

On the Holy Spirit

Basil the Great

TRANSLATED BY REV. BLOMFIELD JACKSON



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by Basil the Great
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CHAPTER I.

Prefatory remarks on the need of exact investigation of the most minute portions of theology.

1. Your desire for information, my right well-beloved and most deeply respected brother Amphilochius, I highly commend, and not less your industrious energy. I have been exceedingly delighted at the care and watchfulness shewn in the expression of your opinion that of all the terms concerning God in every mode of speech, not one ought to be left without exact investigation. You have turned to good account your reading of the exhortation of the Lord, "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth," and by your diligence in asking might, I ween, stir even the most reluctant to give you a share of what they possess. And this in you yet further moves my admiration, that you do not, according to the manners of the most part of the men of our time, propose your questions by way of mere test, but with the honest desire to arrive at the actual truth. There is no lack in these days of captious listeners and questioners; but to find a character desirous of information, and seeking the truth as a remedy for ignorance, is very difficult. Just as in the hunter's snare, or in the soldier's ambush, the trick is generally ingeniously concealed, so it is with the inquiries of the majority of the questioners who advance arguments, not so much with the view of getting any good out of them, as in order that, in the event of their failing to elicit answers which chime in with their own desires, they may seem to have fair ground for controversy.

2. If "To the fool on his asking for wisdom, wisdom shall be reckoned," at how high a price shall we value "the wise hearer" who is quoted by the Prophet in the same verse with "the admirable counsellor"? It is right, I ween, to hold him worthy of all

approbation, and to urge him on to further progress, sharing his enthusiasm, and in all things toiling at his side as he presses onwards to perfection. To count the terms used in theology as of primary importance, and to endeavour to trace out the hidden meaning in every phrase and in every syllable, is a characteristic wanting in those who are idle in the pursuit of true religion, but distinguishing all who get knowledge of “the mark” “of our calling;” for what is set before us is, so far as is possible with human nature, to be made like unto God. Now without knowledge there can be no making like; and knowledge is not got without lessons. The beginning of teaching is speech, and syllables and words are parts of speech. It follows then that to investigate syllables is not to shoot wide of the mark, nor, because the questions raised are what might seem to some insignificant, are they on that account to be held unworthy of heed. Truth is always a quarry hard to hunt, and therefore we must look everywhere for its tracks. The acquisition of true religion is just like that of crafts; both grow bit by bit; apprentices must despise nothing. If a man despise the first elements as small and insignificant, he will never reach the perfection of wisdom.

Yea and Nay are but two syllables, yet there is often involved in these little words at once the best of all good things, Truth, and that beyond which wickedness cannot go, a Lie. But why mention Yea and Nay? Before now, a martyr bearing witness for Christ has been judged to have paid in full the claim of true religion by merely nodding his head. If, then, this be so, what term in theology is so small but that the effect of its weight in the scales according as it be rightly or wrongly used is not great? Of the law we are told “not one jot nor one tittle shall pass away;” how then could it be safe for us to leave even the least unnoticed? The very points which you yourself have sought to have thoroughly sifted by us are at the same time both small and great. Their use is the matter of a moment, and peradventure they are therefore made of small account; but, when we reckon the force of their meaning, they are great. They may be likened to the mustard plant which, though it be the least of shrub-seeds, yet when properly cultivated and the forces latent in its germs unfolded, rises to its own sufficient height.

If any one laughs when he sees our subtilty, to use the Psalmist’s words, about syllables, let him know that he reaps laughter’s fruitless fruit; and let us, neither giving in to men’s

reproaches, nor yet vanquished by their disparagement, continue our investigation. So far, indeed, am I from feeling ashamed of these things because they are small, that, even if I could attain to ever so minute a fraction of their dignity, I should both congratulate myself on having won high honour, and should tell my brother and fellow-investigator that no small gain had accrued to him therefrom.

While, then, I am aware that the controversy contained in little words is a very great one, in hope of the prize I do not shrink from toil, with the conviction that the discussion will both prove profitable to myself, and that my hearers will be rewarded with no small benefit. Wherefore now with the help, if I may so say, of the Holy Spirit Himself, I will approach the exposition of the subject, and, if you will, that I may be put in the way of the discussion, I will for a moment revert to the origin of the question before us.

3. Lately when praying with the people, and using the full doxology to God the Father in both forms, at one time “with the Son together with the Holy Ghost,” and at another “through the Son in the Holy Ghost,” I was attacked by some of those present on the ground that I was introducing novel and at the same time mutually contradictory terms. You, however, chiefly with the view of benefiting them, or, if they are wholly incurable, for the security of such as may fall in with them, have expressed the opinion that some clear instruction ought to be published concerning the force underlying the syllables employed. I will therefore write as concisely as possible, in the endeavour to lay down some admitted principle for the discussion.

CHAPTER II.

The origin of the heretics' close observation of syllables.

4. The petty exactitude of these men about syllables and words is not, as might be supposed, simple and straightforward; nor is the mischief to which it tends a small one. There is involved a deep and covert design against true religion. Their pertinacious contention is to show that the mention of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is unlike, as though they will thence find it easy to demonstrate that there is a variation in nature. They have an old sophism, invented by Aetius, the champion of this heresy, in one of whose Letters there is a

passage to the effect that things naturally unlike are expressed in unlike terms, and, conversely, that things expressed in unlike terms are naturally unlike. In proof of this statement he drags in the words of the Apostle, “One God and Father of whom are all things,...and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things.” “Whatever, then,” he goes on, “is the relation of these terms to one another, such will be the relation of the natures indicated by them; and as the term ‘of whom’ is unlike the term ‘by whom,’ so is the Father unlike the Son.” On this heresy depends the idle subtilty of these men about the phrases in question. They accordingly assign to God the Father, as though it were His distinctive portion and lot, the phrase “of Whom;” to God the Son they confine the phrase “by Whom;” to the Holy Spirit that of “in Whom,” and say that this use of the syllables is never interchanged, in order that, as I have already said, the variation of language may indicate the variation of nature. Verily it is sufficiently obvious that in their quibbling about the words they are endeavouring to maintain the force of their impious argument.

By the term “of whom” they wish to indicate the Creator; by the term “through whom,” the subordinate agent or instrument; by the term “in whom,” or “in which,” they mean to shew the time or place. The object of all this is that the Creator of the universe may be regarded as of no higher dignity than an instrument, and that the Holy Spirit may appear to be adding to existing things nothing more than the contribution derived from place or time.

CHAPTER III.

The systematic discussion of syllables is derived from heathen philosophy.

5. They have, however, been led into this error by their close study of heathen writers, who have respectively applied the terms “of whom” and “through whom” to things which are by nature distinct. These writers suppose that by the term “of whom” or “of which” the matter is indicated, while the term “through whom” or “through which” represents the instrument, or, generally speaking, subordinate agency. Or rather—for there seems no reason why we should not take up their whole argument, and briefly expose at once its incompatibility with the truth and its inconsistency with their own

teaching—the students of vain philosophy, while expounding the manifold nature of cause and distinguishing its peculiar significations, define some causes as principal, some as cooperative or con-causal, while others are of the character of “sine qua non,” or indispensable.

For every one of these they have a distinct and peculiar use of terms, so that the maker is indicated in a different way from the instrument. For the maker they think the proper expression is “by whom,” maintaining that the bench is produced “by” the carpenter; and for the instrument “through which,” in that it is produced “through” or by means of adze and gimlet and the rest. Similarly they appropriate “of which” to the material, in that the thing made is “of” wood, while “according to which” shews the design, or pattern put before the craftsman. For he either first makes a mental sketch, and so brings his fancy to bear upon what he is about, or else he looks at a pattern previously put before him, and arranges his work accordingly. The phrase “on account of which” they wish to be confined to the end or purpose, the bench, as they say, being produced for, or on account of, the use of man. “In which” is supposed to indicate time and place. When was it produced? In this time. And where? In this place. And though place and time contribute nothing to what is being produced, yet without these the production of anything is impossible, for efficient agents must have both place and time. It is these careful distinctions, derived from unpractical philosophy and vain delusion, which our opponents have first studied and admired, and then transferred to the simple and unsophisticated doctrine of the Spirit, to the belittling of God the Word, and the setting at naught of the Divine Spirit. Even the phrase set apart by non-Christian writers for the case of lifeless instruments or of manual service of the meanest kind, I mean the expression “through or by means of which,” they do not shrink from transferring to the Lord of all, and Christians feel no shame in applying to the Creator of the universe language belonging to a hammer or a saw.

CHAPTER IV.

That there is no distinction in the scriptural use of these syllables.

6. We acknowledge that the word of truth has in many places made use of these expressions; yet we absolutely deny that the freedom of the Spirit is in bondage to the pettiness of Paganism. On the contrary, we maintain that Scripture varies its expressions as occasion requires, according to the circumstances of the case. For instance, suppose, indicate the material, but it is more in accordance with the usage of Scripture to apply this term in the case of the Supreme Cause, as in the words "One God, of whom are all things," and again, "All things of God." The word of truth has, however, frequently used this term in the case of the material, as when it says "Thou shalt make an ark of incorruptible wood;" and "Thou shalt make the candlestick of pure gold;" and "The first man is of the earth, earthy;" and "Thou art formed out of clay as I am." But these men, to the end, as we have already remarked, that they may establish the difference of nature, have laid down the law that this phrase befits the Father alone. This distinction they have originally derived from heathen authorities, but here they have shewn no faithful accuracy of limitation. To the Son they have in conformity with the teaching of their masters given the title of instrument, and to the Spirit that of place, for they say in the Spirit, and through the Son. But when they apply "of whom" to God they no longer follow heathen example, but "go over, as they say, to apostolic usage, as it is said, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus," and "All things of God." What, then, is the result of this systematic discussion? There is one nature of Cause; another of Instrument; another of Place. So the Son is by nature distinct from the Father, as the tool from the craftsman; and the Spirit is distinct in so far as place or time is distinguished from the nature of tools or from that of them that handle them.

CHAPTER V.

That "through whom" is said also in the case of the Father, and "of whom" in the case of the Son and of the Spirit.

7. After thus describing the outcome of our adversaries' arguments, we shall now proceed to shew, as we have proposed, that the Father does not first take "of whom" and then abandon "through whom" to the Son; and that there is no truth in these men's ruling that the Son refuses to admit the Holy Spirit to a share in "of whom" or in "through whom," according to the limitation of their new-fangled allotment of phrases. "There is one God and Father of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things."

Yes; but these are the words of a writer not laying down a rule, but carefully distinguishing the hypostases.

The object of the apostle in thus writing was not to introduce the diversity of nature, but to exhibit the notion of Father and of Son as unconfounded. That the phrases are not opposed to one another and do not, like squadrons in war marshalled one against another, bring the natures to which they are applied into mutual conflict, is perfectly plain from the passage in question. The blessed Paul brings both phrases to bear upon one and the same subject, in the words "of him and through him and to him are all things." That this plainly refers to the Lord will be admitted even by a reader paying but small attention to the meaning of the words. The apostle has just quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor," and then goes on, "For of him and from him and to him are all things." That the prophet is speaking about God the Word, the Maker of all creation, may be learnt from what immediately precedes: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" Now the word "who" in this passage does not mean absolute impossibility, but rarity, as in the passage "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?" and "What man is he that desireth life?" and "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" So is it in the passage in question, "Who hath directed [lxx., known] the Spirit of the Lord,

or being his counsellor hath known him?" "For the Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things." This is He who holds the earth, and hath grasped it with His hand, who brought all things to order and adornment, who poised the hills in their places, and measured the waters, and gave to all things in the universe their proper rank, who encompasseth the whole of heaven with but a small portion of His power, which, in a figure, the prophet calls a span. Well then did the apostle add "Of him and through him and to him are all things." For of Him, to all things that are, comes the cause of their being, according to the will of God the Father. Through Him all things have their continuance and constitution, for He created all things, and metes out to each severally what is necessary for its health and preservation. Wherefore to Him all things are turned, looking with irresistible longing and unspeakable affection to "the author" and maintainer "of" their "life," as it is written "The eyes of all wait upon thee," and again, "These wait all upon thee," and "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

8. But if our adversaries oppose this our interpretation, what argument will save them from being caught in their own trap?

For if they will not grant that the three expressions "of him" and "through him" and "to him" are spoken of the Lord, they cannot but be applied to God the Father. Then without question their rule will fall through, for we find not only "of whom," but also "through whom" applied to the Father. And if this latter phrase indicates nothing derogatory, why in the world should it be confined, as though conveying the sense of inferiority, to the Son? If it always and everywhere implies ministry, let them tell us to what superior the God of glory and Father of the Christ is subordinate.

They are thus overthrown by their own selves, while our position will be on both sides made sure. Suppose it proved that the passage refers to the Son, "of whom" will be found applicable to the Son. Suppose on the other hand it be insisted that the prophet's words relate to God, then it will be granted that "through whom" is properly used of God, and both phrases have equal value, in that both are used with equal force of God. Under either alternative both terms, being employed of one and the same Person, will be shewn to be equivalent. But let us revert to our subject.

9. In his Epistle to the Ephesians the apostle says, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body."

And again in the Epistle to the Colossians, to them that have not the knowledge of the Only Begotten, there is mention of him that holdeth "the head," that is, Christ, "from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered increaseth with the increase of God." And that Christ is the head of the Church we have learned in another passage, when the apostle says "gave him to be the head over all things to the Church," and "of his fulness have all we received." And the Lord Himself says "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." In a word, the diligent reader will perceive that "of whom" is used in diverse manners. For instance, the Lord says, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Similarly we have frequently observed "of whom" used of the Spirit. "He that soweth to the spirit," it is said, "shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." John too writes, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us by (ἐκ) the spirit which he hath given us." "That which is conceived in her," says the angel, "is of the Holy Ghost," and the Lord says "that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Such then is the case so far.

10. It must now be pointed out that the phrase "through whom" is admitted by Scripture in the case of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost alike. It would indeed be tedious to bring forward evidence of this in the case of the Son, not only because it is perfectly well known, but because this very point is made by our opponents. We now show that "through whom" is used also in the case of the Father. "God is faithful," it is said, "by whom (δι' οὗ) ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son," and "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by (δι' αὐ) the will of God;" and again, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." And "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by (δι' αὐ) the glory of God the Father." Isaiah, moreover, says, "Woe unto them that make deep counsel and not through the Lord;" and many proofs of the use of this phrase in the case of the Spirit might be adduced. "God hath revealed him to us," it is said, "by (δι' αὐ) the

spirit;” and in another place, “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by (δ:ῶ) the Holy Ghost;” and again, “To one is given by (δ:ῶ) the spirit the word of wisdom.”

11. In the same manner it may also be said of the word “in,” that Scripture admits its use in the case of God the Father. In the Old Testament it is said through (ἐν) God we shall do valiantly, and, “My praise shall be continually of (ἐν) thee;” and again, “In thy name will I rejoice.” In Paul we read, “In God who created all things,” and, “Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father;” and “if now at length I might have a prosperous journey by (ἐν) the will of God to come to you;” and, “Thou makest thy boast of God.” Instances are indeed too numerous to reckon; but what we want is not so much to exhibit an abundance of evidence as to prove that the conclusions of our opponents are unsound. I shall, therefore, omit any proof of this usage in the case of our Lord and of the Holy Ghost, in that it is notorious. But I cannot forbear to remark that “the wise hearer” will find sufficient proof of the proposition before him by following the method of contraries. For if the difference of language indicates, as we are told, that the nature has been changed, then let identity of language compel our adversaries to confess with shame that the essence is unchanged.

12. And it is not only in the case of the theology that the use of the terms varies, but whenever one of the terms takes the meaning of the other we find them frequently transferred from the one subject to the other. As, for instance, Adam says, “I have gotten a man through God,” meaning to say the same as from God; and in another passage “Moses commanded...Israel through the word of the Lord,” and, again, “Is not the interpretation through God?” Joseph, discoursing about dreams to the prisoners, instead of saying “from God” says plainly “through God.” Inversely Paul uses the term “from whom” instead of “through whom,” when he says “made from a woman” (A.V., “of” instead of “through a woman”). And this he has plainly distinguished in another passage, where he says that it is proper to a woman to be made of the man, and to a man to be made through the woman, in the words “For as the woman is from [A.V., of] the man, even so is the man also through [A.V., by] the woman.” Nevertheless in the passage in

question the apostle, while illustrating the variety of usage, at the same time corrects obiter the error of those who supposed that the body of the Lord was a spiritual body, and, to shew that the God-bearing flesh was formed out of the common lump of human nature, gave precedence to the more emphatic preposition.

The phrase “through a woman” would be likely to give rise to the suspicion of mere transit in the generation, while the phrase “of the woman” would satisfactorily indicate that the nature was shared by the mother and the offspring. The apostle was in no wise contradicting himself, but he shewed that the words can without difficulty be interchanged. Since, therefore, the term “from whom” is transferred to the identical subjects in the case of which “through whom” is decided to be properly used, with what consistency can these phrases be invariably distinguished one from the other, in order that fault may be falsely found with true religion?

CHAPTER VI.

Issue joined with those who assert that the Son is not with the Father, but after the Father. Also concerning the equal glory.

13. Our opponents, while they thus artfully and perversely encounter our argument, cannot even have recourse to the plea of ignorance. It is obvious that they are annoyed with us for completing the doxology to the Only Begotten together with the Father, and for not separating the Holy Spirit from the Son. On this account they style us innovators, revolutionizers, phrase-coiners, and every other possible name of insult. But so far am I from being irritated at their abuse, that, were it not for the fact that their loss causes me “heaviness and continual sorrow,” I could almost have said that I was grateful to them for the blasphemy, as though they were agents for providing me with blessing. For “blessed are ye,” it is said, “when men shall revile you for my sake.” The grounds of their indignation are these: The Son, according to them, is not together with the Father, but after the Father. Hence it follows that glory should be ascribed to the Father “through him,” but not “with him;” inasmuch as “with him” expresses equality of dignity, while “through him” denotes subordination. They further assert that the Spirit is not to

be ranked along with the Father and the Son, but under the Son and the Father; not coordinated, but subordinated; not connumerated, but subnumerated.

With technical terminology of this kind they pervert the simplicity and artlessness of the faith, and thus by their ingenuity, suffering no one else to remain in ignorance, they cut off from themselves the plea that ignorance might demand.

14. Let us first ask them this question: In what sense do they say that the Son is “after the Father;” later in time, or in order, or in dignity? But in time no one is so devoid of sense as to assert that the Maker of the ages holds a second place, when no interval intervenes in the natural conjunction of the Father with the Son. And indeed so far as our conception of human relations goes, it is impossible to think of the Son as being later than the Father, not only from the fact that Father and Son are mutually conceived of in accordance with the relationship subsisting between them, but because posteriority in time is predicated of subjects separated by a less interval from the present, and priority of subjects farther off. For instance, what happened in Noah’s time is prior to what happened to the men of Sodom, inasmuch as Noah is more remote from our own day; and, again, the events of the history of the men of Sodom are posterior, because they seem in a sense to approach nearer to our own day. But, in addition to its being a breach of true religion, is it not really the extremest folly to measure the existence of the life which transcends all time and all the ages by its distance from the present? Is it not as though God the Father could be compared with, and be made superior to, God the Son, who exists before the ages, precisely in the same way in which things liable to beginning and corruption are described as prior to one another?

The superior remoteness of the Father is really inconceivable, in that thought and intelligence are wholly impotent to go beyond the generation of the Lord; and St. John has admirably confined the conception within circumscribed boundaries by two words, “In the beginning was the Word.” For thought cannot travel outside “was,” nor imagination beyond “beginning.” Let your thought travel ever so far backward you cannot get beyond the “was,” and however you may strain and strive to see what is beyond the Son, you will find it impossible to get further than the “beginning.” True religion,

therefore, thus teaches us to think of the Son together with the Father.

15. If they really conceive of a kind of degradation of the Son in relation to the Father, as though He were in a lower place, so that the Father sits above, and the Son is thrust off to the next seat below, let them confess what they mean. We shall have no more to say. A plain statement of the view will at once expose its absurdity. They who refuse to allow that the Father pervades all things do not so much as maintain the logical sequence of thought in their argument. The faith of the sound is that God fills all things; but they who divide their up and down between the Father and the Son do not remember even the word of the Prophet: "If I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I go down to hell thou art there also." Now, to omit all proof of the ignorance of those who predicate place of incorporeal things, what excuse can be found for their attack upon Scripture, shameless as their antagonism is, in the passages "Sit thou on my right hand" and "Sat down on the right hand of the majesty of God"? The expression "right hand" does not, as they contend, indicate the lower place, but equality of relation; it is not understood physically, in which case there might be something sinister about God, but Scripture puts before us the magnificence of the dignity of the Son by the use of dignified language indicating the seat of honour. It is left then for our opponents to allege that this expression signifies inferiority of rank. Let them learn that "Christ is the power of God and wisdom of God," and that "He is the image of the invisible God" and "brightness of his glory," and that "Him hath God the Father sealed," by engraving Himself on Him.

Now are we to call these passages, and others like them, throughout the whole of Holy Scripture, proofs of humiliation, or rather public proclamations of the majesty of the Only Begotten, and of the equality of His glory with the Father? We ask them to listen to the Lord Himself, distinctly setting forth the equal dignity of His glory with the Father, in His words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and again, "When the Son cometh in the glory of his Father;" that they "should honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" and, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;" and "the only begotten God which is in the bosom of the Father." Of all these passages they take no account, and then assign to the Son the place set apart for His foes. A father's bosom

is a fit and becoming seat for a son, but the place of the footstool is for them that have to be forced to fall.

We have only touched cursorily on these proofs, because our object is to pass on to other points. You at your leisure can put together the items of the evidence, and then contemplate the height of the glory and the preeminence of the power of the Only Begotten. However, to the well-disposed hearer, even these are not insignificant, unless the terms “right hand” and “bosom” be accepted in a physical and derogatory sense, so as at once to circumscribe God in local limits, and invent form, mould, and bodily position, all of which are totally distinct from the idea of the absolute, the infinite, and the incorporeal. There is moreover the fact that what is derogatory in the idea of it is the same in the case both of the Father and the Son; so that whoever repeats these arguments does not take away the dignity of the Son, but does incur the charge of blaspheming the Father; for whatever audacity a man be guilty of against the Son he cannot but transfer to the Father. If he assigns to the Father the upper place by way of precedence, and asserts that the only begotten Son sits below, he will find that to the creature of his imagination attach all the consequent conditions of body. And if these are the imaginations of drunken delusion and phrensied insanity, can it be consistent with true religion for men taught by the Lord himself that “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father” to refuse to worship and glorify with the Father him who in nature, in glory, and in dignity is conjoined with him? What shall we say? What just defence shall we have in the day of the awful universal judgment of all-creation, if, when the Lord clearly announces that He will come “in the glory of his Father;” when Stephen beheld Jesus standing at the right hand of God; when Paul testified in the spirit concerning Christ “that he is at the right hand of God;” when the Father says, “Sit thou on my right hand;” when the Holy Spirit bears witness that he has sat down on “the right hand of the majesty” of God; we attempt to degrade him who shares the honour and the throne, from his condition of equality, to a lower state? Standing and sitting, I apprehend, indicate the fixity and entire stability of the nature, as Baruch, when he wishes to exhibit the immutability and immobility of the Divine mode of existence, says, “For thou sittest for ever and we perish utterly.” Moreover, the place on the right hand indicates in my judgment equality of honour. Rash, then, is the attempt to

deprive the Son of participation in the doxology, as though worthy only to be ranked in a lower place of honour.

CHAPTER VII.

Against those who assert that it is not proper for "with whom" to be said of the Son, and that the proper phrase is "through whom."

16. But their contention is that to use the phrase "with him" is altogether strange and unusual, while "through him" is at once most familiar in Holy Scripture, and very common in the language of the brotherhood. What is our answer to this? We say, Blessed are the ears that have not heard you and the hearts that have been kept from the wounds of your words. To you, on the other hand, who are lovers of Christ, I say that the Church recognizes both uses, and deprecates neither as subversive of the other. For whenever we are contemplating the majesty of the nature of the Only Begotten, and the excellence of His dignity, we bear witness that the glory is with the Father; while on the other hand, whenever we bethink us of His bestowal on us of good gifts, and of our access to, and admission into, the household of God, we confess that this grace is effected for us through Him and by Him.

It follows that the one phrase "with whom" is the proper one to be used in the ascription of glory, while the other, "through whom," is specially appropriate in giving of thanks. It is also quite untrue to allege that the phrase "with whom" is unfamiliar in the usage of the devout. All those whose soundness of character leads them to hold the dignity of antiquity to be more honourable than mere new-fangled novelty, and who have preserved the tradition of their fathers unadulterated, alike in town and in country, have employed this phrase. It is, on the contrary, they who are surfeited with the familiar and the customary, and arrogantly assail the old as stale, who welcome innovation, just as in dress your lovers of display always prefer some utter novelty to what is generally worn. So you may even still see that the language of country folk preserves the ancient fashion, while of these, our cunning experts in logomachy, the language bears the brand of the new philosophy.

What our fathers said, the same say we, that the glory of the Father and of the Son is common; wherefore we offer the doxology to the Father with the Son. But we do not rest only on the fact that such is the tradition of the Fathers; for they too followed the sense of Scripture, and started from the evidence which, a few sentences back, I deduced from Scripture and laid before you. For “the brightness” is always thought of with “the glory,” “the image” with the archetype, and the Son always and everywhere together with the Father; nor does even the close connexion of the names, much less the nature of the things, admit of separation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of the origin of the word “with,” and what force it has. Also concerning the unwritten laws of the church.

65. The word “in,” say our opponents, “is exactly appropriate to the Spirit, and sufficient for every thought concerning Him. Why then, they ask, have we introduced this new phrase, saying, “with the Spirit” instead of “in the Holy Spirit,” thus employing an expression which is quite unnecessary, and sanctioned by no usage in the churches? Now it has been asserted in the previous portion of this treatise that the word “in” has not been specially allotted to the Holy Spirit, but is common to the Father and the Son. It has also been, in my opinion, sufficiently demonstrated that, so far from detracting anything from the dignity of the Spirit, it leads all, but those whose thoughts are wholly perverted, to the sublimest height. It remains for me to trace the origin of the word “with;” to explain what force it has, and to shew that it is in harmony with Scripture.

66. Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us “in a mystery” by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will gainsay;—no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the

Gospel in its very vitals; or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more. For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is thence who has taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? What writing has taught us to turn to the East at the prayer? Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the displaying of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For we are not, as is well known, content with what the apostle or the Gospel has recorded, but both in preface and conclusion we add other words as being of great importance to the validity of the ministry, and these we derive from unwritten teaching. Moreover we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learnt the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents. What was the meaning of the mighty Moses in not making all the parts of the tabernacle open to everyone? The profane he stationed without the sacred barriers; the first courts he conceded to the purer; the Levites alone he judged worthy of being servants of the Deity; sacrifices and burnt offerings and the rest of the priestly functions he allotted to the priests; one chosen out of all he admitted to the shrine, and even this one not always but on only one day in the year, and of this one day a time was fixed for his entry so that he might gaze on the Holy of Holies amazed at the strangeness and novelty of the sight. Moses was wise enough to know that contempt stretches to the trite and to the obvious, while a keen interest is naturally associated with the unusual and the unfamiliar. In the same manner the Apostles and Fathers who laid down laws for the Church from the beginning thus guarded the awful dignity of the mysteries in secrecy and silence, for what is bruited abroad random among the common folk is no mystery at all. This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten

precepts and practices, that the knowledge of our dogmas may not become neglected and contemned by the multitude through familiarity. “Dogma” and “Kerugma” are two distinct things; the former is observed in silence; the latter is proclaimed to all the world. One form of this silence is the obscurity employed in Scripture, which makes the meaning of “dogmas” difficult to be understood for the very advantage of the reader: Thus we all look to the East at our prayers, but few of us know that we are seeking our own old country, Paradise, which God planted in Eden in the East. We pray standing, on the first day of the week, but we do not all know the reason. On the day of the resurrection (or “standing again” Grk. ἀνάστασις) we remind ourselves of the grace given to us by standing at prayer, not only because we rose with Christ, and are bound to “seek those things which are above,” but because the day seems to us to be in some sense an image of the age which we expect, wherefore, though it is the beginning of days, it is not called by Moses first, but one. For he says “There was evening, and there was morning, one day,” as though the same day often recurred. Now “one” and “eighth” are the same, in itself distinctly indicating that really “one” and “eighth” of which the Psalmist makes mention in certain titles of the Psalms, the state which follows after this present time, the day which knows no waning or eventide, and no successor, that age which endeth not or groweth old. Of necessity, then, the church teaches her own foster children to offer their prayers on that day standing, to the end that through continual reminder of the endless life we may not neglect to make provision for our removal thither. Moreover all Pentecost is a reminder of the resurrection expected in the age to come. For that one and first day, if seven times multiplied by seven, completes the seven weeks of the holy Pentecost; for, beginning at the first, Pentecost ends with the same, making fifty revolutions through the like intervening days. And so it is a likeness of eternity, beginning as it does and ending, as in a circling course, at the same point. On this day the rules of the church have educated us to prefer the upright attitude of prayer, for by their plain reminder they, as it were, make our mind to dwell no longer in the present but in the future. Moreover every time we fall upon our knees and rise from off them we shew by the very deed that by our sin we fell down to earth, and by the loving kindness of our Creator were called back to heaven.

67. Time will fail me if I attempt to recount the unwritten mysteries of the Church. Of the rest I say nothing; but of the very confession of our faith in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what is the written source? If it be granted that, as we are baptized, so also under the obligation to believe, we make our confession in like terms as our baptism, in accordance with the tradition of our baptism and in conformity with the principles of true religion, let our opponents grant us too the right to be as consistent in our ascription of glory as in our confession of faith. If they deprecate our doxology on the ground that it lacks written authority, let them give us the written evidence for the confession of our faith and the other matters which we have enumerated. While the unwritten traditions are so many, and their bearing on “the mystery of godliness” is so important, can they refuse to allow us a single word which has come down to us from the Fathers;—which we found, derived from untutored custom, abiding in unperverted churches;—a word for which the arguments are strong, and which contributes in no small degree to the completeness of the force of the mystery?

68. The force of both expressions has now been explained. I will proceed to state once more wherein they agree and wherein they differ from one another;—not that they are opposed in mutual antagonism, but that each contributes its own meaning to true religion. The preposition “in” states the truth rather relatively to ourselves; while “with” proclaims the fellowship of the Spirit with God. Wherefore we use both words, by the one expressing the dignity of the Spirit; by the other announcing the grace that is with us. Thus we ascribe glory to God both “in” the Spirit, and “with” the Spirit; and herein it is not our word that we use, but we follow the teaching of the Lord as we might a fixed rule, and transfer His word to things connected and closely related, and of which the conjunction in the mysteries is necessary. We have deemed ourselves under a necessary obligation to combine in our confession of the faith Him who is numbered with Them at Baptism, and we have treated the confession of the faith as the origin and parent of the doxology. What, then, is to be done? They must now instruct us either not to baptize as we have received, or not to believe as we were baptized, or not to ascribe glory as we have believed. Let any man prove if he can that the relation of sequence in these acts is not necessary and unbroken; or let any man deny if he can that

innovation here must mean ruin everywhere. Yet they never stop dinning in our ears that the ascription of glory “with” the Holy Spirit is unauthorized and unscriptural and the like. We have stated that so far as the sense goes it is the same to say “glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,” and “glory be to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Ghost.” It is impossible for any one to reject or cancel the syllable “and,” which is derived from the very words of our Lord, and there is nothing to hinder the acceptance of its equivalent. What amount of difference and similarity there is between the two we have already shewn. And our argument is confirmed by the fact that the Apostle uses either word indifferently,—saying at one time “in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God;” at another “when ye are gathered together, and my Spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,” with no idea that it makes any difference to the connexion of the names whether he use the conjunction or the preposition.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

That our opponents refuse to concede in the case of the Spirit the terms which Scripture uses in the case of men, as reigning together with Christ.

69. But let us see if we can bethink us of any defence of this usage of our fathers; for they who first originated the expression are more open to blame than we ourselves. Paul in his Letter to the Colossians says, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision...hath He quickened together with” Christ. Did then God give to a whole people and to the Church the boon of the life with Christ, and yet the life with Christ does not belong to the Holy Spirit? But if this is impious even to think of, is it not rightly reverent so to make our confession, as They are by nature in close conjunction? Furthermore what boundless lack of sensibility does it not shew in these men to confess that the Saints are with Christ, (if, as we know is the case, Paul, on becoming absent from the body, is present with the Lord, and, after departing, is with Christ) and, so far as lies in their power, to refuse to allow to the Spirit to be with Christ even to the same extent as men? And Paul calls himself a “labourer together with God” in the dispensation of the Gospel; will they bring

an indictment for impiety against us, if we apply the term “fellow-labourer” to the Holy Spirit, through whom in every creature under heaven the Gospel bringeth forth fruit? The life of them that have trusted in the Lord “is hidden,” it would seem, “with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall” they themselves also “appear with Him in glory;” and is the Spirit of life Himself, “Who made us free from the law of sin,” not with Christ, both in the secret and hidden life with Him, and in the manifestation of the glory which we expect to be manifested in the saints? We are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” and is the Spirit without part or lot in the fellowship of God and of His Christ? “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;” and are we not to allow to the Spirit even that testimony of His fellowship with God which we have learnt from the Lord? For the height of folly is reached if we through the faith in Christ which is in the Spirit hope that we shall be raised together with Him and sit together in heavenly places, whenever He shall change our vile body from the natural to the spiritual, and yet refuse to assign to the Spirit any share in the sitting together, or in the glory, or anything else which we have received from Him. Of all the boons of which, in accordance with the indefeasible grant of Him who has promised them, we have believed ourselves worthy, are we to allow none to the Holy Spirit, as though they were all above His dignity? It is yours according to your merit to be “ever with the Lord,” and you expect to be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and to be ever with the Lord.” You declare the man who numbers and ranks the Spirit with the Father and the Son to be guilty of intolerable impiety. Can you really now deny that the Spirit is with Christ?

70. I am ashamed to add the rest. You expect to be glorified together with Christ; (“if so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together;”) but you do not glorify the “Spirit of holiness” together with Christ, as though He were not worthy to receive equal honour even with you. You hope to “reign with” Christ; but you “do despite unto the Spirit of grace” by assigning Him the rank of a slave and a subordinate. And I say this not to demonstrate that so much is due to the Spirit in the ascription of glory, but to prove the unfairness of those who will not ever give so much as this, and shrink from the fellowship of the Spirit with Son and Father as from impiety. Who could touch on these things

without a sigh? Is it not so plain as to be within the perception even of a child that this present state of things precludes the threatened eclipse of the faith? The undeniable has become the uncertain. We profess belief in the Spirit, and then we quarrel with our own confessions. We are baptized, and begin to fight again. We call upon Him as the Prince of Life, and then despise Him as a slave like ourselves. We received Him with the Father and the Son, and we dishonour Him as a part of creation. Those who “know not what they ought to pray for,” even though they be induced to utter a word of the Spirit with awe, as though coming near His dignity, yet prune down all that exceeds the exact proportion of their speech. They ought rather to bewail their weakness, in that we are powerless to express in words our gratitude for the benefits which we are actually receiving; for He “passes all understanding,” and convicts speech of its natural inability even to approach His dignity in the least degree; as it is written in the Book of Wisdom, “Exalt Him as much as you can, for even yet will He far exceed; and when you exalt Him put forth all your strength, and be not weary, for you can never go far enough.” Verily terrible is the account to be given for words of this kind by you who have heard from God who cannot lie that for blasphemy against the Holy Ghost there is no forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Enumeration of the illustrious men in the Church who in their writings have used the word “with.”

71. In answer to the objection that the doxology in the form “with the Spirit” has no written authority, we maintain that if there is no other instance of that which is unwritten, then this must not be received. But if the greater number of our mysteries are admitted into our constitution without written authority, then, in company with the many others, let us receive this one. For I hold it apostolic to abide also by the unwritten traditions. “I praise you,” it is said, “that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you;” and “Hold fast the traditions which ye have been taught whether by word, or our Epistle.” One of these traditions is the practice which is now before us, which they who

ordained from the beginning, rooted firmly in the churches, delivering it to their successors, and its use through long custom advances pace by pace with time. If, as in a Court of Law, we were at a loss for documentary evidence, but were able to bring before you a large number of witnesses, would you not give your vote for our acquittal? I think so; for “at the mouth of two or three witnesses shall the matter be established.” And if we could prove clearly to you that a long period of time was in our favour, should we not have seemed to you to urge with reason that this suit ought not to be brought into court against us? For ancient dogmas inspire a certain sense of awe, venerable as they are with a hoary antiquity. I will therefore give you a list of the supporters of the word (and the time too must be taken into account in relation to what passes unquestioned). For it did not originate with us. How could it? We, in comparison with the time during which this word has been in vogue, are, to use the words of Job, “but of yesterday.” I myself, if I must speak of what concerns me individually, cherish this phrase as a legacy left me by my fathers. It was delivered to me by one who spent a long life in the service of God, and by him I was both baptized, and admitted to the ministry of the church. While examining, so far as I could, if any of the blessed men of old used the words to which objection is now made, I found many worthy of credit both on account of their early date, and also a characteristic in which they are unlike the men of to-day—because of the exactness of their knowledge. Of these some coupled the word in the doxology by the preposition, others by the conjunction, but were in no case supposed to be acting divergently,—at least so far as the right sense of true religion is concerned.

72. There is the famous Irenæus, and Clement of Rome; Dionysius of Rome, and, strange to say, Dionysius of Alexandria, in his second Letter to his namesake, on “Conviction and Defence,” so concludes. I will give you his very words. “Following all these, we, too, since we have received from the presbyters who were before us a form and rule, offering thanksgiving in the same terms with them, thus conclude our Letter to you. To God the Father and the Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, glory and might for ever and ever; amen.” And no one can say that this passage has been altered. He would not have so persistently stated that he had received a form and rule if he had said “in the Spirit.” For of this phrase the

use is abundant: it was the use of “with” which required defence. Dionysius moreover in the middle of his treatise thus writes in opposition to the Sabellians, “If by the hypostases being three they say that they are divided, there are three, though they like it not. Else let them destroy the divine Trinity altogether.” And again: “most divine on this account after the Unity is the Trinity.” Clement, in more primitive fashion, writes, “God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.” And now let us hear how Irenæus, who lived near the times of the Apostles, mentions the Spirit in his work “Against the Heresies.” “The Apostle rightly calls carnal them that are unbridled and carried away to their own desires, having no desire for the Holy Spirit,” and in another passage Irenæus says, “The Apostle exclaimed that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of the heavens lest we, being without share in the divine Spirit, fall short of the kingdom of the heavens.” If any one thinks Eusebius of Palestine worthy of credit on account of his wide experience, I point further to the very words he uses in discussing questions concerning the polygamy of the ancients. Stirring up himself to his work, he writes “invoking the holy God of the Prophets, the Author of light, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit.”

73. Origen, too, in many of his expositions of the Psalms, we find using the form of doxology “with the Holy Ghost.” The opinions which he held concerning the Spirit were not always and everywhere sound; nevertheless in many passages even he himself reverently recognises the force of established usage, and expresses himself concerning the Spirit in terms consistent with true religion. It is, if I am not mistaken, in the Sixth Book of his Commentary on the Gospel of St. John that he distinctly makes the Spirit an object of worship. His words are:—“The washing or water is a symbol of the cleaning of the soul which is washed clean of all filth that comes of wickedness; but none the less is it also by itself, to him who yields himself to the God-head of the adorable Trinity, through the power of the invocations, the origin and source of blessings.” And again, in his Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans “the holy powers,” he says “are able to receive the Only-begotten, and the Godhead of the Holy Spirit.” Thus I apprehend, the powerful influence of tradition frequently impels men to express themselves in terms contradictory to their own opinions. Moreover this form of the doxology was not unknown even to Africanus the historian. In the Fifth Book of

his Epitome of the Times he says “we who know the weight of those terms, and are not ignorant of the grace of faith, render thanks to the Father, who bestowed on us His own creatures, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world and our Lord, to whom be glory and majesty with the Holy Ghost, for ever.” The rest of the passages may peradventure be viewed with suspicion; or may really have been altered, and the fact of their having been tampered with will be difficult to detect because the difference consists in a single syllable. Those however which I have quoted at length are out of the reach of any dishonest manipulation, and can easily be verified from the actual works.

I will now adduce another piece of evidence which might perhaps seem insignificant, but because of its antiquity must in nowise be omitted by a defendant who is indicted on a charge of innovation. It seemed fitting to our fathers not to receive the gift of the light at eventide in silence, but, on its appearing, immediately to give thanks. Who was the author of these words of thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps, we are not able to say. The people, however, utter the ancient form, and no one has ever reckoned guilty of impiety those who say “We praise Father, Son, and God’s Holy Spirit.” And if any one knows the Hymn of Athenogenes, which, as he was hurrying on to his perfecting by fire, he left as a kind of farewell gift to his friends, he knows the mind of the martyrs as to the Spirit. On this head I shall say no more.

74. But where shall I rank the great Gregory, and the words uttered by him? Shall we not place among Apostles and Prophets a man who walked by the same Spirit as they; who never through all his days diverged from the footprints of the saints; who maintained, as long as he lived, the exact principles of evangelical citizenship? I am sure that we shall do the truth a wrong if we refuse to number that soul with the people of God, shining as it did like a beacon in the Church of God; for by the fellow-working of the Spirit the power which he had over demons was tremendous, and so gifted was he with the grace of the word “for obedience to the faith among...the nations,” that, although only seventeen Christians were handed over to him, he brought the whole people alike in town and country through knowledge to God. He too by Christ’s mighty name commanded even rivers to change their course, and caused a lake, which afforded a ground of quarrel to some covetous brethren, to

dry up. Moreover his predictions of things to come were such as in no wise to fall short of those of the great prophets. To recount all his wonderful works in detail would be too long a task. By the superabundance of gifts, wrought in him by the Spirit in all power and in signs and in marvels, he was styled a second Moses by the very enemies of the Church. Thus in all that he through grace accomplished, alike by word and deed, a light seemed ever to be shining, token of the heavenly power from the unseen which followed him. To this day he is a great object of admiration to the people of his own neighbourhood, and his memory, established in the churches ever fresh and green, is not dulled by length of time. Thus not a practice, not a word, not a mystic rite has been added to the Church besides what he bequeathed to it. Hence truly on account of the antiquity of their institution many of their ceremonies appear to be defective. For his successors in the administration of the Churches could not endure to accept any subsequent discovery in addition to what had had his sanction. Now one of the institutions of Gregory is the very form of the doxology to which objection is now made, preserved by the Church on the authority of his tradition; a statement which may be verified without much trouble by any one who likes to make a short journey. That our Firmilian held this belief is testified by the writings which he has left. The contemporaries also of the illustrious Meletius say that he was of this opinion. But why quote ancient authorities? Now in the East are not the maintainers of true religion known chiefly by this one term, and separated from their adversaries as by a watchword? I have heard from a certain Mesopotamian, a man at once well skilled in the language and of unperverted opinions, that by the usage of his country it is impossible for any one, even though he may wish to do so, to express himself in any other way, and that they are compelled by the idiom of their mother tongue to offer the doxology by the syllable "and," or, I should more accurately say, by their equivalent expressions. We Cappadocians, too, so speak in the dialect of our country, the Spirit having so early as the division of tongues foreseen the utility of the phrase. And what of the whole West, almost from Illyricum to the boundaries of our world? Does it not support this word?

75. How then can I be an innovator and creator of new terms, when I adduce as originators and champions of the word whole nations,

cities, custom going back beyond the memory of man, men who were pillars of the church and conspicuous for all knowledge and spiritual power? For this cause this banded array of foes is set in motion against me, and town and village and remotest regions are full of my calumniators. Sad and painful are these things to them that seek for peace, but great is the reward of patience for sufferings endured for the Faith's sake. So besides these let sword flash, let axe be whetted, let fire burn fiercer than that of Babylon, let every instrument of torture be set in motion against me. To me nothing is more fearful than failure to fear the threats which the Lord has directed against them that blaspheme the Spirit. Kindly readers will find a satisfactory defence in what I have said, that I accept a phrase so dear and so familiar to the saints, and confirmed by usage so long, inasmuch as, from the day when the Gospel was first preached up to our own time, it is shewn to have been admitted to all full rights within the churches, and, what is of greatest moment, to have been accepted as bearing a sense in accordance with holiness and true religion. But before the great tribunal what have I prepared to say in my defence? This; that I was in the first place led to the glory of the Spirit by the honour conferred by the Lord in associating Him with Himself and with His Father at baptism; and secondly by the introduction of each of us to the knowledge of God by such an initiation; and above all by the fear of the threatened punishment shutting out the thought of all indignity and unworthy conception. But our opponents, what will they say? After shewing neither reverence for the Lord's honour nor fear of His threats, what kind of defence will they have for their blasphemy? It is for them to make up their mind about their own action or even now to change it. For my own part I would pray most earnestly that the good God will make His peace rule in the hearts of all, so that these men who are swollen with pride and set in battle array against us may be calmed by the Spirit of meekness and of love; and that if they have become utterly savage, and are in an untamable state, He will grant to us at least to bear with long suffering all that we have to bear at their hands. In short "to them that have in themselves the sentence of death," it is not suffering for the sake of the Faith which is painful; what is hard to bear is to fail to fight its battle. The athlete does not so much complain of being wounded in the struggle as of not being able even to secure admission into the stadium. Or perhaps this was the time for silence spoken of by Solomon the wise. For, when life is buffeted by so fierce a storm

that all the intelligence of those who are instructed in the word is filled with the deceit of false reasoning and confounded, like an eye filled with dust, when men are stunned by strange and awful noises, when all the world is shaken and everything tottering to its fall, what profits it to cry, as I am really crying, to the wind?

CHAPTER XXX.

Exposition of the present state of the Churches.

76. To what then shall I liken our present condition? It may be compared, I think, to some naval battle which has arisen out of time old quarrels, and is fought by men who cherish a deadly hate against one another, of long experience in naval warfare, and eager for the fight. Look, I beg you, at the picture thus raised before your eyes. See the rival fleets rushing in dread array to the attack. With a burst of uncontrollable fury they engage and fight it out. Fancy, if you like, the ships driven to and fro by a raging tempest, while thick darkness falls from the clouds and blackens all the scenes so that watchwords are indistinguishable in the confusion, and all distinction between friend and foe is lost. To fill up the details of the imaginary picture, suppose the sea swollen with billows and whirled up from the deep, while a vehement torrent of rain pours down from the clouds and the terrible waves rise high. From every quarter of heaven the winds beat upon one point, where both the fleets are dashed one against the other. Of the combatants some are turning traitors; some are deserting in the very thick of the fight; some have at one and the same moment to urge on their boats, all beaten by the gale, and to advance against their assailants. Jealousy of authority and the lust of individual mastery splits the sailors into parties which deal mutual death to one another. Think, besides all this, of the confused and unmeaning roar sounding over all the sea, from howling winds, from crashing vessels, from boiling surf, from the yells of the combatants as they express their varying emotions in every kind of noise, so that not a word from admiral or pilot can be heard. The disorder and confusion is tremendous, for the extremity of misfortune, when life is despaired of, gives men license for every kind of wickedness. Suppose, too, that the men are all smitten with the

incurable plague of mad love of glory, so that they do not cease from their struggle each to get the better of the other, while their ship is actually settling down into the deep.

77. Turn now I beg you from this figurative description to the unhappy reality. Did it not at one time appear that the Arian schism, after its separation into a sect opposed to the Church of God, stood itself alone in hostile array? But when the attitude of our foes against us was changed from one of long standing and bitter strife to one of open warfare, then, as is well known, the war was split up in more ways than I can tell into many subdivisions, so that all men were stirred to a state of inveterate hatred alike by common party spirit and individual suspicion. But what storm at sea was ever so fierce and wild as this tempest of the Churches? In it every landmark of the Fathers has been moved; every foundation, every bulwark of opinion has been shaken: everything buoyed up on the unsound is dashed about and shaken down. We attack one another. We are overthrown by one another. If our enemy is not the first to strike us, we are wounded by the comrade at our side. If a foeman is stricken and falls, his fellow soldier tramples him down. There is at least this bond of union between us that we hate our common foes, but no sooner have the enemy gone by than we find enemies in one another. And who could make a complete list of all the wrecks? Some have gone to the bottom on the attack of the enemy, some through the unsuspected treachery of their allies, some from the blundering of their own officers. We see, as it were, whole churches, crews and all, dashed and shattered upon the sunken reefs of disingenuous heresy, while others of the enemies of the Spirit of Salvation have seized the helm and made shipwreck of the faith. And then the disturbances wrought by the princes of the world have caused the downfall of the people with a violence unmatched by that of hurricane or whirlwind. The luminaries of the world, which God set to give light to the souls of the people, have been driven from their homes, and a darkness verily gloomy and disheartening has settled on the Churches. The terror of universal ruin is already imminent, and yet their mutual rivalry is so unbounded as to blunt all sense of danger. Individual hatred is of more importance than the general and common warfare, for men by whom the immediate gratification of ambition is esteemed more highly than the rewards that await us in a time to come, prefer the glory of getting the better

of their opponents to securing the common welfare of mankind. So all men alike, each as best he can, lift the hand of murder against one another. Harsh rises the cry of the combatants encountering one another in dispute; already all the Church is almost full of the inarticulate screams, the unintelligible noises, rising from the ceaseless agitations that divert the right rule of the doctrine of true religion, now in the direction of excess, now in that of defect. On the one hand are they who confound the Persons and are carried away into Judaism; on the other hand are they that, through the opposition of the natures, pass into heathenism. Between these opposite parties inspired Scripture is powerless to mediate; the traditions of the apostles cannot suggest terms of arbitration. Plain speaking is fatal to friendship, and disagreement in opinion all the ground that is wanted for a quarrel. No oaths of confederacy are so efficacious in keeping men true to sedition as their likeness in error. Every one is a theologian though he have his soul branded with more spots than can be counted. The result is that innovators find a plentiful supply of men ripe for faction, while self-appointed scions of the house of place-hunters reject the government of the Holy Spirit and divide the chief dignities of the Churches. The institutions of the Gospel have now everywhere been thrown into confusion by want of discipline; there is an indescribable pushing for the chief places while every self-advertiser tries to force himself into high office. The result of this lust for ordering is that our people are in a state of wild confusion for lack of being ordered; the exhortations of those in authority are rendered wholly purposeless and void, because there is not a man but, out of his ignorant impudence, thinks that it is just as much his duty to give orders to other people, as it is to obey anyone else.

78. So, since no human voice is strong enough to be heard in such a disturbance, I reckon silence more profitable than speech, for if there is any truth in the words of the Preacher, "The words of wise men are heard in quiet," in the present condition of things any discussion of them must be anything but becoming. I am moreover restrained by the Prophet's saying, "Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time," a time when some trip up their neighbours' heels, some stamp on a man when he is down, and others clap their hands with joy, but there is not one to feel for the fallen and hold out a helping hand, although according to the ancient law

he is not uncondemned, who passes by even his enemy's beast of burden fallen under his load. This is not the state of things now. Why not? The love of many has waxed cold; brotherly concord is destroyed, the very name of unity is ignored, brotherly admonitions are heard no more, nowhere is there Christian pity, nowhere falls the tear of sympathy. Now there is no one to receive "the weak in faith," but mutual hatred has blazed so high among fellow clansmen that they are more delighted at a neighbour's fall than at their own success. Just as in a plague, men of the most regular lives suffer from the same sickness as the rest, because they catch the disease by communication with the infected, so nowadays by the evil rivalry which possesses our souls we are carried away to an emulation in wickedness, and are all of us each as bad as the others. Hence merciless and sour sit the judges of the erring; unfeeling and hostile are the critics of the well disposed. And to such a depth is this evil rooted among us that we have become more brutish than the brutes; they do at least herd with their fellows, but our most savage warfare is with our own people.

79. For all these reasons I ought to have kept silence, but I was drawn in the other direction by love, which "seeketh not her own," and desires to overcome every difficulty put in her way by time and circumstance. I was taught too by the children at Babylon, that, when there is no one to support the cause of true religion, we ought alone and all unaided to do our duty. They from out of the midst of the flame lifted up their voices in hymns and praise to God, reeking not of the host that set the truth at naught, but sufficient, three only that they were, with one another. Wherefore we too are undismayed at the cloud of our enemies, and, resting our hope on the aid of the Spirit, have, with all boldness, proclaimed the truth. Had I not so done, it would truly have been terrible that the blasphemers of the Spirit should so easily be emboldened in their attack upon true religion, and that we, with so mighty an ally and supporter at our side, should shrink from the service of that doctrine, which by the tradition of the Fathers has been preserved by an unbroken sequence of memory to our own day. A further powerful incentive to my undertaking was the warm fervour of your "love unfeigned," and the seriousness and taciturnity of your disposition; a guarantee that you would not publish what I was about to say to all the world,—not because it would not be worth making known, but to avoid casting

pearls before swine. My task is now done. If you find what I have said satisfactory, let this make an end to our discussion of these matters. If you think any point requires further elucidation, pray do not hesitate to pursue the investigation with all diligence, and to add to your information by putting any uncontroversial question. Either through me or through others the Lord will grant full explanation on matters which have yet to be made clear, according to the knowledge supplied to the worthy by the Holy Spirit. Amen.