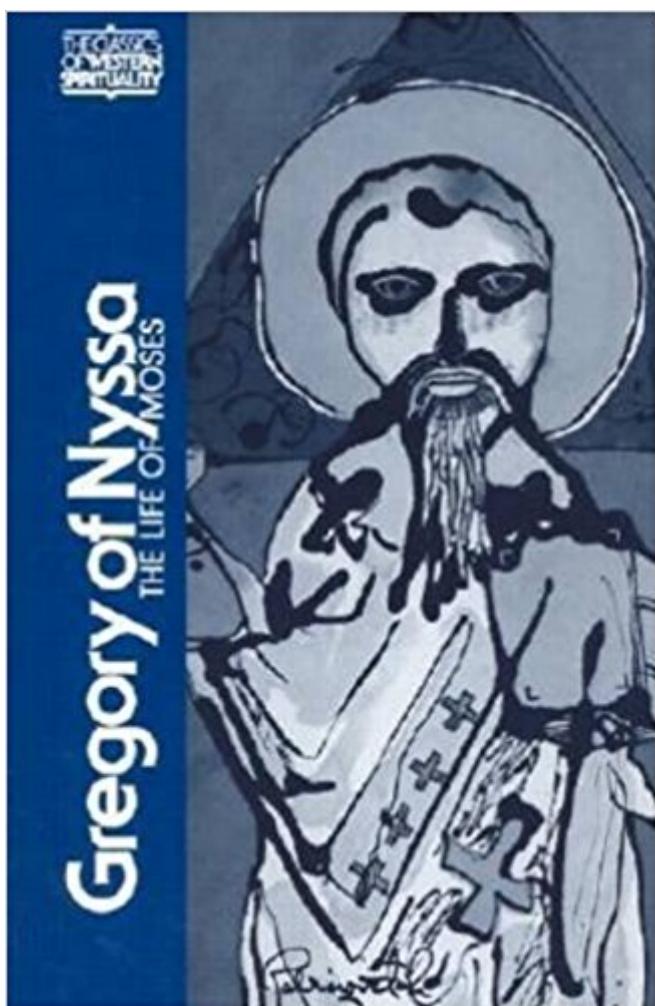


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# Gregory Of Nyssa: The Life Of Moses (Classics Of Western Spirituality)



## 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: 4.6 out of 5 stars 19 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #320,366 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #217 in Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Mysticism #394 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Mysticism #1039 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Bible Study > Old Testament

## Customer Reviews

Text: English, Greek (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The spiritual journey is the oldest and longest journey known to humankind. It has fascinated and intrigued cultures down through the centuries. Inner spiritual experiences are found in all religious traditions around the world. In Judaism, we find reflections on the life of Moses and others, offering examples of personal spiritual growth (I discuss this in my review of Martini's, *Through Moses to Jesus: The Way of the Paschal Mystery*). With the coming of the incarnate Christ, the Christian spiritual journey as we know it was born. As a result, this spiritual journey underwent an evolution during the early Christian era. Gradually, the spiritual masters defined and developed various stages of spiritual growth. It was Saint Gregory of Nyssa, a Father of the Eastern Church, who introduced the idea of progression along this journey. Accordingly, in the fourth century, he was hailed as a major spiritual thinker, one who developed his ideas by reading scripture from the context of his life

experience. He introduced the idea of stages and viewed the spiritual life as a continual growth process. He based this concept on Paul's theme of moving forward. "Forgetting the past, I strain ahead for what is still to come" (Phil 3:13). In this work, *The Life of Moses*, by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, we read in the "Introduction" that "the theme that holds the whole work together [is] the idea of eternal progress." This progress is at the heart of Saint Gregory's spiritual doctrine. Many, including Saint Augustine, a Father of the Western Church, have examined his treatise and have found that his theological framework resembles "that progress" that people strive for, in what has come to be known as "The Spiritual Life." This includes the general points that must be recognized and accepted if one is to make progress spiritually in this world. First of all, we (humankind & individually) were made in the image [the mirror] of God. Secondly, by our fall into sin, this image was tarnished. Thirdly, Christ took upon himself our nature in order to restore us to our original nature. Lastly, through Christ, conversion restores our capacity to reflect the divine nature. The "Introduction" tells us that Saint Gregory sees that, in *The Spiritual Life*, "There is an incessant transformation into the likeness of God as man stretches out with the divine infinity; there is an ever-greater participation in God." Saint Gregory saw this as evident in the life of Moses. He had already been exposed to similar thoughts about this from the writings of Philo and Origen, who had "described the spiritual life as a succession of steps." In his work, Saint Gregory expresses the idea of infinite progress in the never-completed journey to God towards perfection. Following in Saint Gregory's footsteps, Saint Augustine developed this idea further by giving these steps/stages names and descriptions. The first stage was the "purgative way." During this stage a person's chief concern is his or her awareness of sin, sorrow for sin, and desire to make amends because God has been offended. The second stage was the "illuminative way." Its main feature is the enlightenment of a person's mind regarding the ways of God, and a clearer understanding of God's will in a person's life style. The third, and final stage, was the "unitive way." Here, there is a continual awareness of being in God's presence. The individual also, in a loving way; strives to conform his or her will to the will of God. Saint Augustine's analysis of the Spiritual Life and his classification of it into three stages were widely accepted and are still very popular today as a way of identifying and measuring individual progress along the journey. It has further been treated by many, especially people like Garrigou-LaGrange (in the Thomistic/Dominican tradition), and Saint John of the Cross, and Saint Teresa of Avila (in the Mystical/Carmelite tradition). Besides a better understanding of the *Life of Moses*, this book provides some early and unique insights into the Spiritual Life that we, like others, can benefit from.

Amazing book from a time not our own to help us be countercultural. An easy read and would recommend it to anybody who wants to understand both Moses and another era of Christianity.

This is a fine book on so many levels, as other reviewers have pointed out. So I will focus on one relatively narrow aspect of the book, and that's the nature of hermeneutics used by St. Gregory. In our time, almost all biblical interpreters use a sometimes painfully literal approach to the texts. This was often not the approach used by the New Testament writers in their Old Testament citations, and that alone leads to a lot of confusion in our readings of the New Testament. So it shouldn't be surprising that early church Fathers such as St. Gregory will sometimes use a less than literal approach to the text, as here in his treatment of Moses' life. And that's one of the treasures of this book, reading and hearing the story of Moses' life in a way that I had never heard before, in a manner that illuminated stories that had sometimes not made sense, and shed light on some obscurities of Moses' life. You don't have to agree with everything the dear saint says to treasure this book, and appreciate his humble insights. This book also (like a number in the "Classics of Western Spirituality" series) provides a helpful segue into the early Fathers for those like myself who grew up Protestant, and had little by way of introduction to the Fathers. This is a good way of learning about them, fun and easy to read, and even a bit of a page-turner. How could you go wrong with something like that?

This book was recommended by a talk by David B. Hart; I'm glad I got it. Learning from the Greek fathers is enlightening.

Beautifully written.

Purchased this to add to my Classics of Western Spirituality collection. When I get around to reading it, probably years from now, I'll probably review it then.

Thanks

Very good

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