Gregg, John Allen Fitzgerald (1873–1961), Church of Ireland archbishop of Armagh, was born 4 July 1873 at North Cerney, Gloucestershire, England, into a distinguished family, youngest and only son among four children of the Rev. John Robert Gregg (1831–82), vicar of Deptford, Kent, and Sarah Caroline Frances Gregg (née French), sister of Thomas Valpy French (1825–91), bishop of Lahore, India (in Pakistan since 1947). His grandfather John Gregg (qv) was bishop of Cork. He was educated at Bedford Grammar School, entered Christ's College, Cambridge, on a foundation scholarship (1891), and graduated BA (1894), distinguished himself in sport and scholarship and won the Hulsean prize (1896) for his thesis *Decian persecution* (1897), took his MA (1897), BD (1909), and DD (1929). From Dublin University he graduated BD (*ad eundem* 1911) and DD (1913).

His uncle R. S. Gregg (qv), archbishop of Armagh, welcomed his decision to enter the church, but not his proposal to settle in Ireland, warning him that he would ‘find it very rough’ (Seaver, 26). Ordained deacon at St Luke’s Church, Belfast (1896), he was successively appointed curate at Ballymena, Co. Antrim (1896), curate and residentiary preacher, Cork cathedral (1899), and rector of St Michael’s, Blackrock, Co. Cork (1906–12). On his appointment as Archbishop King’s professor of divinity at TCD (1911–15) he moved to Dublin and became canon of St Patrick’s cathedral, Dublin, chaplain to the lord lieutenant (1912–15), and examining chaplain to the archbishop of Dublin (1913–15), before joining the episcopal bench as bishop of Ossory (1915–20).

Though Gregg was instinctively conservative, his awareness of contemporary trends made him responsive to demands for change: he supported the resolution for women to hold parochial office and presented a petition to the general synod (1914), signed by 1,400 women; though the motion was lost, he persevered undaunted, and a bill for the ecclesiastical enfranchisement of women was finally carried in 1920. A unionist, he was also one of three anglican and seventeen catholic bishops to sign the declaration against partition in 1917, which was organised by the catholic bishop of Derry, Charles McHugh (qv).

From the 1920s the Irish church was dominated by Gregg, first as archbishop of Dublin (1920–39) and later as archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland (1939–59). He provided stability to the church during a turbulent period of political and social change and was outspoken in defence of its interests, pragmatically espousing policies that would lead to the greater integration of the protestant community into the new Irish state, as in his acceptance of the teaching of compulsory Irish in national schools. Despite a declining protestant community in the south of Ireland, he maintained the unity of the church, overcoming the political
division of the country into two entities. He regretted constitutional change but pledged the loyalty of the church to the Irish Free State; while recognising that the protestant ethos was different from that of the majority of Irishmen, he maintained that ‘whatever our religious or political outlook may be, here is our home, and we have a right to be here’ (Seaver, 117). He was elected to the first Irish Free State senate, and was subsequently consulted by Éamon de Valera (qv) – who later described him as ‘a most learned and kindly gentleman, and . . . a highly valued friend’ (Seaver, 129) – in framing the text of the 1937 constitution. In 1949 he adapted, albeit with sadness, the state prayers to fit the republican form of government, observing that ‘the republic is a fact’ and that ‘in our prayers, above all, there must be reality’ (Acheson, 233).

Gregg was an able administrator, and his courage and integrity in facing difficult situations and his scholarship and devotion to the church earned him respect in the councils of the wider anglican communion; he was known as ‘the churchman’s bishop’ for his emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy, ecclesiastical discipline, and loyalty to the clergy. Though conservative in his approach to church unity, he sought closer relations between the Christian churches and frequently visited the reformed churches of the Iberian peninsula, where a portrait plaque was unveiled (1950) in St John's church, Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal; a baptistry in the cathedral church of St Paul, Lisbon, is dedicated to his memory. Well known in England as a writer and preacher, he was appointed select preacher at Cambridge University (1916, 1930, 1936) and at Oxford University (1946, 1947) and supported the institution of annual theological lectures at QUB. His publications include *Epistle of St Clement of Rome* (1899) and *The primitive faith and Roman Catholic developments* (1909) – a minor classic which was used as a textbook for ordinands of the Church of England. He wrote the introduction and notes to the revised version of the ‘Wisdom of Solomon’ for the *Cambridge Bible for schools* (1909) and published sermons and articles in religious journals. Elected MRIA (1914), he was elected to hon. fellowship (1934) by Christ’s College, Cambridge, was awarded an hon. DD (1949) by QUB, and was created CH (1957).

A commanding figure, tall, thin, with raven-black hair, piercing eyes, and fine features, he had an air of sacerdotal austerity, lightened on occasion by his dry sense of humour. He maintained a well regulated daily timetable and kept a diary, writing his most personal thoughts in Greek; he made time for recreation, a daily walk of two miles (3.2 km), tennis, and (from 1929) sailing, and holidays in Ireland and on the Continent. He had a great love of English literature and church music. He retired (1959) to the Woodhouse, Rostrevor, Co. Down. Though incapacitated by blindness, deafness, and lameness, he never complained, and (according to his wife) his life of prayer was enriched. He died 2 May 1961 at his home and was buried in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, beside his first wife and son.

His sisters had distinguished careers: Hilda Caroline Gregg, hon. MA from London University, was author of historical novels using the pen-name ‘Sydney C. Grier’;
Katherine Gregg, one of the first women doctors, trained at the Royal Free Hospital, London, and subsequently served as a missionary in India; Mary Penelope Valpy Gregg, a nurse, served as a missionary in Japan.

Gregg married (26 November 1902) Anna Alicia Jennings (d. 1945); they had two sons and two daughters. Claude J. M. Gregg died of pneumonia (1928) and John F. F. Gregg was torpedoed while a prisoner of war of the Japanese (1943). Both daughters had distinguished undergraduate careers at TCD: the elder daughter, Margaret Gregg, graduated MB, BCh, and BAO (1931) from Dublin University, was awarded the Professor of Medicine’s prize (1931), was the first woman to win the Hudson scholarship presented by the Adelaide Hospital, Dublin, and was admitted FRCSI (1934). She married C. S. Wilson (d. 1978), state surgeon in the Malayan Medical Service. The younger daughter, Barbara Gregg, gained a non-foundation scholarship (1931), won the Kathleen Burgess prize in Italian (1931) and graduated BA (1933) in modern languages from Dublin University; under the pseudonym ‘Barbara Fitzgerald’ she wrote We are besieged (1946), which was awarded the Book Society’s recommendation (1946). She married Michael Somerville, son of Vice-adm. H. B. Somerville (qv) and lived for many years in West Africa.

Gregg married secondly (22 January 1947) Leslie Alexandra, daughter of the Rev. T. J. McEndoo (c.1864–1957), dean of Armagh, who officiated at the marriage of his daughter and of his archbishop.