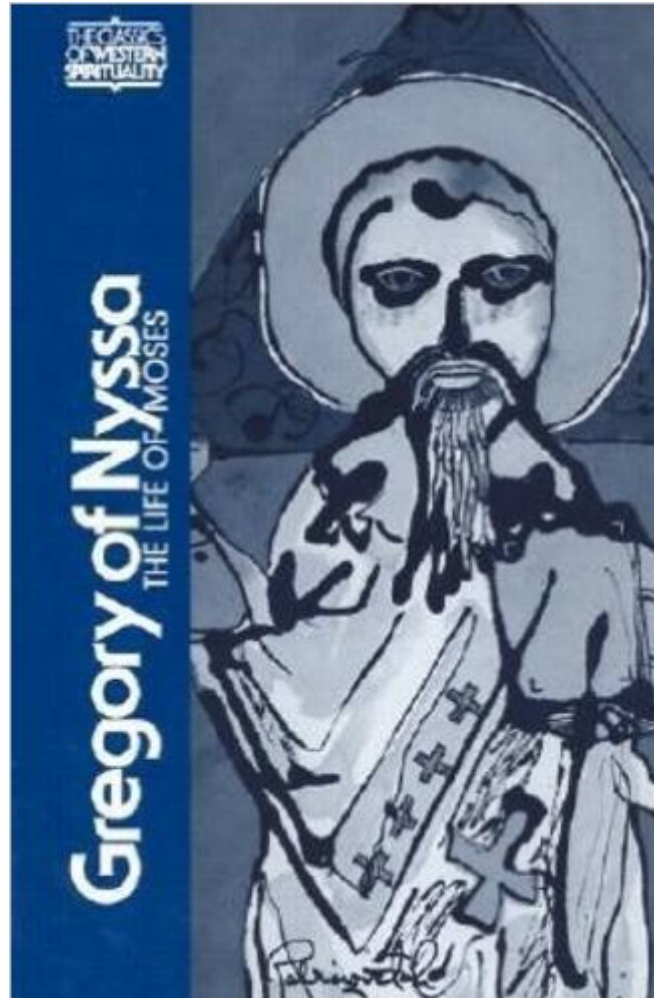


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Gregory Of Nyssa: The Life Of Moses (Classics Of Western Spirituality)



Synopsis

Here is an award-winning, new translation that brings to light Gregory's complex identity as an early mystic. Gregory (c. 332-395) was one of the Greek Cappadocian Fathers, along with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen.

Book Information

Series: Classics of Western Spirituality (Paperback)

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Paulist Press (January 1, 1978)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0809121123

ISBN-13: 978-0809121120

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (17 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #145,618 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #103 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Mysticism](#) #170 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Mysticism](#) #422 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Bible Study > Old Testament](#)

Customer Reviews

Gregory of Nyssa, one of the three great 'Cappadocians', is well represented in this mystical biography of the prophet Moses. Gregory of Nyssa is a towering intellectual figure in the Christian tradition. He is revered as one of the main Church Fathers, especially in Eastern Christianity, however he is somewhat below Augustine in the West, although much recent Catholic scholarship is recovering the theological and philosophical brilliance of this great man. Gregory of Nyssa wrote several key works, including a long treatise against the heretic Eunomius (who using Aristotle's logic claimed the essence of God is finite and knowable to the human mind), a commentary on the Song of Songs, and a mystical biography on Moses. In this work Gregory meditates on the famous life of Moses as recounted in the Old Testament, from his birth in Egypt to his calling in the field by the burning bush to his meeting with God on Mt Sinai. In his meditations Gregory introduces several themes which will dominate later Christian theology and mysticism, including the theme of the darkness of God, the notion of 'epikstasis' or endless progress into the Godhead for the saint, the infinity of God's Being (a critical concept for Gregory) as well as encountering God in light and

unknowing. Gregory readily adapts several ideas from Platonic and Aristotlian philosophy but articulates a genuinely Christian understanding of God, as an ineffable and infinite mystery, One in three and three in One.

Paul the apostle and Augustine of Hippo both penned rather famous statements toward the fact that spiritual people discern spiritual things and not merely that which is familiar in any 'fleshly' or 'literal' or empirical sense. Although stating this in their own inimitable ways, neither of them were the first to see this. Jesus Christ taught in parable (allegory), explaining to his disciples that he did so for this very reason. The philosophy of scriptural exegesis that looks to deeper, allegorical / figurative, and spiritual meanings was certainly known, practiced and esteemed in the Judaic world which Christ entered. It is singularly prominent in Philo and, we might argue, is instructed a thousand years earlier by Solomon. Strongly influenced by the life and work of Origen (who is often credited, rightly or wrongly, with systematizing this ancient approach to exegesis) Gregory of Nyssa is one of the church "Fathers" and early theologians to teach this approach to scripture. Much of his work is perhaps known only to scholars, and his "Life of Moses" is one of his few works to be now available in an English text. For this we thank the Paulist Press. Moses is seen by Gregory (c. 332-395) as a spiritual model. While he was very literally the historical personage who led the Hebrews out of Egypt, the history centered around him is not merely or purely a history. It is seen as a series of lessons and spiritual insights on a more or less historical armature. These kinds of statements from Gregory demonstrate the influence of Philo and Origen in particular: "How would a concept worthy of God be preserved in the description of what happened if one looked only to the history? . . . Where is the holiness? . . . How can the history so contradict reason?"

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