

0329-0390 – Gregorius Nazianzenus – Letters on the Apollinarian Controversy

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SELECT LETTERS
OF
SAINT GREGORY NAZIANZEN,

ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

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A Selection from the Letters of Saint Gregory Nazianzen, Sometime
Archbishop of Constantinople.

Division I.

Letters on the Apollinarian Controversy.

Introduction.

THE circumstances which called forth the two letters to Cledonius have already been described in the first section of the General Prolegomena, and it will not be necessary here to add much to what was there said. In the letter to Nectarius, his own successor on the throne of Constantinople, written about A.D. 383, and sometimes reckoned as Orat. XLVI., S. Gregory gives extracts from a work of Apollinarius himself, but without mentioning the title of the book. In this treatise the fundamental errors of the heresy (see Proleg. c. 1, p. 172) are laid down. Apollinarius, according to S. Gregory, declares that the Son of God was from all eternity clothed with a human body, and not from the time of His conception only by the Blessed Virgin; but that this humanity of God is without human mind, the place of which was supplied by the Godhead of the Only-begotten. And he goes even further and ascribes passibility and mortality to the very Godhead of Christ. Therefore S. Gregory earnestly protests against any toleration being granted to these heretics, or even permission to hold their assemblies; for, he says, toleration or permission would certainly be regarded

by them as a condonation of their doctrinal position, and a condemnation of that of the Church. Dr. Ullman, however, thinks that while S. Gregory was certainly speaking the truth in saying that he had in his hands a pamphlet by Apollinarius, yet that he, perhaps unconsciously, exaggerated the heretical character of its contents, pushing its statements to consequences which Apollinarius would have repudiated. The one purpose of the latter was, in Dr. Ullman's view, to safeguard the doctrine of the Unity of Christ; and he thought that the orthodox expression of Two Whole and Perfect Natures tended to a Nestorian division of the Person of Christ; and so he used language which certainly seemed to confound the natures, or at any rate to make the Incarnation imperfect, inasmuch as a Christ in Whom the human mind is absent, and its place filled up by the Godhead of the Son, cannot be said to be perfect Man. But while Epiphanius mentions these extravagances of the heresy, and does so with a lingering feeling of regret for the lapse of so good a man whose services in the past had been of so much value to the Church, yet, in the spirit common to Ecclesiastical authorities of the time, he would rather ascribe them to an expansion of Apollinarius' teaching by his younger disciples who did not really understand what Apollinarius himself meant.

Olympius, to whom the last of this series is addressed, was Governor of Cappadocia Secunda in A.D. 382. He was a man for whom S. Gregory had a very high esteem, and with whom he was upon terms of close friendship, as will be seen from other letters of Gregory to him in another division of this Selection. The occasion of the present letter was the necessity to appeal to the secular power for aid to punish a sect of Apollinarians at Nazianzus, who had ventured to take advantage of S. Gregory's absence at the Baths of Xanxaris to procure the consecration of a Bishop of their own way of thinking. Technically the See was vacant, but the administration had been committed to Gregory by the Bishops of the Province, and though he, foreseeing some such attempt on the part of the heretics, had been very earnest in pressing upon the Metropolitan and his Comprovincials the necessity of filling this throne by a canonical election, yet he was by no means prepared to hand over the authority, with which he had been invested, to an irregularly elected and uncanonically consecrated heretic.

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To Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople. (Ep. CCII.)

The Care of God, which throughout the time before us guarded the Churches, seems to have utterly forsaken this present life. And my soul is immersed to such a degree by calamities that the private sufferings of my own life hardly seem to be worth reckoning among evils (though they are so numerous and great, that if they befel anyone else I should think them unbearable); but I can only look at the common sufferings of the Churches; for if at the present crisis some pains be not taken to find a remedy for them, things will gradually get into an altogether desperate condition. Those who follow the heresy of Arius or Eudoxius (I cannot say who stirred them up to this folly) are making a display of their disease, as if they had attained some degree of confidence by collecting

congregations as if by permission. And they of the Macedonian party have reached such a pitch of folly that they are arrogating to themselves the name of Bishops, and are wandering about our districts babbling of Eleusius⁴⁶⁹⁴ as to their ordinations. Our bosom evil, Eunomius, is no longer content with merely existing; but unless he can draw away everyone with him to his ruinous heresy, he thinks himself an injured man. All this, however, is endurable. The most grievous item of all in the woes of the Church is the boldness of the Apollinarians, whom your Holiness has overlooked, I know not how, when providing themselves with authority to hold meetings on an equality with myself. However, you being, as you are, thoroughly instructed by the grace of God in the Divine Mysteries on all points, are well informed, not only as to the advocacy of the true faith, but also as to all those arguments which have been devised by the heretics against the sound faith; and yet perhaps it will not be unseasonable that your Excellency should hear from my littleness that a pamphlet by Apollinarius has come into my hands, the contents of which surpass all heretical pravity. For he asserts that the Flesh which the Only-begotten Son assumed in the Incarnation for the remodelling of our nature was no new acquisition, but that that carnal nature was in the Son from the beginning. And he puts forward as a witness to this monstrous assertion a garbled quotation from the Gospels, namely, No man hath Ascended up into Heaven save He which came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.⁴⁶⁹⁵ As though even before He came down He was the Son of Man, and when He came down He brought with Him that Flesh, which it appears He had in Heaven, as though it had existed before the ages, and been joined with His Essence. For he alleges another saying of an Apostle, which he cuts off from the whole body of its context, that The Second Man is the Lord from Heaven.⁴⁶⁹⁶ Then he assumes that that Man who came down from above is without a mind, but that the Godhead of the Only-begotten fulfils the function of mind, and is the third part of this human composite, inasmuch as soul and body are in it on its human side, but not mind, the place of which is taken by God the Word. This is not yet the most serious part of it; that which is most terrible of all is that he declares that the Only-begotten God, the Judge of all, the Prince of Life, the Destroyer of Death, is mortal, and underwent the Passion in His proper Godhead; and that in the three days' death of His body, His Godhead also was put to death with His body, and thus was raised again from the dead by the Father. It would be tedious to go through all the other propositions which he adds to these monstrous absurdities. Now, if they who hold such views have authority to meet, your Wisdom approved in Christ must see that, inasmuch as we do not approve their views, any permission of assembly granted to them is nothing

⁴⁶⁹⁴ Eleusius was Bishop of Cyzicus, a prominent leader of the Semi-Arian party. He bore a very high character for personal holiness, and approached more nearly to orthodoxy than most of his associates, men like Basil of Ancyra, Eustathius of Sebaste, etc. He obstinately maintained, however, Macedonian views on the Deity of the Holy Ghost, even after their condemnation by the Council of Constantinople.

⁴⁶⁹⁵ John iii. 13.

⁴⁶⁹⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

less than a declaration that their view is thought more true than ours. For if they are permitted to teach their view as godly men, and with all confidence to preach their doctrine, it is manifest that the doctrine of the Church has been condemned, as though the truth were on their side. For nature does not admit of two contrary doctrines on the same subject being both true. How then could your noble and lofty mind submit to suspend your usual courage in regard to the correction of so great an evil? But even though there is no precedent for such a course, let your inimitable perfection in virtue stand up at a crisis like the present, and teach our most pious Emperor, that no gain will come from his zeal for the Church on other points if he allows such an evil to gain strength from freedom of speech for the subversion of sound faith.

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To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius. (Ep. CI.)

To our most reverend and God-beloved brother and fellow-priest Cledonius, Gregory, greeting in the Lord.

I desire to learn what is this fashion of innovation in things Concerning the Church, which allows anyone who likes, or the passerby,⁴⁶⁹⁷ as the Bible says, to tear asunder the flock that has been well led, and to plunder it by larcenous attacks, or rather by piratical and fallacious teachings. For if our present assailants had any ground for condemning us in regard of the faith, it would not have been right for them, even in that case, to have ventured on such a course without giving us notice. They ought rather to have first persuaded us, or to have been willing to be persuaded by us (if at least any account is to be taken of us as fearing God, labouring for the faith, and helping the Church), and then, if at all, to innovate; but then perhaps there would be an excuse for their outrageous conduct. But since our faith has been proclaimed, both in writing and without writing, here and in distant parts, in times of danger and of safety, how comes it that some make such attempts, and that others keep silence?

The most grievous part of it is not (though this too is shocking) that the men instil their own heresy into simpler souls by means of those who are worse; but that they also tell lies about us and say that we share their opinions and sentiments; thus baiting their hooks, and by this cloak villainously fulfilling their will, and making our simplicity, which looked upon them as brothers and not as foes, into a support of their wickedness. And not only so, but they also assert, as I am told, that they have been received by the Western Synod, by which they were formerly condemned, as is well known to everyone. If, however, those who hold the views of Apollinarius have either now or formerly been received, let them prove it and we will be content. For it is evident that they can only have been so received as assenting to the Orthodox Faith, for this were an impossibility

⁴⁶⁹⁷ Ps. lxxx. 12.

on any other terms. And they can surely prove it, either by the minutes of the Synod, or by Letters of Communion, for this is the regular custom of Synods. But if it is mere words, and an invention of their own, devised for the sake of appearances and to give them weight with the multitude through the credit of the persons, teach them to hold their tongues, and confute them; for we believe that such a task is well suited to your manner of life and orthodoxy. Do not let the men deceive themselves and others with the assertion that the “Man of the Lord,” as they call Him, Who is rather our Lord and God, is without human mind. For we do not sever the Man from the Godhead, but we lay down as a dogma the Unity and Identity of Person, Who of old was not Man but God, and the Only Son before all ages, unmingled with body or anything corporeal; but Who in these last days has assumed Manhood also for our salvation; passible in His Flesh, impassible in His Godhead; circumscrip in the body, uncircumscrip in the Spirit; at once earthly and heavenly, tangible and intangible, comprehensible and incomprehensible; that by One and the Same Person, Who was perfect Man and also God, the entire humanity fallen through sin might be created anew.

If anyone does not believe that Holy Mary is the Mother of God, he is severed from the Godhead. If anyone should assert that He passed through the Virgin as through a channel, and was not at once divinely and humanly formed in her (divinely, because without the intervention of a man; humanly, because in accordance with the laws of gestation), he is in like manner godless. If any assert that the Manhood was formed and afterward was clothed with the Godhead, he too is to be condemned. For this were not a Generation of God, but a shirking of generation. If any introduce the notion of Two Sons, one of God the Father, the other of the Mother, and discredits the Unity and Identity, may he lose his part in the adoption promised to those who believe aright. For God and Man are two natures, as also soul and body are; but there are not two Sons or two Gods. For neither in this life are there two manhoods; though Paul speaks in some such language of the inner and outer man. And (if I am to speak concisely) the Saviour is made of elements which are distinct from one another (for the invisible is not the same with the visible, nor the timeless with that which is subject to time), yet He is not two Persons. God forbid! For both natures are one by the combination, the Deity being made Man, and the Manhood deified or however one should express it. And I say different Elements, because it is the reverse of what is the case in the Trinity; for There we acknowledge different Persons so as not to confound the persons; but not different Elements, for the Three are One and the same in Godhead.

If any should say that it wrought in Him by grace as in a Prophet, but was not and is not united with Him in Essence—let him be empty of the Higher Energy, or rather full of the opposite. If any worship not the Crucified, let him be Anathema and be numbered among the Deicides. If any assert that He was made perfect by works, or that after His Baptism, or after His Resurrection from the dead, He was counted worthy of an adoptive Sonship, like those whom the Greeks interpolate as added to the ranks of the gods, let him be anathema. For that which has a beginning or a progress or is made perfect, is not God, although the expressions may be used of His gradual manifestation. If any assert that He has now put off His holy flesh, and that His Godhead is stripped of the body, and deny that He is now with His body and will come again with it, let him not see the glory of His

Coming. For where is His body now, if not with Him Who assumed it? For it is not laid by in the sun, according to the babble of the Manichæans, that it should be honoured by a dishonour; nor was it poured forth into the air and dissolved, as is the nature of a voice or the flow of an odour, or the course of a lightning flash that never stands. Where in that case were His being handled after the Resurrection, or His being seen hereafter by them that pierced Him, for Godhead is in its nature invisible. Nay; He will come with His body—so I have learnt—such as He was seen by His Disciples in the Mount, or as he shewed Himself for a moment, when his Godhead overpowered the carnality. And as we say this to disarm suspicion, so we write the other to correct the novel teaching. If anyone assert that His flesh came down from heaven, and is not from hence, nor of us though above us, let him be anathema. For the words, The Second Man is the Lord from Heaven;⁴⁶⁹⁸ and, As is the Heavenly, such are they that are Heavenly; and, No man hath ascended up into Heaven save He which came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven;⁴⁶⁹⁹ and the like, are to be understood as said on account of the Union with the heavenly; just as that All Things were made by Christ,⁴⁷⁰⁰ and that Christ dwelleth in your hearts⁴⁷⁰¹ is said, not of the visible nature which belongs to God, but of what is perceived by the mind, the names being mingled like the natures, and flowing into one another, according to the law of their intimate union.

If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole. Let them not, then, begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Saviour only with bones and nerves and the portraiture of humanity. For if His Manhood is without soul, even the Arians admit this, that they may attribute His Passion to the Godhead, as that which gives motion to the body is also that which suffers. But if He has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is He man, for man is not a mindless animal? And this would necessarily involve that while His form and tabernacle was human, His soul should be that of a horse or an ox, or some other of the brute creation. This, then, would be what He saves; and I have been deceived by the Truth, and led to boast of an honour which had been bestowed upon another. But if His Manhood is intellectual and nor without mind, let them cease to be thus really mindless. But, says such an one, the Godhead took the place of the human intellect. How does this touch me? For Godhead joined to flesh alone is not man, nor to soul alone, nor to both apart from intellect, which is the most essential part of man. Keep then the whole man, and mingle Godhead therewith, that you may benefit me in my completeness. But, he asserts, He could not contain Two perfect Natures. Not if you only look at Him in a bodily fashion. For a bushel measure will not hold two

⁴⁶⁹⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

⁴⁶⁹⁹ John iii. 13.

⁴⁷⁰⁰ John i. 3.

⁴⁷⁰¹ Ephes. iii. 17.

bushels, nor will the space of one body hold two or more bodies. But if you will look at what is mental and incorporeal, remember that I in my one personality can contain soul and reason and mind and the Holy Spirit; and before me this world, by which I mean the system of things visible and invisible, contained Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For such is the nature of intellectual Existences, that they can mingle with one another and with bodies, incorporeally and invisibly.

For many sounds are comprehended by one ear; and the eyes of many are occupied by the same visible objects, and the smell by odours; nor are the senses narrowed by each other, or crowded out, nor the objects of sense diminished by the multitude of the perceptions. But where is there mind of man or angel so perfect in comparison of the Godhead that the presence of the greater must crowd out the other? The light is nothing compared with the sun, nor a little damp compared with a river, that we must first do away with the lesser, and take the light from a house, or the moisture from the earth, to enable it to contain the greater and more perfect. For how shall one thing contain two completenesses, either the house, the sunbeam and the sun, or the earth, the moisture and the river? Here is matter for inquiry; for indeed the question is worthy of much consideration. Do they not know, then, that what is perfect by comparison with one thing may be imperfect by comparison with another, as a hill compared with a mountain, or a grain of mustard seed with a bean or any other of the larger seeds, although it may be called larger than any of the same kind? Or, if you like, an Angel compared with God, or a man with an Angel. So our mind is perfect and commanding, but only in respect of soul and body; not absolutely perfect; and a servant and a subject of God, not a sharer of His Princedom and honour. So Moses was a God to Pharaoh,⁴⁷⁰² but a servant of God,⁴⁷⁰³ as it is written; and the stars which illumine the night are hidden by the Sun, so much that you could not even know of their existence by daylight; and a little torch brought near a great blaze is neither destroyed, nor seen, nor extinguished; but is all one blaze, the bigger one prevailing over the other.

But, it may be said, our mind is subject to condemnation. What then of our flesh? Is that not subject to condemnation? You must therefore either set aside the latter on account of sin, or admit the former on account of salvation. If He assumed the worse that He might sanctify it by His incarnation, may He not assume the better that it may be sanctified by His becoming Man? If the clay was leavened and has become a new lump, O ye wise men, shall not the Image be leavened and mingled with God, being deified by His Godhead? And I will add this also: If the mind was utterly rejected, as prone to sin and subject to damnation, and for this reason He assumed a body but left out the mind, then there is an excuse for them who sin with the mind; for the witness of God—according to you—has shewn the impossibility of healing it. Let me state the greater results.

⁴⁷⁰² Exod. vii. 1.

⁴⁷⁰³ Num. xii. 7.

You, my good sir, dishonour my mind (you a Sarcolater, if I am an Anthropolater⁴⁷⁰⁴) that you may tie God down to the Flesh, since He cannot be otherwise tied; and therefore you take away the wall of partition. But what is my theory, who am but an ignorant man, and no Philosopher. Mind is mingled with mind, as nearer and more closely related, and through it with flesh, being a Mediator between God and carnality.

Further let us see what is their account of the assumption of Manhood, or the assumption of Flesh, as they call it. If it was in order that God, otherwise incomprehensible, might be comprehended, and might converse with men through His Flesh as through a veil, their mask and the drama which they represent is a pretty one, not to say that it was open to Him to converse with us in other ways, as of old, in the burning bush⁴⁷⁰⁵ and in the appearance of a man.⁴⁷⁰⁶ But if it was that He might destroy the condemnation by sanctifying like by like, then as He needed flesh for the sake of the flesh which had incurred condemnation, and soul for the sake of our soul, so, too, He needed mind for the sake of mind, which not only fell in Adam, but was the first to be affected, as the doctors say of illnesses. For that which received the command was that which failed to keep the command, and that which failed to keep it was that also which dared to transgress; and that which transgressed was that which stood most in need of salvation; and that which needed salvation was that which also He took upon Him. Therefore, Mind was taken upon Him. This has now been demonstrated, whether they like it or no, by, to use their own expression, geometrical and necessary proofs. But you are acting as if, when a man's eye had been injured and his foot had been injured in consequence, you were to attend to the foot and leave the eye uncared for; or as if, when a painter had drawn something badly, you were to alter the picture, but to pass over the artist as if he had succeeded. But if they, overwhelmed by these arguments, take refuge in the proposition that it is possible for God to save man even apart from mind, why, I suppose that it would be possible for Him to do so also apart from flesh by a mere act of will, just as He works all other things, and has wrought them without body. Take away, then, the flesh as well as the mind, that your monstrous folly may be complete. But they are deceived by the latter, and, therefore, they run to the flesh, because they do not know the custom of Scripture. We will teach them this also. For what need is there even to mention to those who know it, the fact that everywhere in Scripture he is called Man, and the Son of Man?

If, however, they rely on the passage, The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us,⁴⁷⁰⁷ and because of this erase the noblest part of Man (as cobblers do the thicker part of skins) that they may join together God and Flesh, it is time for them to say that God is God only of flesh, and not of

⁴⁷⁰⁴ The Apollinarians seem to have charged the Orthodox with being Anthropolaters, or worshippers of a mere Man. S.

Gregory retorts upon them that if so, they are worse themselves, being actually Sarcolaters, or worshippers of mere flesh, denying Mind to Him whom they adore as Lord and Saviour.

⁴⁷⁰⁵ Exod. iii. 2.

⁴⁷⁰⁶ Gen. xviii. 5.

⁴⁷⁰⁷ John i. 14.

souls, because it is written, “As Thou hast given Him power over all Flesh,”⁴⁷⁰⁸ and “Unto Thee shall all Flesh come;”⁴⁷⁰⁹ and “Let all Flesh bless His holy Name,”⁴⁷¹⁰ meaning every Man. Or, again, they must suppose that our fathers went down into Egypt without bodies and invisible, and that only the Soul of Joseph was imprisoned by Pharaoh, because it is written, “They went down into Egypt with threescore and fifteen Souls,”⁴⁷¹¹ and “The iron entered into his Soul,”⁴⁷¹² a thing which could not be bound. They who argue thus do not know that such expressions are used by Synecdoche, declaring the whole by the part, as when Scripture says that the young ravens call upon God,⁴⁷¹³ to indicate the whole feathered race; or Pleiades, Hesperus, and Arcturus⁴⁷¹⁴ are mentioned, instead of all the Stars and His Providence over them.

Moreover, in no other way was it possible for the Love of God toward us to be manifested than by making mention of our flesh, and that for our sake He descended even to our lower part. For that flesh is less precious than soul, everyone who has a spark of sense will acknowledge. And so the passage, The Word was made Flesh, seems to me to be equivalent to that in which it is said that He was made sin,⁴⁷¹⁵ or a curse⁴⁷¹⁶ for us; not that the Lord was transformed into either of these, how could He be? But because by taking them upon Him He took away our sins and bore our iniquities.⁴⁷¹⁷ This, then, is sufficient to say at the present time for the sake of clearness and of being understood by the many. And I write it, not with any desire to compose a treatise, but only to check the progress of deceit; and if it is thought well, I will give a fuller account of these matters at greater length.

But there is a matter which is graver than these, a special point which it is necessary that I should not pass over. I would they were even cut off that trouble you,⁴⁷¹⁸ and would reintroduce a second Judaism, and a second circumcision, and a second system of sacrifices. For if this be done, what hinders Christ also being born again to set them aside, and again being betrayed by Judas, and crucified and buried, and rising again, that all may be fulfilled in the same order, like the Greek system of cycles, in which the same revolutions of the stars bring round the same events? For what

⁴⁷⁰⁸ Ib. xvii. 2.

⁴⁷⁰⁹ Ps. lxv. 2.

⁴⁷¹⁰ Ib. cxlv. 21.

⁴⁷¹¹ Acts vii. 14.

⁴⁷¹² Ps. cv. 18.

⁴⁷¹³ Ps. cxlvii. 8.

⁴⁷¹⁴ Job. ix. 9.

⁴⁷¹⁵ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴⁷¹⁶ Gal. iii. 13.

⁴⁷¹⁷ Isa. liii. 7 LXX.

⁴⁷¹⁸ Galat. v. 12.

the method of selection is, in accordance with which some of the events are to occur and others to be omitted, let these wise men who glory in the multitude of their books shew us.

But since, puffed up by their theory of the Trinity, they falsely accuse us of being unsound in the Faith and entice the multitude, it is necessary that people should know that Apollinarius, while granting the Name of Godhead to the Holy Ghost, did not preserve the Power of the Godhead. For to make the Trinity consist of Great, Greater, and Greatest, as of Light, Ray, and Sun, the Spirit and the Son and the Father (as is clearly stated in his writings), is a ladder of Godhead not leading to Heaven, but down from Heaven. But we recognize God the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and these not as bare titles, dividing inequalities of ranks or of power, but as there is one and the same title, so there is one nature and one substance in the Godhead.

But if anyone who thinks we have spoken rightly on this subject reproaches us with holding communion with heretics, let him prove that we are open to this charge, and we will either convince him or retire. But it is not safe to make any innovation before judgment is given, especially in a matter of such importance, and connected with so great issues. We have protested and continue to protest this before God and men. And not even now, be well assured, should we have written this, if we had not seen that the Church was being torn asunder and divided, among their other tricks, by their present synagogue of vanity.⁴⁷¹⁹ But if anyone when we say and protest this, either from some advantage they will thus gain, or through fear of men, or monstrous littleness of mind, or through some neglect of pastors and governors, or through love of novelty and proneness to innovations, rejects us as unworthy of credit, and attaches himself to such men, and divides the noble body of the Church, he shall bear his judgment, whoever he may be,⁴⁷²⁰ and shall give account to God in the day of judgment.⁴⁷²¹ But if their long books, and their new Psalters, contrary to that of David, and the grace of their metres, are taken for a third Testament, we too will compose Psalms, and will write much in metre. For we also think we have the spirit of God,⁴⁷²² if indeed this is a gift of the Spirit, and not a human novelty. This I will that thou declare publicly, that we may not be held responsible, as overlooking such an evil, and as though this wicked doctrine received food and strength from our indifference.

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Against Apollinarius; The Second Letter to Cledonius. (Ep. CII.)

Forasmuch as many persons have come to your Reverence seeking confirmation of their faith, and therefore you have affectionately asked me to put forth a brief definition and rule of my opinion,

⁴⁷¹⁹ Ps. xxvi. 4 LXX.

⁴⁷²⁰ Galat. v. 10.

⁴⁷²¹ Matt. xii. 36.

⁴⁷²² 1 Cor. vii. 40.

I therefore write to your Reverence, what indeed you knew before, that I never have and never can honour anything above the Nicene Faith, that of the Holy Fathers who met there to destroy the Arian heresy; but am, and by God's help ever will be, of that faith; completing in detail that which was incompletely said by them concerning the Holy Ghost; for that question had not then been mooted, namely, that we are to believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are of one Godhead, thus confessing the Spirit also to be God. Receive then to communion those who think and teach thus, as I also do; but those who are otherwise minded refuse, and hold them as strangers to God and the Catholic Church. And since a question has also been mooted concerning the Divine Assumption of humanity, or Incarnation, state this also clearly to all concerning me, that I join in One the Son, who was begotten of the Father, and afterward of the Virgin Mary, and that I do not call Him two Sons, but worship Him as One and the same in undivided Godhead and honour. But if anyone does not assent to this statement, either now or hereafter, he shall give account to God at the day of judgment.

Now, what we object and oppose to their mindless opinion about His Mind is this, to put it shortly; for they are almost alone in the condition which they lay down, as it is through want of mind that they mutilate His mind. But, that they may not accuse us of having once accepted but of now repudiating the faith of their beloved Vitalius⁴⁷²³ which he handed in in writing at the request of the blessed Bishop Damasus of Rome, I will give a short explanation on this point also. For these men, when they are theologizing among their genuine disciples, and those who are initiated into their secrets, like the Manichæans among those whom they call the "Elect," expose the full extent of their disease, and scarcely allow flesh at all to the Saviour. But when they are refuted and pressed with the common answers about the Incarnation which the Scripture presents, they confess indeed the orthodox words, but they do violence to the sense; for they acknowledge the Manhood to be neither without soul nor without reason nor without mind, nor imperfect, but they bring in the Godhead to supply the soul and reason and mind, as though It had mingled Itself only with His flesh, and not with the other properties belonging to us men; although His sinlessness was far above us, and was the cleansing of our passions.

⁴⁷²³ Vitalius or Vitalis was one of the principal followers of Apollinarius, and by him was consecrated schismatical Bishop of Antioch, where, while yet orthodox, he had been ordained a priest by Meletius. But he quarrelled with his Bishop through jealousy of another priest, and then fell under the influence of Apollinarius. He was summoned to Rome to clear himself of the charge of heresy; and by a clever manipulation of language he produced a confession which the Pope, Damasus, accepted as orthodox; but the Pope remitted the whole case to Paulinus, who was at that time recognized by the Western Church as rightful Bishop. Vitalius, however, was unable to accept the test required, and seceded. On his return from Rome he had visited Nazianzus, where S. Gregory received him as a brother in the faith, though further acquaintance compelled him to withdraw from this position. Vitalius, while admitting that our Lord had both a human body and a human soul, denied Him a human mind; whose place, according to his teaching, was supplied by Divinity.

Thus, then, they interpret wrongly the words, But we have the Mind of Christ,⁴⁷²⁴ and very absurdly, when they say that His Godhead is the mind of Christ, and not understanding the passage as we do, namely, that they who have purified their mind by the imitation of the mind which the Saviour took of us, and, as far as may be, have attained conformity with it, are said to have the mind of Christ; just as they might be testified to have the flesh of Christ who have trained their flesh, and in this respect have become of the same body and partakers of Christ; and so he says “As we have borne the image of the earth⁴⁷²⁵ we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” And so they declare that the Perfect Man is not He who was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin;⁴⁷²⁶ but the mixture of God and Flesh. For what, say they, can be more perfect than this?

444 They play the same trick with the word that describes the Incarnation, viz.: He was made Man, explaining it to mean, not, He was in the human nature with which He surrounded Himself, according to the Scripture, He knew what was in man;⁴⁷²⁷ but teaching that it means, He consorted and conversed with men, and taking refuge in the expression which says that He was seen on Earth and conversed with Men.⁴⁷²⁸ And what can anyone contend further? They who take away the Humanity and the Interior Image cleanse by their newly invented mask only our outside,⁴⁷²⁹ and that which is seen; so far in conflict with themselves that at one time, for the sake of the flesh, they explain all the rest in a gross and carnal manner (for it is from hence that they have derived their second Judaism and their silly thousand years delight in paradise, and almost the idea that we shall resume again the same conditions after these same thousand years); and at another time they bring in His flesh as a phantom rather than a reality, as not having been subjected to any of our experiences, not even such as are free from sin; and use for this purpose the apostolic expression, understood and spoken in a sense which is not apostolic, that our Saviour was made in the likeness of Men and found in fashion as a Man,⁴⁷³⁰ as though by these words was expressed, not the human form, but some delusive phantom and appearance.

Since then these expressions, rightly understood, make for orthodoxy, but wrongly interpreted are heretical, what is there to be surprised at if we received the words of Vitalius in the more orthodox sense; our desire that they should be so meant persuading us, though others are angry at the intention of his writings? This is, I think, the reason why Damasus himself, having been subsequently better informed, and at the same time learning that they hold by their former explanations, excommunicated them and overturned their written confession of faith with an

⁴⁷²⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 16.

⁴⁷²⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 49.

⁴⁷²⁶ Heb. iv. 15.

⁴⁷²⁷ John ii. 25.

⁴⁷²⁸ Baruch iii. 37.

⁴⁷²⁹ Matt. xxiii. 25, 26.

⁴⁷³⁰ Phil. ii. 7.

Anathema; as well as because he was vexed at the deceit which he had suffered from them through simplicity.

Since, then, they have been openly convicted of this, let them not be angry, but let them be ashamed of themselves; and let them not slander us, but abase themselves and wipe off from their portals that great and marvellous proclamation and boast of their orthodoxy, meeting all who go in at once with the question and distinction that we must worship, not a God-bearing Man, but a flesh-bearing God. What could be more unreasonable than this, though these new heralds of truth think a great deal of the title? For though it has a certain sophistical grace through the quickness of its antithesis, and a sort of juggling quackery grateful to the uninstructed, yet it is the most absurd of absurdities and the most foolish of follies. For if one were to change the word *Man* or *Flesh* into *God* (the first would please us, the second them), and then were to use this wonderful antithesis, so divinely recognized, what conclusion should we arrive at? That we must worship, not a God-bearing Flesh, but a Man-bearing God. O monstrous absurdity! They proclaim to us to-day a wisdom hidden ever since the time of Christ—a thing worthy of our tears. For if the faith began thirty years ago, when nearly four hundred years had passed since Christ was manifested, vain all that time will have been our Gospel, and vain our faith; in vain will the Martyrs have borne their witness, and in vain have so many and so great Prelates presided over the people; and Grace is a matter of metres and not of the faith.

And who will not marvel at their learning, in that on their own authority they divide the things of Christ, and assign to His Manhood such sayings as He was born, He was tempted, He was hungry, He was thirsty, He was wearied, He was asleep; but reckon to His Divinity such as these: He was glorified by Angels, He overcame the Tempter, He fed the people in the wilderness, and He fed them in such a manner, and He walked upon the sea; and say on the one hand that the “Where have ye laid Lazarus?”⁴⁷³¹ belongs to us, but the loud voice “Lazarus, Come Forth”⁴⁷³² and the raising him that had been four days dead, is above our nature; and that while the “He was in an Agony, He was crucified, He was buried,” belongs to the Veil, on the other hand, “He was confident, He rose again, He ascended,” belong to the Inner Treasure; and then they accuse us of introducing two natures, separate or conflicting, and of dividing the supernatural and wondrous Union. They ought, either not to do that of which they accuse us, or not to accuse us of that which they do; so at least if they are resolved to be consistent and not to propound at once their own and their opponents’ principles. Such is their want of reason; it conflicts both with itself and with the truth to such an extent that they are neither conscious nor ashamed of it when they fall out with themselves. Now, if anyone thinks that we write all this willingly and not upon compulsion, and that we are dissuading from unity, and not doing our utmost to promote it, let him know that he is very much mistaken, and has not made at all a good guess at our desires, for nothing is or ever has been more valuable

⁴⁷³¹ John xi. 34.

⁴⁷³² Ib. xi. 43.

in our eyes than peace, as the facts themselves prove; though their actions and brawlings against us altogether exclude unanimity.

Ep. CXXV. To Olympius.

Even hoar hairs have something to learn; and old age, it would seem, cannot in all respects be trusted for wisdom. I at any rate, knowing better than anyone, as I did, the thoughts and the heresy of the Apollinarians, and seeing that their folly was intolerable; yet thinking that I could tame them by patience and soften them by degrees, I let my hopes make me eager to attain this object. But, as it seems, I overlooked the fact that I was making them worse, and injuring the Church by my untimely philosophy. For gentleness does not put bad men out of countenance. And now if it had been possible for me to teach you this myself, I should not have hesitated, you may be sure, even to undertake a journey beyond my strength to throw myself at the feet of your Excellency. But since my illness has brought me too far, and it has become necessary for me to try the hot baths of Xanxaris at the advice of my medical men, I send a letter to represent me. These wicked and utterly abandoned men have dared, in addition to all their other misdeeds, either to summon, or to make a bad use of the passage (I am not prepared to say precisely which) of certain Bishops, deprived by the whole Synod of the Eastern and Western Church; and, in violation of all Imperial Ordinances, and of your commands, to confer the name of Bishop on a certain individual of their own misbelieving and deceitful crew; encouraged to do so, as I believe, by nothing so much as my great infirmity; for I must mention this. If this is to be tolerated, your Excellency will tolerate it, and I too will bear it, as I have often before. But if it is serious, and not to be endured by our most august Emperors, pray punish what has been done—though more mildly than such madness merits.

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Division II.

Correspondence with Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Cæsarea.

Ep. I. To Basil His Comrade.

(Perhaps about A.D. 357 or 358; in answer to a letter which is not now extant.)

I have failed, I confess, to keep my promise. I had engaged even at Athens, at the time of our friendship and intimate connection there (for I can find no better word for it), to join you in a life of philosophy. But I failed to keep my promise, not of my own will, but because one law prevailed against another; I mean the law which bids us honour our parents overpowered the law of our