

The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter

1. Greetings in the Lord from Gregory to his very precious and God-beloved brother and fellow-presbyter Cledonius.

2. We want to learn what the piece of novelty going round the Church is. Its effect is to let every “passer-by” (to used the biblical phrase)¹ scatter² the well-ordered flock at will, despoil it in stealthy onslaughts, or, rather rustle it by outrageous teachings. If the present attackers had indeed any matter of faith to condemn us on they ought not to have ventured upon such a charge in such a way without notice. There ought first to have been an attempt at persuasion or a willingness to be persuaded, since even we have some reputation for fearing God, for laboring on behalf of the Word and for having benefited the Church. At that point, if there had indeed to be any innovating, those who offered the insult might have had an excuse. But since our faith has been proclaimed both out loud and in writing, both in this place and further afield, both in danger and out of danger, why do some undertake such attacks while others take no notice?

3. Dreadful though it is if they instill their own perverse views into more naïve souls by the agency of more mischievous people, it is not so dreadful as their telling the lie that we share their views and their sentiments. They bait the hook and use it as a device to accomplish their base intent, making our simplicity, in regarding them as

brothers and no less, fuel for their mischief. Not only that: they are saying, I understand, that they have been accepted by the Western council, which, as everybody knows, had earlier condemned them.³ If the Apollinarians indeed were accepted, either just now or in the past, they are to prove the fact and we shall acquiesce. Clearly they will have agreed with orthodox belief: their success will have been entirely contingent on so doing. But they must demonstrate the fact either by a decree of the council or by letters of communion: that is the rule of councils. But if this is just words, an invention to lend them specious dignity and allow them, by using reliable characters, to take advantage of the credulity of ordinary folk, instruct them to be silent and rebut them. It is our opinion that doing so would be entirely appropriate to your manner of life and your soundness in doctrine.

4. People are not to deceive, nor are they to be deceived, into accepting a human being without a mind as the, in their language, "Lordly Man,"⁴ but to use better language, as "our Lord and God." For we do not part the human being from the Godhead; no, we affirm and teach one and the same God and Son, at first not man but alone and pre-eternal,⁵ unmixed with body and all that belongs to the body, but finally human being too, assumed for our salvation, the same possible in flesh, impassible in Godhead, bounded in body, boundless in spirit, earthly and heavenly, visible and known spiritually, finite and infinite: so that by the same, whole man and God, the whole human being fallen under sin might be fashioned anew.

5. Whoever does not accept Holy Mary as the Mother of God has no relation with the Godhead.⁶

Whoever says that he was channeled, as it were, through the Virgin but not formed within her divinely and humanly ("divinely" because without a husband, "humanly" because by law of conception) is likewise godless.

Whoever says the human being was formed and then God put him on to wear him is condemned: this is not God's birth but the avoidance of birth.

Whoever imports two "sons," one from God the Father, a second from the mother and not one and the same Son, loses the adoption⁷ promised to those who believe aright. Two natures there are, God and man (since there are both soul and body), but not two "sons" or two "Gods"; though Paul spoke of the "inner" and "outer" man,⁸ we are not dealing with two human beings. In sum: the constituents of our Savior are different *things* (since invisible and visible, timeless and temporal, are not the same), but not different *people*—God forbid! The pair is one by coalescence, God being "in-manned" and man "deified"—or however we are to put it.⁹ I say "different things" meaning the reverse of what is the case in the Trinity. There we have "others" in order not to confuse the subjects or hypostases, but not other *things*: the three are one and the same thing *qua* Godhead.

Whoever speaks of "activation by grace" as happens in a prophet, but does not speak of "joining" and "being joined" is devoid of the higher kind of action and full, rather, of its contrary.¹⁰

Whoever does not worship the Crucified is to be anathema and ranked with the God-slaughters.¹¹

Whoever says he was made perfect by his works, or that, in the way the heathen intrude aliens into the civil register, he was deemed worthy of adoption after his baptism or after his resurrection from the dead, is to be anathema: what begins, or progresses or is rendered complete is not God; even though he is spoken of in this way owing to his gradual self-disclosure.¹²

Whoever says his flesh has now been discarded and his Godhead denuded of body, but denies that he exists along with what he assumed and will come with it, will not see the glory of the Parousia. Where is his body now, if not with the one who assumed it? It was not, after all, stored away in the Sun, along the lines of the Manichees' ravings, to be honored with dishonor. Nor was it dispersed in the atmosphere and dissolved like living sound or perfume fading away or lightning speeding without stay. What are we to make of his being handled after his resurrection,¹³ or of his being seen at some future time by those who have pierced him?¹⁴ Godhead,

indeed, is of itself invisible. Yet he will come, along with his body I say, just such an one as he was when seen or revealed for the benefit of the disciples on the mount,¹⁵ the Godhead predominating over frail flesh. We repudiate suspicion by saying the latter just as we correct innovation by writing the former.¹⁶

Whoever says that his flesh descended from heaven,¹⁷ but had no source here amongst us, is to be anathema. "The second man from heaven,"¹⁸ "As the heavenly such also the heavenly,"¹⁹ "No one has ascended into heaven save him who descended from heaven, the son of man,"²⁰ and any other texts of this kind are to be reckoned as applying to the union with the heavenly in the same way as "Through Christ all things have come into being,"²¹ and "Christ dwells in our hearts"²²: not in terms of God made manifest but of God as he is experienced only by the mind. Just as the natures are blended²³ so too are the titles which mutually transfer by the principle of their natural togetherness.²⁴

Whoever has set his hope on a human being without mind is actually mindless himself and unworthy of being saved in his entirety. The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved. Had half of Adam fallen, what was assumed and is being saved would have been half too; but if the whole fell he is united to the whole of what was born and is being saved wholly. They are not, then, to begrudge us our entire salvation or to fit out a Savior with only bones and sinews and the picture of a human being. If the human being is without a soul—why, that is what the Arians say too, intending to apply the suffering to the Godhead, the mover of the body also being the sufferer! If he has a soul, but if he has no mental consciousness, can he be human? Man is not an animal without mind! The form, "the tabernacle," must have been human, but the soul might be a horse's soul or a cow's or some other unintelligent beast's. That, at any rate, will be what is being saved! I was cheated by the Truth. One does the bragging, another got the honor. But if the human being is mentally conscious, if he is not without mind, they are to stop behaving in so actually mindless a way.

6. *But the Godhead made up for the mind*, they say. So what is that to me? Godhead with only flesh, or even with only soul, or with both of them, is not man if lacking mind which is the even better part of man. So keep the human being whole and mix in the Godhead, so that you may benefit me completely. *But he does not have room for two complete things*, they say, well, no, since you are looking at them from a bodily point of view. A pint-sized pot does not have room for a quart, and space for one body will not accommodate two or more bodies. But if you are looking at them as things ideal and incorporeal, notice that I myself have had room for soul, reason and mind, and Holy Spirit as well, and that before me the cosmos, this structure, I mean, of visibles and invisibles had room for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the nature of things ideal to be mixed with one another and with bodies in an indivisible and incorporeal way. After all, one person's hearing can accommodate several sounds, several people's eyes the same sights, several noses the same smells, without the senses being cramped or squeezed by one another or the things "sensed" being diminished by the amount of perception.

7. Where is there a human or angelic mind that is so complete a thing in comparison with the Godhead's mind that the presence of the greater squeezes out the other? A beam in comparison with the Sun, a drop of moisture in comparison with a river, are not so complete that we must get rid of the small—beam from a house, moisture from the ground—ere we can accommodate the larger and more complete. Let us consider the way a house can have room for two complete things—the Sun's radiance and the Sun—or the earth for some moisture and a river: the matter deserves a good deal of thought. Do they not know that a thing relatively complete when compared with one thing is incomplete when compared with something else (a hill, say, with a mountain, a grain of mustard with a bean or some other large seed), even if it is called "larger" than its fellows? Or, if you like, an angel compared with God, a man with an angel? Our mind, therefore, is a complete thing, governing the soul

and body, but not absolutely complete; it is God's servant and under his control, neither a partner in government nor an equal in worth. Moses too, after all, was, as the Bible puts it, "God" to Pharaoh²⁵ though he was God's minister.²⁶ The stars light up in the night but are so hidden by the Sun that by day even their existence goes unnoticed. A little lamp next to a blazing pyre does not go out, does not shine out, nor does it part company with the pyre; no, the stronger prevails and all is pyre.

8. *But our mind is damned, they say.* What about the flesh? Is not that damned? You should either get rid of the flesh on account of its sin, or add mind for the sake of its salvation. If the meaner element has been assumed so that it may be hallowed by the "fleshing," will not the higher be assumed so that it may be hallowed by "in-manning"? If, my clever friends, the clay has been leavened and a "new lump"²⁷ created, will not the image be leavened and be blended anew with God, deified by the Godhead? We shall add this: If the mind has been utterly disdained as productive of sin and damned, and that is why body has been assumed and mind left out, those whose offenses involve their minds have an excuse, since the testimony of God has clearly shown their untreatability. Shall I mention the major point? You, my good sir, abuse my mind like the "flesh-worshipper" you are (since I am a "man-worshipper"!), meaning to bind a God, incapable of being bound in any other way, to flesh. That is why you abolish "the middle wall."²⁸ What answer shall I give, unlearned as I am and no philosopher? Mind mingles with mind, closer to Godhead as it is and more familiar, through it mediating between Godhead and the grossness of flesh.²⁹

9. Let us see then what account they give of the "in-manning" ("fleshing" they call it!). If it is to encompass God who is otherwise incapable of being encompassed, so that he may have "dealings with humans"³⁰ under a covering of flesh, their mask, their drama of pretense, is neat—I will refrain from mentioning that it was quite possible for him to converse in the way he had done before in the burning bush³¹ and in human form.³² If it was to undo the con-

demnation of sin through hallowing like by like that he required flesh (because flesh had been condemned), and likewise soul (because soul had been condemned), then he needed mind too: because mind not only fell in Adam, but it was the "protopath," to use the term the physicians use in the case of first ailments. The very thing that had accepted the commandment did not keep the commandment. The very thing that did not keep it ventured its transgression. The very thing that transgressed stood in special need of salvation. The very thing that needed salvation was assumed. Therefore mind was assumed.

10. The matter has now been demonstrated, whether they like it or not, by necessary and "geometrical" (as they themselves say) proofs. You would be doing very nearly the same thing were you, when a man's eye has gone wrong and his foot been injured, to heal his foot but leave the eye unattended to. Or were you, when a painter has painted something badly, to change his picture but treat him as though he had done a good job and leave it at that. But if, under pressure from these arguments, they take refuge in the possibility of God's saving man even without mind, why that is indeed quite possible without flesh either, by his merely willing it, in the way he effects everything else and has effected it, incorporeally. So abolish the flesh too along with the mind, to make your own absence of mind complete! However, they are deceived by the letter; that is why they head for the flesh in ignorance of the conventions of Scripture. We shall give then a lesson on this point too.

11. Knowledgeable people do not need to be told that throughout Scripture he is called "man" and "son of man." If, though, they insist on the text, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,"³³ and make that the reason for scraping away man's noblest feature (in the way leather-dressers scrape the thicker hides) so that they can glue God to flesh, then it is high time to tell them that God must be God of "flesh" (in the plural) alone, and not souls as well, because of the Biblical texts, "As you have given him power over all flesh"³⁴ and "To you shall all flesh come"³⁵ and "Let all flesh bless his holy

name"³⁶—"all flesh" i.e., "every human being." Or again, our fathers must have gone down into Egypt disembodied and invisible, and only Joseph's soul been fettered by Pharaoh because of the text, "They went down into Egypt to the number of seventy-five souls,"³⁷ and "His soul" (a thing incapable of fettering) "passed through iron."³⁸ People who say this are ignorant of the fact that the words are used here by synecdoche, the whole being indicated by a part, like "The ravens' young" (meaning the whole race of birds) "call upon God."³⁹ The Pleiades, the Evening Star and the Bear⁴⁰ are also mentioned and stand for all stars and their ordering.

12. As well as that, God's love for us could not have been revealed in any way other than by mention of "flesh," meaning he came down for us, down to a meaner level. Everybody of sound sense will agree that flesh is worth less than soul. The text, then, "The Word was made flesh"⁴¹ seems to me to be equivalent to speaking of his being made "sin" and "curse."⁴² Not that the Lord was changed into these things—how could he have been?—but by accepting these things he "assumed our acts of transgressions and carried our maladies."⁴³ That, then, is enough for the present, because the point is clear and easily taken in by ordinary people, and we have not, after all, written this with the intention of composing a treatise but of checking error. We shall, if you would like, publish a more complete and more extensive discussion on the subject.

13. More intolerable than this, and the very thing that must not be missed out: "Would that those who are upsetting you might mutilate themselves!"⁴⁴ introducing, as they do, a second Judaism, a second circumcision, and a second set of sacrifices.⁴⁵ In which case, what is to prevent Christ's being born again for the annulling of these very things, and his being betrayed again by Judas, being crucified, buried and rising again, so that the same sequence of events will all recur in accordance with the pagan notion of cycles, when the same movement of the stars bring round the same things? What a piece of arbitrariness: that a particular past event should have happened, another have been disregarded! Let the clever

people, who pride themselves on the number of their books,⁴⁶ prove it!

14. But since they are "puffed up"⁴⁷ by their treatise on the Trinity, telling the lie that we are not sound on the faith⁴⁸ and enticing ordinary people, I must tell you that Apollinarius, though he bestows the name of Godhead on the Holy Spirit, has not kept secure the power of the Godhead. He makes the Trinity consist of a Great Spirit, a Greater Son and a Greatest Father, as it were of beam, radiance and Sun (as is clearly written in his texts), a ladder of Godhead not leading up to heaven but taking one down from heaven.⁴⁹ But we recognize the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as God, and these as not being mere appellations determining inequalities of ranks or powers, but we recognize that as there is one and the same title so is there one and the same nature, substance and power of Godhead.

15. Anyone who thinks this said aright but who accuses us of communion with heretics is to prove the act ours, and either we shall convince or take our leave. Prior to judgment it is dangerous to make any innovation at all, especially in so important a matter involving such important issues. So we call God and men to witness this, and we bear witness ourselves. Be assured that we should not, even now, have written this had we not seen the Church rent asunder and divided both by other monstrosities and by the current "assembly of vanity."⁵⁰

16. But anyone who, despite our utterances and attestations, whether because of some particular needs or human fear, whether because of extraordinary triviality of mind, whether because hitherto unshepherded and ungoverned, or because of favoritism towards the outlandish and having a readiness for novelties; anyone, I say, who discounts us with scorn as unworthy of consideration, but sets his course toward such folk, dividing the noble body of the Church, shall carry his own condemnation,⁵¹ whoever he may be, and shall render account to God on the day of judgment.⁵² But if the third testament is to be long treatises, modern psalters singing

in opposition to David,⁵³ and metrical gratification, we too will write psalms, and in quantity, and will versify, since we too think we have God's Spirit,⁵⁴ if, indeed, the Spirit's grace and not human innovation is involved. I want you to bear witness to these matters before ordinary people so that we are not burdened with the complaint of disregarding evil like this, and that owing to our negligence a wicked dogma has found pasture and acquired strength.

NOTES

¹Ps 80(79):12(13).

²Cf. Jn 10:12.

³The Roman Church under Damasus, for church-political reasons connected with the leadership of the Church in Antioch, initially accepted associates of Apollinarius, including Vitalius in 375 (see below Letter II, para 6) though never Apollinarius's views. Condemnation of these followed from 377 onwards (see the Roman documents collected in H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* [Freiburg-i-B 1976], nos. 146, 149, 159; cf. also Sozomen *H.E.* 6, 25).

⁴A designation of Christ which turns up in a number of passages in both the Latin and Greek writers from the fourth century onwards. It seems to have been favored at Antioch and not of itself controversial. Gregory, though cool towards it, does not disown it. For a full history of the term, see Alois Grillmeier's essay in *Fragmente zur Christologie* (Freiburg i B, 1997), 152–214.

⁵Cf. Ps 55(54):19(20); Ps 74(73):12; Heb 1:2.

⁶The disclaimer cast in the form of anathema was taken over from conciliar confessions and had become common in public professions of faith; cf. e.g. Apollinarius' Letter to Jovian (H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* [Tübingen, 1904], 250f.) and below Vitalius' profession of faith. The series of anathematisms begins with the title of the BVM, which was to become a watchword in the Nestorian controversy. Prior to that, its most striking occurrences are in the formula of faith presented at the council which met in Antioch in 324, prefatory to the council at Nicaea (325); the complaint of the Emperor Julian against Christians: "You are continually calling Mary 'Mother of God'"; and here, where the emphasis is on both nouns: *mother*, because real birth is affirmed, as against the "Gnostic" claim of the next anathema, *God*, because her Son is God consubstantial with his Father.

⁷Eph 1:5 etc.

⁸2 Cor 4:16.

⁹Gregory rejects Diodore's dualism of sons but accepts the duality of natures. He does not say whether the duality continues after their "coalescence," a term favored by Apollinarians and to be rejected by the Church at large as implying a dissolution of

both natures. The terminology and the arguments of subsequent hot christological discussion are hinted at here innocently.

¹⁰The word for "joining" which Gregory insists on, has the same root as the word for "conjunction" that later christology is to reject as too weak to denote true incarnation. Gregory does not, I think, exclude the analogy of prophetic inspiration in the case of Christ; he requires that it be tempered by a stronger analogy of composition.

¹¹The Jews who put Jesus to death.

¹²Christ "grew in wisdom and understanding" (Lk 2:52) but this does not, for Gregory, imply that he was an "adopted son." Whether any Christian theologian of standing ever maintained such a view is dubious. Perhaps Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, deposed 268, either did so or came near to it.

¹³Lk 24:50.

¹⁴Zech 12:10; Jn 19:37.

¹⁵Mt 17:2 and parr.

¹⁶I.e. both flesh=manhood and Godhead are to be mentioned. For the idea that the Godhead predominates cf. *Oration* 29, 19.

¹⁷Vitalius rejects this expressly in his profession of faith, see below.

¹⁸1 Cor 15:47.

¹⁹1 Cor 15:48.

²⁰Jn 3:13.

²¹Cf. Jn 1:3.

²²Eph 3:17.

²³The earlier term, "union," was subsequently favored by the Church as a description of the relation of the two natures in Christ, but not the term "blending" (see above on "coalescence").

²⁴The "communicatio idiomatum," so that it may be said, since they are one and the same subject, that Jesus created the world and that God died on the Cross.

²⁵Ex 7:1.

²⁶Josh 1:15.

²⁷1 Cor 5:7.

²⁸Eph 2:14.

²⁹Divine incarnation, we may interpret Gregory as saying, is possible because of an affinity between divine and human intellect cf. *Oration* 29, 19 above, page 86.

³⁰Bar 3:38.

³¹Ex 3:2.

³²Gen 18:1ff; 32:24.

³³Jn 1:14.

³⁴Jn 17:2.

³⁵Ps 65(64):2(3).

³⁶Ps 145(144):21.

³⁷Acts 7:14.

³⁸Ps 105(104):18.

³⁹Ps 147(146):9.

⁴⁰Job 38:31f.

⁴¹Jn 1:14.

⁴²Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13.

⁴³Cf. Is 53:4; 1 Pet 2:24.

⁴⁴Gal 5:12.

⁴⁵I do not understand what teaching of Apollinarius this points to: certainly his alleged millenarianism, but why should that imply that "we repeat the same things" (see Letter two para. 5)? Perhaps the argument is that if there is to be a first resurrection of the just followed by a 1,000-year reign of Christ, then all events are in principle to be repeated. Like the suggestion above that Apollinarius taught that Christ had brought his flesh down from heaven, this is no doubt mostly "smear."

⁴⁶Such books do not survive.

⁴⁷1 Cor 8:1.

⁴⁸Cf. Titus 1:13.

⁴⁹Cf. Apollinarius' letter to Basil (Basil. Ep. 363) where the Son is spoken of as "reduced light" in relation to the Father's light. As we have only Gregory's version of what Apollinarius said, we do not know exactly what he meant. It would be quite in keeping with Nicene teaching to speak of the Father as "greater" than the Son *qua* cause, and similarly of the Son as "greater" than the Spirit. Perhaps, though, Apollinarius simply used the by now antiquated illustration (beam-radiance-Sun) which Gregory "smears" as implying "Arianism."

⁵⁰Ps 26(25):4.

⁵¹Gal 5:10.

⁵²Mt 12:36.

⁵³Apollinarius had a high reputation as a skilled and popular hymnographer (see Sozomen *HE* 6,25).

⁵⁴1 Cor 7:40.

LETTER 102

The Second Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter

1. Since many are approaching your devout self, seeking a full explanation on a matter of faith, you kindly asked us for our view as a concise rule and standard. Which is why we write to your devout self what you knew even before this letter: that we cannot esteem, and never have esteemed anything more highly than the creed of the holy fathers assembled at Nicaea for the condemnation of the Arian heresy. That faith we belong to, and with God's help, shall belong to, with the addition to the article on the Holy Spirit of what they left out,¹ because the point was not mooted then: because recognizing, as we do, the Holy Spirit too as God, we must acknowledge Father, Son and Holy Spirit as of one Godhead. So with those who hold and teach this view you should be in communion, since we are too, and should repudiate those of a different persuasion and treat them as strangers to the Catholic Church.

2. Since a question is being mooted concerning the divine "inmaning," or "fleshing,"² you should expressly declare to all, in reference to ourselves, that we treat the Son of God begotten of the Father and thereafter of the Virgin Mary as a single item, and that we do not name two sons but worship one and the same Son in undivided Godhead and honor. Whoever does not agree with this, whether now or later, will account to God on the day of judgment.³

3. Our objection, then, and counter-argument to their mindless opinion on the mind, in brief is as follows: they are almost alone