Fragments of Book 3 - Against Theodore

Cyril of Alexandria (c. AD 376–444)

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Introduction

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA — FROM THE THIRD BOOK AGAINST THEODORE BISHOP OF MOPSUESTIA
[Translated by P. E. Pusey]

which begins
For burdensome, I suppose, are our words. Hear therefore from us too. Understand, O man, the depth of the Mystery, go along the straight way of the aim of the sacred Scriptures. For one thing and another is Godhead and flesh or manhood, as far as regards the plan of their properties. Since how has the Word being God been made as we, albeit abiding what He was? Yet grant Him His flesh by a Union inseverable, bare Him not of the Veil, for thus will you worship One Son, consubstantial with the Father Divinely, the Same consubstantial to us too humanly. To them who chuse thus to think will Christ turn the knowledge of the Mystery Him ward. For the nature of man which was in Christ was both honoured and hallowed. For that in regard to His Being He would neither be in need of Baptism nor of partaking |351 the Holy Ghost, the fact that He is Bestower of the Spirit will be sufficient to prove.

S. Cyril in his second Book against Theodore of Mopsuestia, But I think that this, viz. that of Christ alone the Saviour of all is it said by the God-inspired Scripture that He was born in the flesh, shews that being God He was made in our likeness. I mean something of this sort: For no one receives one who would say either of the all-wise Moses, or of one of the Saints that he was born in the flesh of the Jews, or of a woman: for no one has any other birth, for of flesh is flesh mother. But if Christ be said to be in the flesh of the Jews, i. e., of a woman, the addition of in the flesh has some wise meaning and replete with declarations of things necessary for the hearers. For in order that we may not suppose that the Nature of the Word, that is, His Godhead, had a beginning of being that It was in the flesh and of flesh, the phrase in the flesh must be taken cautiously and in its necessary meaning. For being God by Nature, and Very Son of God the Father, He was made in likeness of men and made His own the flesh which was of the holy Virgin.

for he wrote thus in his second book against Theodore, But I would fain ask him what he says that unity of Person is. For if he says that the Only-Begotten God the Word Incarnate is One Son, One will be the Person of the Son: but if he altogether distinguish and say that

One is said to be and is Son in truth, and one by grace, and to the One gives the glory and the appellation of Godhead and the bare name alone of sonship: but to the other that he receives it as from Another and a Superior, and One so exalted and in Excellency, as is God above man, what room will there be for unity of person, a thing that I know not how it is put forth by him? |352 S. Cyril patriarch of Alexandria against Theodore. Since then 'it has become the own body of the Word which quickeneth all,' it too is quickening: has it not therefore ascended up above the definitions of its nature? for the Word out of God the Father has largely placed in His Body the operation of His quickening might, so that it should have power to quicken the dead and to heal the sick: just as fire approaching a vessel of brass or of other matter, changes it to its own might and working.

The same Cyril from his second book.

The words of Theodore. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Let us consider then who the man is in regard to whom he is astonished and marvels that the Only-Begotten has deigned to be mindful of and visit. Yet that it is not said of every one, has been shewn above; that it is not of any one you please, this too is certain. To omit all things, let us take the Apostle's witness which is more trustworthy than all . The Apostle therefore writes to the Hebrews telling of Christ and, confirming His Person which was not well received among them, thus says, But a certain one somewhere testified on this wise saying, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou loweredst him a little below the angels, with glory and honour Thou crownedst him and didst set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou didst put all things under his feet. And having spoken the testimony he |353 interpreting it proceeded, But in subjecting all things He left nothing not subject: yet we see not at present all things subjected to him. And teaching us who the man is, since it was doubtful in the words put in blessed David, he added, But we see Jesus lowered a little below the angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.

If therefore we are taught out of the Gospels that it was to the Lord that blessed David said all that are in the psalm &c, both that Thou art mindful, and Thou visitest and Thou loweredst and Thou subjectedst; and out of the Apostle learn that it was Jesus of Whom David speaking says both that He is mindful of Him and that He visited Him, yea also that He subjected all things to Him, when He had lowered Him a little below the Angels; cease ye now at last from your shamelessness, knowing what is right. For ye see (O most wicked of men) how vast the difference of natures in that the one is astounded for that He deigns to be mindful of man and to visit him and to make him partaker of the other things whereof He made him partaker; the other on the contrary marvels, that he hath been vouchsafed to be a partaker of so great things above his nature: and the one is marvelled at as bestowing a kindness and giving great things and above the nature of him who obtains it; the other, obtaining the kindness and receiving from Him greater things than he is."

S. CYRIL

Be ye sober from your wine, may one cry to them who are thus astray. Put, o man, a door and bolt on thy tongue, cease lifting up your horn on high and speaking unrighteousness against God. How long dost thou insult Christ who endures it? Keep in mind what is written by Divine Paul, Thus sinning against the brethren and smiting their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. And to say something out of the |354 prophetic books, Sodom was justified by thee: thou hast surpassed the talk of the pagans, which they made against Christ, deeming the Cross foolishness, thou hast shewn the charges against Jewish pride to be a nothing. Thou presumest to lower and (as far as pertains to thee) thou draggest down to dishonour Him Who sitteth in the Thrones above and together with God the Father hath the same seat. For Him Who rose from the dead is it that the most wise Paul says is sitting on the Thrones of Godhead. For he said, We have such an High Priest Who sitteth on the Right Hand of the Throne of Majesty in the highest, Who is above all princedom and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that to come: for to Him every knee boweth and every tongue confesseth that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. And who is He Who is in this case as being God?

The same again explaineth who is the priest of His Mysteries: for he said that He emptied Himself, was made in likeness of man and found in fashion as a man and abased Himself made obedient unto death, yea the death of the Cross. Every knee therefore of heavenly and earthly and neath the earth bendeth to Him Who bare the Cross: Whom the adversary casting into the mere and alone measures of the human nature, says was accounted worthy of mindfulness and visiting from God the Word, when surely he ought to know and mind that God the Word was not another Son apart and by Himself from Him who is (as he says) man of the seed of David; but God the Word Himself out of God the Father was made as we, i. e. man, did not rather deem worthy of visiting and mindfulness some other than He.

And out of the same book.

THEODORE

"Will they now cease from their shameless contest? will they give over empty contention blushing before the proof of what has been said? for he said, Bringing many sons unto glory. Lo therefore the Apostle co-numbering |355 in the rank of sonship with the rest the man that was assumed not for that he partakes of sonship in like manner as they, but in regard that he assumed in like manner the grace of sonship, the Godhead alone possessing sonship by Nature . For it is certain that the glory of sonship is in him specially beyond others on account of the Unity that he has with Him. Whence in the very word too that means Son, he too is in like manner included. But they argue with us, If ye say two things perfect, we shall surely be also saying Two sons. But lo he is called son too by himself in the divine Scripture, without the Godhead, co-numbered with the rest of men, and we do not say Two sons. But One Son there rightly is in our confession, seeing that division of natures must needs remain and union of person be kept indissoluble."

CYRIL. Fie the madness! He knew not the manifold depth of the mystery of Christ who has trusted in words so cold and childish. But that he no wise understandeth the force of the Scripture proposed, but leaveth the right way and goes off again to the wicked aim put forth by himself, we forthwith teach. For that before all things his aim is, to want to prove that a mere man is co-seated with the Father and to be worshipped as God by every creature, himself shall come in as witness. For numbering Him with those who are sons by grace and the multitude of men, he argues that the. Godhead of the Word has alone the glory of true sonship, all but finding fault with Him Who for our sakes was pleased to suffer emptying: or haply even casting his own base madness on the disciple who says, And the Word |356 was made flesh. We must know therefore that although he somewhere says one and not rather two sons, casting out altogether him who (as he says) is of the seed of David from being God and Son, he refers the glory of true sonship to only God the Word Who is forth of God the Father. This is nought else (as I said) than not to take on Him the measure of human nature, but utterly to destroy the Economy whereby we were both saved and have passed from death and sin and have laid down the yoke of the devil's oppression.

Theodore from the same book. "Let none be deceived by the craft of the questionings. For it were a wicked thing to put down so great a crowd of witnesses (as the Apostle said) and, deceived by cunning questionings, to join the side of the opponents. But what are the ques-

tions which they artfully ask? 'Is Mary mother of man or God's mother?' and, Is He Who was crucified, God or man?' But of that there has been a clear solution in these things which we have said before in the replies which were made to the questions: nevertheless let that be said even now which one ought to briefly reply in order that no occasion be left them for their cunning. When therefore they ask, 'Is Mary mother of man or God's mother?' let answer be made them, Both; one from the nature of the thing, the other by reference. For she is mother of man by nature, because he was man in the womb of Mary, who also proceeded thence: but mother of God because God was in the man who was born, not circumscribed within him by Nature, but in him in the affection of the will. Hence it is right to reply, Both, but not in like wise. For not as man took in the womb a beginning of his being, did God the Word too, for He was before every creature. Hence it is right that both be said, each according to their proper notion. |357

"The same answer is to be made if they ask, 'Was God crucified or man? Both, but not in like wise: for the one was crucified, as both undergoing the Passion and fastened to the wood and holden of the Jews; the other because He was with him after the reason given above." And forthwith he goes on adding hereto that man having God indwelling him was crucified.

S. CYRIL

What are you saying, o mighty man? was the holy Virgin mother of God because God was in what was born of her, indwelling in mere good-pleasure of the will? dost thou call that union? then when the Word being God makes His habitation in ourselves too (for He dwells in the souls of the saints through the Holy Ghost), dost thou confess that in like wise ourselves too have union with Him? Where then will any one see the marvel of the mystery of Christ? For so long as God the Word is believed to have been made man as we, truly marvellous is the Mystery and one will wonder at it deservedly and intensely ; but if He be said to dwell in a man in mere good-pleasure of the will, the fact of the economy has another plan. For we have been vouchsafed, as I said, grace of this kind, who are resplendent with the faith Him-ward. For no one, I suppose, will say that not of His own will is He within us; rather of His own will, i. e. after His own inherent will had He good-pleasure towards us.

Yet neither do we say that God the Word Who is con-substantial with the Father, has the beginning of His Being from the flesh of the holy Virgin (for with Him was He ever existent), but rather we know that He was made man as we. Therefore rightly will the holy Virgin be called by us Mother of God rather than mother of man, since surely 'she hath borne Christ according to the flesh.' |358 And after more. For when this was put forth for explanation, viz. When He bringeth in the First-Begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the Angels of God worship Him„ he writes again thus,

THEODORE

”Who then is He Who is brought in into the world and commences His reign, wherefrom it results that He is also worshipped by the Angels? For one will not madly say that God the Word was brought in Who made all things when they were not, bestowing on them through His unspeakable might that they should be.”

S. CYRIL

Callest thou it then madness, to chuse to think aright and to keep in mind the true and right and unmixed Faith? since surely one would say and that deservedly that they are words full of impiety which deny that the Only-Begotten Word of God was brought in by God the Father into the world when He was made man. For He Who by Nature and diversity is superior to all, seeing He is their Creator and is Essentially as greatly superior to them, as is the thing made less than its Maker, entered into the world when He was made a part of it , in that He appeared man.

And after a little. But I marvel that the opponent should have written that Jesus too would never have been accounted worthy of connection with God the Word had He not first been rendered spotless through the anointing. For first of all he is openly severing and distinguishing, saying outright Two sons: next let him say, when He was (as he terms it) made spotless and attained connection with God the Word, was it from the very womb, or when, in His thirtieth year, He came to the Jordan and sought John's baptism? If He were holy from the womb, how |359 does he say that He was made holy and not rather that He was so? For in that He is said to be made so, it is quite necessary to understand that He was not what He was made. But if He were holy always, and was not so made in time, how does he say that the SPIRIT soared down upon Him and shewed that He was worthy of the connection and added to Him what He lacked? For this too he has put in his other books. For what was it that was at all lacking to Him unto sanctification from the very womb, yea rather and before Birth after the flesh, to Him Who is holy and spotless and sanctifieth the creature?

When therefore he says that Jesus would not have been counted worthy of connection with God the Word except He had first been rendered spotless, he is indicting very many accusations against his empty talk. For first of all he unbecomingly says, been counted worthy: next he severs into another son apart Him Who is forth of the seed of David, whom he shamelessly maintains is called JESUS apart by Himself. Further, to say that He was made spotless, as if at one time He were not so, this too has very great blasphemy. For God the Word united from the very womb to His own flesh was One Son and thus also spotless, the Holy of holies, and giving of His fulness the SPIRIT not only to men but also to the rational powers above and in Heaven.

And after a little,

THEODORE

”Manifoldly and in many modes of old spake God to the fathers in the Prophets, in these last days He spake to us in His Son. For through the Son He spake to us: and it is clear that he is speaking of the man who was assumed. For to which of the Angels ever said He, My Son THOU art, I to day begat thee? None, he says, hath He made partaker of the Son’s dignity. For in this that He said, I begat Thee, He gave as it were through it a participation |360 of sonship, yet this which has been said is openly shewn to have nothing at all to do with God the Word.”

S. CYRIL

Verily in his discourses too which he made to them who were to be baptized, the same Theodore again said, "But this testimony we found not out of our ownselves, but were taught it out of the Divine Scripture, seeing that blessed Paul thus saith, Forth of whom is Christ after the flesh Who is God over all, not that He is forth of the Jews and according to the flesh Who is God over all, but he used the one term to point out the human nature, which he knew was of the stock of Israel, the other to shew the Divine Nature which he knew was over all and king of all ."

Hear ye deaf and see ye blind, cried aloud one of the saints to them of the blood of Israel: but I think, and deservedly, that this belongs to them who have not, or who will not understand aright the mystery of Christ. For the god of this world hath blinded the understandings of the unbelievers, and they, not having the Divine and intellectual light in heart and mind, have deservedly gone astray. But if some who are somehow or other holden in like diseases, have been enlightened, yea rather even co-numbered with the Doctors, what else will one cry to them than this which has been said by God through one of the holy Prophets, For ye are become a snare of a watchtower in your visitation and as nets spread out in a prop which the hunters have pierced through? For they who ought to be of the greatest profit to those under them, they have been a snare and a net and a stumbling block and pitfall of hades. And thus I say marvelling exceedingly and unable to see whereunto tends the opponent's aim. For he confessed in plain terms that |361 God the Father spake to us through the Son, yet says that that Son is the man who was assumed, who has no share with God the Word in regard to what was said. How therefore is not the slander against the blessed Paul, yea rather the accusal of the Truth itself manifest to all? for not thus did the Apostle who has the Holy Ghost understand it. But the opponent is again turning aside right doctrine to his own pleasure.

From the second book of Cyril Bishop of Alexandria that One is Christ against Theodore.

That the ungodly Nestorius desired to follow the doctrines of Theodore, does not acquit him, rather it will thence work a deeper charge against him. For when he might have taken hold of the right words and spotless discourses of the holy Fathers on the Godhead, he thinks fit to prefer a lie to the truth. For he let alone what was theirs, he chose rather to cleave to what was base and to delight him in such perverted words. That this man therefore who

hath such aim and madness, should have leapt down hereto, one may I think blame him and deservedly. For ho ought, he ought to have remembered the most holy Paul who clearly writes to us, Be ye wise money-changers, prove all things, hold fast that which is good, keep ye from every kind of evil. Which thing we, won t to do and hastening to imitate assayers of coin, repudiate those base and counterfeit doctrines, and receive full-gladly all which shine forth with the clear beauty of truth. But again let our argument turn the way befitting it and set before it. There have been writ therefore by good Theodore against the heresy of the Arians and Eunomians about twenty books or more; besides others interpreting the Gospel and Apostolic books: toils which none would have wished to find fault with, yea rather would have honoured the zeal with his approval, if soundness of doctrine had been in them .

But if one walk |362 outside of the appointed road, and leaving the right way of truth, go a crooked path and wound the hearts of the more simple, casting therein seeds of perverted understanding, then it will not be without damage for them who are over the people to rest herein, but they will have their reward and gain if they withstand [him]. Hence since in these books or writings which we mentioned above of the man spoken of, have been found certain things full of the uttermost impiety, how would it bo congruous to choose to be silent? for he severs the inseverable Christ and, in place of One Son, he honours a duality falling away from truth and as it were tinted with false names. For he says that God the Word Who is forth of God the Father was called man, yet not that He was so made in truth: the man, Him who is of Mary (as he speaks) whom too he in many places cleverly calls flesh , he says was called indeed God and Son of God, not that He is so in truth.

But Paul a workman exceeding wise to bring in the Divine Mysteries sometimes brings in to manifest the Mystery of Christ even things which are said by some in Divine Scripture, of other people. Yet he does not separate them from the persons of whom we know that they were said, nor yet does he transfer all that is theirs to Christ, but sometimes takes even some very little bit, which he can without risk skilfully transfer to his purpose. [Page running titles] 350 Incarnate Son Consubstantial to Father and to us. Born in the flesh, implies GOD. Unity of Person. 351 352 The Body quickens, because the Body of the WORD. Peril of heedless speech. 353 354 Christ crucified enthroned worshipped. God made-man. 355 356 Reference says One Son, makes Two. Indwelling ours, the WORD incarnate God the Son. 357 358 God the Son brought into the world. GOD the Son Incarnate, JESUS, one Son. 359 360 Some baptized, yea even teachers, have gone astray. Nestorius followed Theodore amiss, Theodore's writings. 361

362 Silence wrong when people hurt. S. Paul's skill. [Footnotes moved to end] 1. Of the extracts of this last book, John of Caesarea supplies the two first, Severus in his Book against him, gives the third, a rather later syriac collection the fourth; the fifth is from a Monophysite treatise against the Nestorians, from a ninth century MS; the remainder was read before the fifth Council, except the last, a small fragment from Facundus. 2. This is also extant in Syriac, in the MS. 12156 fol. 31 v (quoted by Timothy heretical Bishop of Alexandria

and the first of the heretical succession, in his "Letter to them of Constantinople against the heretics [Eutychians] who confess not that God the Word is consubstantial with us according to the flesh, Who is consubstantial with His Father in His Godhead, and against them who say Two Natures" i. e. against the Catholics) with the title, Blessed Cyril Archbishop of Alexandria from the second chapter against Theodore. The Manuscript is itself of the sixth century. It commences with a writing of the same Timothy against the Council of Chalcedon.

3. Thus far is given, in a different translation, by Leontius of Byzantium, against the Nestorians and Eutychians, book 3, in Gall. xii. 693, with the title, The same [Theodore the heretic] from the same [book or discourse x.] i. e. of Theodore's book on the Incarnation, which was written in Theodore's earlier life (Tillemont xii. 436) against the Apollinarians and Arians in 15 Books (ib. 445, 446), see above p. 337 note a. Leontius in his prefatory remarks to these citations speaks of this work as hard to get a sight of. "For we hardly and with great toil and with much thought have been able to find his book against the Incarnation: for they watch carefully and take care not to communicate his books to them who are not taught in them." ubi supra, p. 690. This proves that Leontius did not get his citations second-hand. 4. Compare the extract quoted from the interpretation of the eighth psalm, in the fourth collation of the Council, t. vi. 50 Colet, and that from the fourth book against the ungodly Apollinarius, ib. 46; and in Leontius, book 3 against the Nestorians and Eutychians, the above, and one, the same from the fourth book against Apollinarius. Gall. xii. 696.

5. Thus far is cited in the fourth collation of the Council, as from the interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews, t. vi. 57 Col., also by Pope Vigilius, t. v. 1341: the whole passage by Leontius of Byzantium, against the Nestorians and Eutychians, with the title, from the same [twelfth] Book, i. e. on the Incarnation. Gall. xii. 694. 6. they, i. e. the Apollinarians, who accused their opponents of holding two sons, see S. Gregory's complaint of it, below p. 363; Theodore's (who was accused of it with real reason), above p. 337, note a and here. The objection itself is stated in S. Athanasius against Apollinarius, 'that two perfects cannot make one whole,' see below p. 363 note b. 7. From here down to, in the affection of the will is cited in the fourth collation (vi. 57 Colet) as from the twelfth book on the Incarnation, and by Pope Vigilius in his Constitution (v. 1340): also by Leontius, as from the fifteenth book, i. e. on (or as Leontius calls it against) the Incarnation. Gall. xii. 695.

8. see above Scholia §§ 19, 20, pp. 208, 209; also de Recta fide to Arcadia and Marina p. 72 c d 122 e. 9. see Nestorius urging that this would follow if the holy Virgin were to be called Mother of God, and S. Cyril's reply in Book 1 § 1 against Nestorius, above pp. 7-10. 10. See above, pp. 52, 92, 189, also p. 324 note c, where S. Athanasius speaks of the great dread on the part of the Apollinarians as to the Incarnate SON being in any way "a part of the world." 11. These few first words are cited by Leontius of Byzantium, Book 3 against the Nestorians and Eutychians, with the title, the same from the same [twelfth book on the Incarnation]. Gall. xii. 694. 12. In the fourth collation of the Council, are seven citations

of Theodore from his book to them that are to be baptized, viz, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42 (t. vi. 55 Col.), but none of these are identical with the one here quoted by S. Cyril.

13. statumine. I do not know how the Latin translator got this word, nor what meaning he attached to it. The Hebrew has Tabor, which the LXX. here translate ταβύριον, and so S. Cyril quotes the verse elsewhere: but he knew its meaning, for in his commentary on the words, he says that it is a very conspicuous mountain in Galilee. 14. I do not know by what error in translation misled, Facundus Bishop of Hermaeum in Africa (in his Defence of the Three Chapters addressed to the Emperor Justinian just before the fifth Council) takes this to be, And these toils no one has dared to blame but to honour with vote of approval the zeal for right doctrines that is in them. Facundus repeats this three times, book iii. § 3, and 5, book viii. § 6. Gall. xi. 692, 696, 753, and in the latter place urges the extract as a reason why S. Cyril was not the writer of the books against Theodore. Facundus' work being addressed to the Emperor Justinian, would of course be not utterly unknown to the Council; this present extract is introduced in their acts as ordered to be recited because some laid stress on the word 'good Theodore,' as if S. Cyril were praising him, in order that the context might shew if it were so: after the recital, "the holy Synod said, 'The things recited shew that Cyril of religious memory blaming rather Theodore and his wicked writings, not as implying praise, used such words.' " t. vi. 90 Colet.

15. This extract is preserved by the above mentioned Facundus (book iii. § 6 in Gall. xi. 698) who says that the author of the work [against Diodore and Theodore] treats of a section in which the Apostle says to the Hebrews, For not to the Angels hath He subjected the world to come &c. 16. S. Cyril himself who enjoys so much adapting Old Testament events as types of Christ and His Church, says that some things in the history belong to the history itself.

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