the earth,⁴²⁸⁹ scattered and dispersed hither and thither as each one could find shelter or pasture, or could gratefully secure its own safety; like that flock which was harassed by lions, dispersed by tempest, or scattered in darkness, the lamentation of prophets who compared it to the misfortunes of Israel,⁴²⁹⁰ given up to the Gentiles; over which we also lamented, so long as our lot was worthy of lamentation. For in very deed we also were thrust out and cast off, and scattered upon every mountain and hill, from the need of a shepherd:⁴²⁹¹ and a dreadful storm fell upon the Church, and fearful beasts assailed her, who do not even now, after the calm, spare us, but without being ashamed of themselves, wield a greater power than the time should allow; while a gloomy darkness, far more

⁴²⁸³ Gal. ii. 2.

⁴²⁸⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

⁴²⁸⁵ Gal. ii. 2.

⁴²⁸⁶ 1 Cor. ix. 3.

⁴²⁸⁷ *On behalf of*, i.e., the Christians of Constantinople, whose Pastor he had been, who were present at the time in the church.

⁴²⁸⁸ 1 Thess. ii. 19.

⁴²⁸⁹ Heb. xi. 38.

⁴²⁹⁰ Ezek. xxxi. ii.

⁴²⁹¹ Ib. xxxiv. 6.

oppressive than the ninth plague of Egypt, the darkness which might be felt,⁴²⁹² enveloped and concealed everything, so that we could scarcely even see one another.

3. To speak in a more feeling strain, trusting in Him Who then forsook me, as in a Father, “Abraham has been ignorant of us, Israel has acknowledged us not, but Thou art our Father, and unto Thee do we look;⁴²⁹³ beside Thee we know none else, we make mention of Thy name.”⁴²⁹⁴ Therefore, says Jeremiah, I will plead with Thee, I will reason the cause with Thee.⁴²⁹⁵ We are become as at the beginning, when Thou barest not rule⁴²⁹⁶ over us, and Thou hast forgotten Thy holy covenant, and shut up Thy mercies from us. Therefore we, the worshippers of the Trinity, the perfect suppliants of the perfect Deity, became a reproach to Thy Beloved, neither daring to bring down to our own level any of the things above us, nor in such wise to rise up against the godless tongues which fought against God, as to make His Majesty a fellow servant with ourselves; but, as is plain, we were delivered up on account of our other sins, and because our conduct had been unworthy of Thy commandments, and we had walked after our own evil mind. For what other reason can there be for our being delivered up to the most unrighteous and wicked men of all the dwellers upon the earth? First Nebuchadnezzar⁴²⁹⁷ afflicted us,⁴²⁹⁸ possessed during the Christian era with an anti-Christian rage, hating Christ just because he had through Him gained salvation, and having bartered the sacred books for sacrifices to those who are no gods. He devoured me, he tore me in pieces, a slight darkness enveloped me,⁴²⁹⁹ if I may even in my lamentation keep to the language of Scripture. If the Lord had not helped me,⁴³⁰⁰ and righteously delivered him to the hands of the lawless, by casting him off (such are the judgments of God) to the Persians, by whom his blood was righteously shed for his unholy sheddings of blood, since in this case alone justice could not afford even to be longsuffering, my soul had shortly dwelt in the grave.⁴³⁰¹ The second⁴³⁰² no more kindly, if he were not even more grievous still, for while he bore the name of Christ, he was a false Christ, and at once a burden and a reproach to the Christians, for, while to obey him was ungodly, to suffer at his hands was inglorious, since they did not even seem to be wronged, nor to gain by their sufferings the glorious title of martyr, inasmuch as the truth was in this case perverted,



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⁴²⁹² Exod. x. 21.

⁴²⁹³ Isai. lxiii. 16.

⁴²⁹⁴ Ib. xxvi. 13 (LXX.).

⁴²⁹⁵ Jer. xii. 1.

⁴²⁹⁶ Isai. lxiii. 19.

⁴²⁹⁷ *Nebuchadnezzar*, i.e., Julian.

⁴²⁹⁸ Jer. li. 34.

⁴²⁹⁹ Ps. lv. 6 (LXX.).

⁴³⁰⁰ Ps. xciv. 17.

⁴³⁰¹ Ib. xciv. 17.

⁴³⁰² *The second*, i.e. Valens.

for while they suffered as Christians, they were supposed to be punished as heretics. Alas! how rich we were in misfortunes, for the fire consumed the beauties of the world.⁴³⁰³ That which the palmerworm left did the locust eat, and that which the locust left did the caterpillar eat: then came the cankerworm,⁴³⁰⁴ then, what next I know not, one evil springing up after another. But for what purpose should I give a tragic description of the evils of the time, and of the penalty exacted from us, or, if I must rather call it so, the testing and refining we endured? At any rate, we went through fire and water,⁴³⁰⁵ and have attained a place of refreshment by the good pleasure of God our Saviour.

4. To return to my original startingpoint. This was my field, when it was small and poor, unworthy not only of God, Who has been, and is cultivating the whole world with the fair seeds and doctrines of piety, but, apparently, even of any poor and needy man of slender means. Nay it did not deserve to be called a field, requiring neither barn nor threshing-floor, and not even worthy of the sickle; with neither heap nor sheaves, or small and untimely sheaves, like those on the housetop, which do not fill the hand of the reaper, nor call forth a blessing from them which go by.⁴³⁰⁶ Such was my field, such my harvest; great and well-eared and fat in the eyes of Him Who beholdeth hidden things, and becoming such a husbandman, its abundance springing from the valleys of souls well tilled with the Word: unrecognized however in public, and not collected together, but gathered in fragments, as an ear gleaned in the stubble,⁴³⁰⁷ as gleaning-grapes in the vintage, where there is no cluster left. I think I may add, only too appropriately, I found Israel like a figtree in the wilderness,⁴³⁰⁸ and like one or two ripe grapes in an unripe cluster, preserved as a blessing from the Lord,⁴³⁰⁹ and a consecrated firstfruit, though small as yet and scanty, and not filling the mouth of the eater: and as an ensign on a hill,⁴³¹⁰ and as a beacon on a mountain, or any other solitary thing visible only to few. Such was its former poverty and dejection.

5. But since God, Who maketh poor and maketh rich, Who killeth and maketh alive;⁴³¹¹ Who maketh and transformeth all things; Who turneth night into day,⁴³¹² winter into spring, storm into calm, drought into abundance of rain; and often for the sake of the prayers⁴³¹³ of one righteous

⁴³⁰³ Joel i. 19.

⁴³⁰⁴ Ib. i. 4.

⁴³⁰⁵ Ps. lxvi. 12.

⁴³⁰⁶ Ib. cxxix. 6 sqq.

⁴³⁰⁷ Mic. vii. 1 (LXX.).

⁴³⁰⁸ Hos. ix. 10 (LXX.).

⁴³⁰⁹ Isai. lxxv. 8.

⁴³¹⁰ Ib. xxx. 17.

⁴³¹¹ 1 Sam. ii. 6 sqq.

⁴³¹² Amos v. 8.

⁴³¹³ 1 Kings xviii. 42.

man⁴³¹⁴ sorely persecuted; Who lifteth up the meek on high, and bringeth the ungodly down to the ground;⁴³¹⁵ since God said to Himself, I have surely seen the affliction of Israel;⁴³¹⁶ and they shall no longer be further vexed with clay and brick-making; and when He spake He visited, and in His visitation He saved, and led forth His people with a mighty hand and outstretched arm,⁴³¹⁷ by the hand of Moses and Aaron,⁴³¹⁸ His chosen — what is the result, and what wonders have been wrought? Those which books and monuments contain. For besides all the wonders by the way, and that mighty roar, to speak most concisely, Joseph came into Egypt alone,⁴³¹⁹ and soon after six hundred thousand depart from Egypt.⁴³²⁰ What more marvellous than this? What greater proof of the generosity of God, when from men without means He wills to supply the means for public affairs? And the land of promise is distributed through one who was hated, and he who was sold⁴³²¹ dispossesses nations, and is himself made a great nation, and that small offshoot becomes a luxuriant vine,⁴³²² so great that it reaches to the river, and is stretched out to the sea,⁴³²³ and spreads from border to border, and hides the mountains with the height of its glory and is exalted above the cedars, even the cedars of God, whatever we are to take these mountains and cedars to be.

6. Such then was once this flock, and such it is now, so healthy and well grown, and if it be not yet in perfection, it is advancing towards it by constant increase, and I prophesy that it will advance. This is foretold me by the Holy Spirit, if I have any prophetic instinct and insight into the future. And from what has preceded I am able to be confident, and recognize this by reasoning, being the nursling of reason. For it was much more improbable that, from that condition, it should reach its present development, than that, as it now is, it should attain to the height of renown. For ever since it began to be gathered together, by Him Who quickeneth the dead,⁴³²⁴ bone to its bone, joint to joint, and the Spirit of life and regeneration was given to it in their dryness,⁴³²⁵ its entire resurrection has been, I know well, sure to be fulfilled: so that the rebellious should not exalt

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4314 S. James v. 16, 17.
 4315 Ps. cxlvii. 6.
 4316 Exod. iii. 7.
 4317 Ps. cxxxvi. 12.
 4318 Ib. lxxvii. 20.
 4319 Gen. xxxvii. 28.
 4320 Exod. xii. 37.
 4321 Gen. xlix. 22.
 4322 Hos. x. 1.
 4323 Ps. lxxx. 8 et seq.
 4324 Rom. iv. 17.
 4325 Ezek. xxxvii. 7, 10.

themselves,⁴³²⁶ and that those who grasp at a shadow, or at a dream when one awaketh,⁴³²⁷ or at the dispersing breezes, or at the traces of a ship in the water,⁴³²⁸ should not think that they have anything. Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen!⁴³²⁹ Let them be instructed by the misfortunes of others, and learn that the poor shall not always be forgotten,⁴³³⁰ and that the Deity will not refrain, as Habakkuk says, from striking through the heads of the mighty ones⁴³³¹ in His fury—the Deity, Who has been struck through and impiously divided into Ruler and Ruled, in order to insult the Deity in the highest degree by degrading It, and oppress a creature by equality with Deity.

7. I seem indeed to hear that voice, from Him Who gathers together those who are broken, and welcomes the oppressed: Enlarge thy cords, break forth on the right hand and on the left, drive in thy stakes, spare not thy curtains.⁴³³² I have given thee up, and I will help thee. In a little wrath I smote thee, but with everlasting mercy I will glorify thee.⁴³³³ The measure of His kindness exceeds the measure of His discipline. The former things were owing to our wickedness, the present things to the adorable Trinity: the former for our cleansing, the present for My glory, Who will glorify them that glorify Me,⁴³³⁴ and I will move to jealousy them that move Me to jealousy. Behold this is sealed up with Me,⁴³³⁵ and this is the indissoluble law of recompense. But thou didst surround thyself with walls and tablets and richly set stones, and long porticos and galleries, and didst shine and sparkle with gold, which thou didst, in part pour forth like water, in part treasure up like sand; not knowing that better is faith, with no other roof but the sky to cover it, than impiety rolling in wealth, and that three gathered together in the Name of the Lord⁴³³⁶ count for more with God than tens of thousands of those who deny the Godhead. Would you prefer the whole of the Canaanites to Abraham alone?⁴³³⁷ or the men of Sodom to Lot?⁴³³⁸ or the Midianites to Moses,⁴³³⁹ when each of these was a pilgrim and a stranger? How do the three hundred men with Gideon, who bravely

⁴³²⁶ Ps. lxvi. 7.
⁴³²⁷ Ps. lxxiii. 20.
⁴³²⁸ Wisd. v. 9 sqq.
⁴³²⁹ Zech. xi. 2.
⁴³³⁰ Ps. ix. 18.
⁴³³¹ Hab. iii. 13.
⁴³³² Isai. liv. 2.
⁴³³³ Ib. liv. 8.
⁴³³⁴ 1 Sam. ii. 30.
⁴³³⁵ Deut. xxxii. 21, 34.
⁴³³⁶ S. Matt. xviii. 20.
⁴³³⁷ Gen. xii. 6; xiii. 12.
⁴³³⁸ Ib. xix. 1.
⁴³³⁹ Exod. ii. 15.

lapped,⁴³⁴⁰ compare with the thousands who were put to flight? Or the servants of Abraham, who scarcely exceeded them in number, with the many kings and the army of tens of thousands whom, few as they were, they overtook and defeated?⁴³⁴¹ Or how do you understand the passage that though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved?⁴³⁴² And again, I have left me seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal?⁴³⁴³ This is not the case; it is not? God has not taken pleasure in numbers.

8. Thou countest tens of thousands, God counts those who are in a state of salvation; thou countest the dust which is without number, I the vessels of election. For nothing is so magnificent in God's sight as pure doctrine, and a soul perfect in all the dogmas of the truth.—For there is nothing worthy of Him Who made all things, of Him by Whom are all things, and for Whom are all things,⁴³⁴⁴ so that it can be given or offered to God: not merely the handiwork or means of any individual, but even if we wished to honour Him, by uniting together all the property and handiwork of all mankind. Do not I fill heaven and earth?⁴³⁴⁵ saith the Lord! and what house will ye build Me? or what is the place of My rest?⁴³⁴⁶ But, since man must needs fall short of what is worthy, I ask of you, as approaching it most nearly, piety, the wealth which is common to all and equal in My eyes, wherein the poorest may, if he be noble-minded, surpass the most illustrious. For this kind of glory depends upon purpose, not upon affluence. These things be well assured, I will accept at your hands.⁴³⁴⁷ To tread⁴³⁴⁸ My courts ye shall not proceed, but the feet of the meek⁴³⁴⁹ shall tread them, who have duly and sincerely acknowledged Me, and My only-begotten Word, and the Holy Spirit. How long will ye inherit My holy Mountain?⁴³⁵⁰ How long shall My ark be among the heathen?⁴³⁵¹ Now for a little longer ye indulge yourselves in that which belongs to others, and gratify your desires. For as ye have devised to reject Me, so will I also reject you,⁴³⁵² saith the Lord Almighty.



⁴³⁴⁰ Judg. vii. 5.

⁴³⁴¹ Gen. xiv. 14.

⁴³⁴² Isai. x. 22; Rom. ix. 27.

⁴³⁴³ 1 Kings xix. 18; Rom. xi. 4.

⁴³⁴⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

⁴³⁴⁵ Jer. xxiii. 24.

⁴³⁴⁶ Isai. lxvi. 1.

⁴³⁴⁷ Ib. i. 12.

⁴³⁴⁸ *To tread*, etc. The Arians for a time had been in possession of the churches of Constantinople.

⁴³⁴⁹ Isai. xxvi. 6 (LXX.).

⁴³⁵⁰ Ib. lvii. 13; lxxv. 9.

⁴³⁵¹ 1 Sam. vi. 1.

⁴³⁵² Hos. iv. 6.

9. This I seemed to hear Him say, and to see Him do, and besides, to hear Him shouting to His people, which once were few and scattered and miserable, and have now become many, and compact enough and enviable, Go through⁴³⁵³ My gates⁴³⁵⁴ and be ye enlarged. Must you always be in trouble and dwell in tents, while those who vex you rejoice exceedingly? And to the presiding Angels, for I believe, as John teaches me in his Revelation, that each Church has its guardian,⁴³⁵⁵ Prepare ye the way of My people, and cast away the stones from the way,⁴³⁵⁶ that there may be no stumblingblock or hindrance for the people⁴³⁵⁷ in the divine road and entrance, now, to the temples made with hands,⁴³⁵⁸ but soon after, to Jerusalem above,⁴³⁵⁹ and the Holy of holies there,⁴³⁶⁰ which will, I know, be the end of suffering and struggle to those who here bravely travel on the way. Among whom are ye also called to be Saints,⁴³⁶¹ a people of possession, a royal priesthood,⁴³⁶² the most excellent portion of the Lord, a whole river from a drop, a heavenly lamp from a spark, a tree from a grain of mustard seed,⁴³⁶³ on which the birds come and lodge.

10. These we present to you, dear shepherds, these we offer to you, with these we welcome our friends, and guests, and fellow pilgrims. We have nothing fairer or more splendid to offer to you, for we have selected the greatest of all our possessions, that you may see that, strangers as we are, we are not in want, but though poor are making many rich.⁴³⁶⁴ If these things are small and unworthy of notice, I would fain learn what is greater and of more account. For, if it be no great thing to have established and strengthened with wholesome doctrines a city which is the eye of the universe, in its exceeding strength by sea and land, which is, as it were, the link between the Eastern and Western shores, in which the extremities of the world from every side meet together, and from which, as the common mart of the faith, they take their rise, a city borne hither and thither on the eddying currents of so many tongues, it will be long ere anything be considered great or worthy of esteem. But if it be indeed a subject for praise, allow to us some glory on this account, since we have contributed in some portion to these results which ye see.

⁴³⁵³ *Go through*, etc. This passage refers to the restoration of the churches to the orthodox by Theodosius, Jan. 10, A.D. 381.

⁴³⁵⁴ Isai. lxii. 10.

⁴³⁵⁵ Rev. ii. 1.

⁴³⁵⁶ Isai. lxii. 10.

⁴³⁵⁷ Ib. lvii. 14.

⁴³⁵⁸ Acts vii. 48.

⁴³⁵⁹ Gal. iv. 26.

⁴³⁶⁰ Heb. ix. 3, 24.

⁴³⁶¹ Rom. i. 6.

⁴³⁶² 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁴³⁶³ S. Matt. xiii. 21.

⁴³⁶⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

11. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see,⁴³⁶⁵ thou critic of my words! See the crown which has been platted in return for the hirelings of Ephraim⁴³⁶⁶ and the crown of insolence; see the assembly of the presbyters, honoured for years and wisdom, the fair order of the deacons, who are not far from the same Spirit, the good conduct of the readers, the people's eagerness for teaching, both of men and women, who are equally renowned for virtue: the men, whether philosophers or simple folk, being alike wise in divine things, whether rulers or ruled, being all in this respect duly under rule; whether soldiers or nobles, students or men of letters, being all soldiers⁴³⁶⁷ of God, though in all other respects meek, ready to fight for the Spirit, all reverencing the assembly above, to which we obtain an entrance, not by the mere letter, but by the quickening Spirit, all in very deed being men of reason, and worshippers of Him Who is in truth the Word: the women, if married, being united by a Divine rather than by a carnal bond; if unwedded and free, being entirely dedicated to God; whether young or old, some honourably advancing towards old age, others eagerly striving to remain immortal, being renewed by the best of hopes.

12. To those who platted this crown—that which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord,⁴³⁶⁸ nevertheless I will say it—I also have given assistance. Some of them are the result of my words, not of those which we have uttered at random, but of those which we have loved—nor again of those which are meretricious, though the language and manners of the harlot have been slanderously attributed to me, but of those which are most grave. Some of them are the offspring and fruit of my Spirit, as the Spirit can beget those who rise superior to the body. To this I have no doubt that those who are kindly among you, nay all of you, will testify, since I have been the husbandman of all: and my sole reward is your confession. For we neither have, nor have had, any other object. For virtue, that it may remain virtue, is without reward, its eyes fixed alone on that which is good.

13. Would you have me say something still more venturesome? Do you see the tongues of the enemy made gentle, and those who made war upon the Godhead against me tranquillised? This also is the result of our Spirit, of our husbandry. For we are not undisciplined in our exercise of discipline, nor do we hurl insults, as many do, who assail not the argument but the speaker, and sometimes strive by their invective to hide the weakness of their reasoning; as the cuttlefish are said to cast forth ink before them, in order to escape from their pursuers, or themselves to hunt others when unperceived. But we show that our warfare is in behalf of Christ by fighting as Christ, the peaceable and meek,⁴³⁶⁹ Who has borne our infirmities, fought.⁴³⁷⁰ Though peaceable, we do not injure the word of truth, by yielding a jot, to gain a reputation for reasonableness; for we do not pursue that which is good by means of ill: and we are peaceable by the legitimate character of

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⁴³⁶⁵ Isai. lx. 4.

⁴³⁶⁶ Ib. xxviii. 1 (LXX.).

⁴³⁶⁷ 2 Tim. ii. 3.

⁴³⁶⁸ 2 Cor. xi. 17.

⁴³⁶⁹ S. Matt. xi. 29.

⁴³⁷⁰ Ib. viii. 17; Isai. liii. 4.

our warfare, confined as it is to our own limits, and the rules of the Spirit. Upon these points, this is my decision, and I lay down the law for all stewards of souls and dispensers of the Word: neither to exasperate others by their harshness, nor to render them arrogant by submissiveness: but to be of good words in treating of the Word, and in neither direction to overstep the mean.

14. But you are perhaps longing for me to give an exposition of the faith, in so far as I am able. For I shall myself be sanctified by the effort of memory, and the people also will be benefited, by its special delight in such discussions, and you will fully acknowledge it—unless we are the objects of groundless envy, as the rivals, in the manifestation of the truth, of those whom we do not excel. For as, of deep waters, some in the depths are utterly hidden, some foam against any obstruction, and hesitate a while before breaking (as they promise to our ears), some do actually break; so also, of those who are professors of the Divine philosophy—setting aside the utterly misguided—some keep their piety entirely secret and hidden within themselves, some are not far from the birth pangs, avoiding impiety, yet not speaking out their piety, either from cautious reserve in their teaching, or under pressure of fear, being themselves sound, as they say, in mind, but not making sound their people, as if they had been entrusted with the government of their own souls, but not of those of others; while there are some who make public their treasure, unable to restrain themselves from giving birth to their piety, and not considering that to be salvation which saves themselves alone, without bestowing upon others the overflow of their blessings. Among these would I range myself, and all who by my side have nobly dared to confess the truth.

15. One concise proclamation of our teaching, an inscription intelligible to all, is this people, which so sincerely worships the Trinity, that it would sooner sever anyone from this life, than sever one of the three from the Godhead: of one mind, of equal zeal, and united to one another, to us and to the Trinity by unity of doctrine. Briefly to run over its details: That which is without beginning, and is the beginning, and is with the beginning, is one God. For the nature of that which is without beginning does not consist in being without beginning or being unbegotten, for the nature of anything lies, not in what it is not but in what it is. It is the assertion of what is, not the denial of what is not. And the Beginning is not, because it is a beginning, separated from that which has no beginning. For its beginning is not its nature, any more than the being without beginning is the nature of the other. For these are the accompaniments of the nature, not the nature itself. That again which is with that which has no beginning, and with the beginning, is not anything else than what they are. Now, the name of that which has no beginning is the Father, and of the Beginning the Son, and of that which is with the Beginning, the Holy Ghost, and the three have one Nature—God. And the union is the Father from Whom and to Whom the order of Persons runs its course, not so as to be confounded, but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, of will, or of power. For these things in our case produce a plurality of individuals, since each of them is separate both from every other quality, and from every other individual possession of the same quality. But to Those who have a simple nature, and whose essence is the same, the term One belongs in its highest sense.



16. Let us then bid farewell to all contentious shiftings and balancings of the truth on either side, neither, like the Sabellians, assailing the Trinity in the interest of the Unity, and so destroying the distinction by a wicked confusion; nor, like the Arians, assailing the Unity in the interest of the Trinity, and by an impious distinction overthrowing the Oneness. For our object is not to exchange one evil for another, but to ensure our attainment of that which is good. These are the playthings of the Wicked One, who is ever swaying our fortunes towards the evil. But we, walking along the royal road which lies between the two extremes, which is the seat of the virtues, as the authorities say, believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, of one Substance and glory; in Whom also baptism has its perfection, both nominally and really (thou knowest who hast been initiated!); being a denial of atheism and a confession of Godhead; and thus we are regenerated, acknowledging the Unity in the Essence and in the undivided worship, and the Trinity in the Hypostases or Persons (which term some prefer.) And let not those who are contentious on these points utter their scandalous taunts, as if our faith depended on terms and not on realities. For what do you mean who assert the three Hypostases? Do you imply three Essences by the term? I am assured that you would loudly shout against those who do so. For you teach that the Essence of the Three is One and the same. What do you mean, who assert the Three Persons? Do you imagine a single compound sort of being, with three faces,⁴³⁷¹ or of an entirely human form? Perish the thought! You too will loudly reply that he who thinks thus, will never see the face of God, whatever it may be. What is the meaning of the Hypostases of the one party, of the Persons of the other, to ask this further question? That They are three, Who are distinguished not by natures, but by properties.⁴³⁷² Excellent. How could men agree and harmonize better than you do, even if there be a difference between the syllables you use? You see what a reconciler I am, bringing you back from the letter to the sense, as we do with the Old and New Testaments.

17. But, to resume: let us speak of the Unbegotten, the Begotten, and the Proceeding, if anyone likes to create names: for we shall have no fear of bodily conceptions attaching to Those who are not embodied, as the calumniators of the Godhead think. For the creature must be called God's, and this is for us a great thing, but God never. Otherwise I shall admit that God is a creature, if I become God, in the strict sense of the term. For this is the truth. If God, He is not a creature; for the creature ranks with us who are not Gods. And if a creature, he is not God, for he had a beginning in time. And there was a time when he who had a beginning was not. And that of which non-existence was its prior condition, has not being in the strict sense of the term. And how can that, which strictly has not being, be God? Not one single one, then, of the Three is a creature, nor, what is worse, came into being for my sake; for in that case he would be not only a creature, but inferior in honour to us. For, if I am for the glory of God, and he is for my sake, as the tongs for the waggon, the saw for the door, I am his superior in causality. For in whatever degree God is

⁴³⁷¹ With three faces (or masks). A play upon the word πρόσωπον which is used in theology in the sense of Person.

⁴³⁷² Properties. Cf. xliii. 30, note.

superior to creatures, in the same degree is he, who came into being for my sake, inferior to me who exist for God's sake.

18. Moreover, the Moabites and Ammonites must not even be allowed to enter⁴³⁷³ into the Church of God, I mean those sophistical, mischievous arguments which enquire curiously into the generation and inexpressible procession of God, and rashly set themselves in array against the Godhead: as if it were necessary that those things which it is beyond the power of language to set forth, must either be accessible to them alone, or else have no existence because they have not comprehended them. We however, following the Divine Scriptures, and removing out of the way of the blind the stumbling blocks contained in them, will cling to salvation, daring any and every thing rather than arrogance against God. As for the evidences, we leave them to others, since they have been set forth by many, and by ourselves also with no little care. And indeed, it would be a very shameful thing for me at this time to be gathering together proofs for what has all along been believed. For it is not the best order of things, first to teach and then to learn, even in matters which are small and of no consequence, and much more in those which are Divine and of such great importance. Nor, again, is it proper to the present occasion to explain and disentangle the difficulties of Scripture, a task requiring fuller and more careful consideration than our present purpose will allow. Such then, to sum up, is our teaching. I have entered into these details, with no intention of contending against the adversaries: for I have already often, even if it be imperfectly, fought out the question with them: but in order that I might exhibit to you the character of my teaching, that you might see whether I have not a share in the defence of your own, and do not take my stand on the same side, and opposed to the same enemies as yourselves.

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19. You have now, my friends, heard the defence of my presence here: if it be deserving of praise, thanks are due for it to God, and to you who called me; if it has fallen below your expectation, I give thanks even on this behalf. For I am assured that it has not been altogether deserving of censure, and am confident that you also admit this. Have we at all made a gain⁴³⁷⁴ of this people? Have we consulted at all our own interests, as I see is most often the case? Have we caused any vexation to the Church? To others possibly, with whose idea that they had gained judgment against us by default, we have joined issue in our argument; but in no wise, as far as I am aware, to you. I have taken no ox of yours,⁴³⁷⁵ says the great Samuel, in his contention against Israel on the subject of the king, nor any propitiation for your souls, the Lord is witness among you, nor this, nor that, proceeding at greater length, that I may not count up every particular; but I have kept the priesthood pure and unalloyed. And if I have loved power, or the height of a throne, or to tread Kings' courts, may I never possess any distinction, or if I gain it, may I be hurled from it.

20. What then do I mean? I am no proficient in virtue without reward, having not attained to so high a degree of virtue. Give me the reward of my labours. What reward? Not that which some,

⁴³⁷³ Deut. xxiii. 3.

⁴³⁷⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 17.

⁴³⁷⁵ 1 Kings xii. 2.

prone to any suspicion would suppose, but that which it is safe for me to seek. Give me a respite from my long labours; give honour to my foreign service; elect another in my place, the one who is being eagerly sought on your behalf, someone who is clean of hands, someone who is not unskilled in voice, someone who is able to gratify you on all points, and share with you the ecclesiastical cares; for this is especially the time for such. But behold, I pray you, the condition of this body, so drained by time, by disease, by toil. What need have you of a timid and unmanly old man, who is, so to speak, dying day by day, not only in body, but even in powers of mind, who finds it difficult to enter into these details before you? Disobey not the voice of your teacher: for indeed you have never yet disobeyed it. I am weary of being charged with my gentleness. I am weary of being assailed in words and in envy by enemies, and by our own. Some aim at my breast, and are less successful in their effort, for an open enemy can be guarded against. Others lie in wait for my back, and give greater pain, for the unsuspected blow is the more fatal. If again I have been a pilot, I have been one of the most skilful; the sea has been boisterous around us, boiling about the ship, and there has been considerable uproar among the passengers, who have always been fighting about something or another, and roaring against one another and the waves. What a struggle I have had, seated at the helm, contending alike with the sea and the passengers, to bring the vessel safe to land through this double storm? Had they in every way supported me, safety would have been hardly won, and when they were opposed to me, how has it been possible to avoid making shipwreck?

21. What more need be said? But how can I bear this holy war? For there has been said to be a holy, as well as a Persian, war.⁴³⁷⁶ How shall I unite and join together the hostile occupants of seas, and hostile pastors, and the people broken up along with, and opposed to them, as if by some chasms caused by earthquakes between neighbouring and adjoining places; or as, in pestilential diseases, befalls servants and members of the family, when the sickness readily attacks in succession one after another; and besides the very quarters of the globe are affected by the spirit of faction, so that East and West are arrayed on opposite sides, and bid fair to be severed in opinion no less than in position. How long are parties to be mine and yours, the old and the new, the more rational and the more spiritual, the more noble and the more ignoble, the more and the less numerous? I am ashamed of my old age, when, after being saved by Christ, I am called by the name of others.

22.⁴³⁷⁷ I cannot bear your horse races and theatres, and this rage for rivalry in expense and party spirit. We unharness, and harness ourselves on the other side, we neigh against each other, we almost beat the air, as they do, and fling the dust towards heaven, like those which are excited; and under other masks satisfy our own rivalry, and become evil arbiters of emulation, and senseless judges of affairs. To-day sharing the same thrones and opinions, if our leaders thus carry us along; to-morrow hostile alike in position and opinion, if the wind blows in the contrary direction. Amid

⁴³⁷⁶ *A Holy War*. That against the Phocians to avenge their sacrilege at Delphi.

⁴³⁷⁷ § 22 is a comparison of Ecclesiastical partisanship to the emulation and party spirit connected with the horse races in the amphitheatre.



the variations of friendship and hatred, our names also vary: and what is most terrible, we are not ashamed to set forth contrary doctrines to the same audience; nor are we constant to the same objects, being rendered different at different times by our contentiousness. They are like the ebb and flow of some narrow strait.⁴³⁷⁸ For as when the children are at play in the midst of the market place, it would be most disgraceful and unbecoming for us to leave our household business, and join them; for children's toys are not becoming for old age: so, when others are contending, even if I am better informed than the majority, I could not allow myself to be one of them, rather than, as I now do, enjoy the freedom of obscurity. For, besides all this, my feeling is that I do not, on most points, agree with the majority, and cannot bear to walk in the same way. Rash and stupid though it may be, such is my feeling. That which is pleasant to others causes pain to me, and I am pleased with what is painful to others. So that I should not be surprised if I were even imprisoned as a disagreeable man, and thought by most men to be out of my senses, as is said to have been the case with one of the Greek philosophers, whose moderation exposed him to the charge of madness, because he laughed at everything, since he saw that the objects of the eager pursuit of the majority were ridiculous; or even be thought full of new wine as were in later days the disciples of Christ, because they spoke with tongues,⁴³⁷⁹ since men knew not that it was the power of the Spirit, and not a distraction of mind.

23. Now, consider the charges laid against us. You have been ruler of the church, it is said, for so long, and favoured by the course of time, and the influence of the sovereign, a most important matter. What change have we been able to notice? How many men have in days gone by used us outrageously? What sufferings have we failed to undergo? Ill-usage? Threats? Banishment? Plunder? Confiscation? The burning⁴³⁸⁰ of priests at sea? The desecration of temples by the blood of the saints, till, instead of temples, they became charnel-houses? The public slaughter of aged Bishops, to speak more accurately, of Patriarchs? The denial of access to every place in the case of the godly alone? In fact any kind of suffering which could be mentioned? And for which of these have we requited the wrongdoers? For the wheel of fortune gave us the power of rightly treating those who so treated us, and our persecutors ought to have received a lesson. Apart from all other things, speaking only of our experiences, not to mention your own, have we not been persecuted, maltreated, driven from churches, houses, and, most terrible of all, even from the deserts? Have we not had to endure an enraged people, insolent governors, the disregard of Emperors and their decrees? What was the result? We became stronger, and our persecutors took to flight. That was actually the case. The power to requite them seemed to me a sufficient vengeance on those who had wronged us. These men thought otherwise; for they are exceedingly exact and just

⁴³⁷⁸ *Narrow strait*, lit. Euripus.

⁴³⁷⁹ Acts ii. 4.

⁴³⁸⁰ *The burning*, etc., cf. This was by order of Valens.

in requiting: and accordingly they demand⁴³⁸¹ what the state of things permits. What governor, they say, has been fined? What populace chastised? What ringleaders of the populace? What fear of ourselves have we been able to inspire for the future?

24. Perhaps⁴³⁸² we may be reproached, as we have been before, with the exquisite character of our table, the splendour of our apparel, the officers who precede us, our haughtiness to those who meet us. I was not aware that we ought to rival the consuls, the governors, the most illustrious generals, who have no opportunity of lavishing their incomes; or that our belly ought to hunger for the enjoyment of the goods of the poor, and to expend their necessaries on superfluities, and belch forth over the altars. I did not know that we ought to ride on splendid horses, and drive in magnificent carriages, and be preceded by a procession and surrounded by applause, and have everyone make way for us, as if we were wild beasts, and open out a passage so that our approach might be seen afar. If these sufferings have been endured, they have now passed away: Forgive me this wrong.⁴³⁸³ Elect another who will please the majority: and give me my desert, my country life, and my God, Whom alone I may have to please, and shall please by my simple life. It is a painful thing to be deprived of speeches and conferences, and public gatherings, and applause like that which now lends wings to my thoughts, and relatives, and friends and honours, and the beauty and grandeur of the city, and its brilliancy which dazzles those who look at the surface without investigating the inner nature of things; but yet not so painful as being clamoured against and besmirched amid public disturbances and agitations, which trim their sails to the popular breeze. For they seek not for priests, but for orators, not for stewards of souls, but for treasurers of money, not for pure offerers of the sacrifice, but for powerful patrons. I will say a word in their defence: we have thus trained them, by becoming all things to all men,⁴³⁸⁴ whether to save or destroy all, I know not.

25. What say you? Are you persuaded, have you been overcome by my words? Or must I use stronger terms in order to persuade you? Yea by the Trinity Itself, Whom you and I alike worship, by our common hope, and for the sake of the unity of this people, grant me this favour; dismiss me with your prayers; let this be the proclamation of my contest; give me my certificate of retirement, as sovereigns do to their soldiers; and, if you will, with a favourable testimony, that I may enjoy the honour of it; if not, just as you please; this will make no difference to me, until God sees what my case really is. What successor then shall we elect? God will provide Himself⁴³⁸⁵ a shepherd for the office, as He once provided a lamb for a burnt-offering. I only make this further request,—let him be one who is the object of envy, not the object of pity; not one who yields everything to all,

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⁴³⁸¹ *Demand.* After all these persecutions, some thought S. Gregory ought to have used his influence with Theodosius to requite or punish the former persecutors of the orthodox.

⁴³⁸² *Perhaps,* an ironical passage.

⁴³⁸³ 2 Cor. xii. 13.

⁴³⁸⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 22.

⁴³⁸⁵ Gen. xxii. 8.

but one who can on some points offer resistance for the sake of what is best: for though the one is most pleasant, the other is most profitable. So do you prepare for me your addresses of dismissal: I will now bid you farewell.

26. Farewell my Anastasia,⁴³⁸⁶ whose name is redolent of piety: for thou hast raised up for us the doctrine which was in contempt: farewell, scene of our common victory, modern Shiloh,⁴³⁸⁷ where the tabernacle was first fixed, after being carried about in its wanderings for forty years in the wilderness. Farewell likewise, grand and renowned temple, our new inheritance, whose greatness is now due to the Word, which once wast a Jebus,⁴³⁸⁸ and hast now been made by us a Jerusalem. Farewell, all ye others, inferior only to this in beauty, scattered through the various parts of the city, like so many links, uniting together each your own neighbourhood, which have been filled with worshippers of whose existence we had despaired, not by me, in my weakness, but by the grace which was with me.⁴³⁸⁹ Farewell, ye Apostles,⁴³⁹⁰ noble settlers here, my masters in the strife; if I have not often kept festival with you, it has been possibly due to the Satan⁴³⁹¹ which I, like S. Paul,⁴³⁹² who was one of you, carry about in my body for my own profit, and which is the cause of my now leaving you. Farewell, my throne, envied and perilous height; farewell assembly of high priests, honoured by the dignity and age of its priests, and all ye others ministers of God round the holy table, drawing nigh to the God Who draws nigh to you.⁴³⁹³ Farewell, choirs of Nazarites, harmonies of the Psalter, night-long stations, venerable virgins, decorous matrons, gatherings of widows and orphans, and ye eyes of the poor, turned towards God and towards me. Farewell, hospitable and Christ-loved dwellings, helpers of my infirmity. Farewell, ye lovers of my discourses, in your eagerness and concourse, ye pencils seen and unseen, and thou balustrade, pressed upon by those who thrust themselves forward to hear the word. Farewell, Emperors, and palace, and ministers and household of the Emperor, whether faithful or not to him, I know not, but for the most part, unfaithful to God. Clap your hands, shout aloud, extol your orator to the skies. This pestilent and garrulous tongue has ceased to speak to you. Though it will not utterly cease to speak: for it will fight with hand and ink: but for the present we have ceased to speak.

⁴³⁸⁶ *Anastasia*. The little church “of the Resurrection” in which the orthodox Christians worshipped with S. Gregory at first on his arrival, while the churches of the city were held by the heretics.

⁴³⁸⁷ Josh. xviii. 1.

⁴³⁸⁸ 1 Chron. xi. 4.

⁴³⁸⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

⁴³⁹⁰ *Apostles*. The Church of the Holy Apostles, to which Constantius translated the relics of SS. Andrew, Luke and Timothy.

⁴³⁹¹ *Satan*, *i.e.*, “thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan”—in S. Gregory’s case serious ill health.

⁴³⁹² 2 Cor. xii. 7.

⁴³⁹³ S. James iv. 8.

27. Farewell, mighty Christ-loving city. I will testify to the truth, though thy zeal be not according to knowledge.⁴³⁹⁴ Our separation renders us more kindly. Approach the truth: be converted at this late hour. Honour God more than you have been wont to do. It is no disgrace to change, while it is fatal to cling to evil. Farewell, East and West, for whom and against whom I have had to fight; He is witness, Who will give you peace, if but a few would imitate my retirement. For those who resign their thrones will not also lose God, but will have the seat on high, which is far more exalted and secure. Last of all, and most of all, I will cry,—farewell ye Angels, guardians of this church, and of my presence and pilgrimage, since our affairs are in the hands of God. Farewell, O Trinity, my meditation, and my glory. Mayest Thou be preserved by those who are here, and preserve them, my people: for they are mine, even if I have my place assigned elsewhere; and may I learn that Thou art ever extolled and glorified in word and conduct. My children, keep, I pray you, that which is committed to your trust.⁴³⁹⁵ Remember my stonings.⁴³⁹⁶ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.



Oration XLIII.

Funeral Oration on the Great S. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia.

S. BASIL died January 1, A.D. 379. A serious illness, in addition to other causes, prevented S. Gregory from being present at his funeral (Epist. 79). Benoît holds that an expression (Epitaph, cxix. 38) in which S. Gregory says that his “lips are fettered” proves that he was still in retirement at Seleucia. This is an unwarranted deduction. In this Oration, § 2, the Saint, alluding to his illness in disparaging terms, alleges his labours at Constantinople as a more pressing reason for his absence: and says that he undertook the task according to the judgment of S. Basil. This implies that S. Gregory went to Constantinople before the death of S. Basil, or that he had then been influenced by his friend’s advice and was on the point of setting out—more probably the former, as we may be sure that, if S. Gregory had been still at Seleucia, no reason but physical incapacity would have kept him from his friend’s side. His pressing duties at Constantinople and the difficulties of the long journey were the “other causes” of his letter to S. Gregory of Nyssa: and we know that he suffered from serious illness at Constantinople (Carm. xi. 887. Orat. xxiii. 1). S. Gregory left Constantinople in June, A.D. 381, and Tillemont places the date of this Oration soon after his return to Nazianzus. Benoît thinks that it was probably delivered on the anniversary of S. Basil’s death.

⁴³⁹⁴ Rom. x. 2.

⁴³⁹⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

⁴³⁹⁶ Col. iv. 18.