The Letter of Agatho, Pope of Old Rome, to the Emperor

Council of Constantinople (AD 681) (AD 681)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

The Letter of Agatho, Pope of Old Rome, to the Emperor

Addressed to the Sixth Council
(Read at the Fourth Session, November 15, at the request of George, Patriarch of Constantinople and his Suffragans.) Introductory Note. (Bossuet, Defensio Cler. Gal. Lib. VII., cap. xxiv.)

All the fathers spoke one by one, and only after examination were the letters of St. Agatho and the whole Western Council approved. Agatho, indeed, and the Western Bishops put forth their decrees thus ['We have directed persons from our humility to your valour protected of God, which shall offer to you the report of us all, that is, of all the Bishops in the Northern or Western Regions, in which too we have summed up the confession of our Apostolic Faith, yet] not as those who wished to contend about these things as being uncertain, but, being certain and unchangeable to see them forth in a brief definition, [suppliantly beseeching you that, by the favour of your sacred majesty, you would command these same things to be preached to all, and to have force with all.'] Undoubtedly, therefore, so far as in them lay, they defined the matter. The question was, whether the other Churches throughout the world would agree, and a matter so great was only made clear after Episcopal examination. But the high, magnificent, yet true expressions, which St. Agatho had used of his See, namely, that resting on the promise of the Lord it had never turned aside from the path of truth, and that its Pontiffs, the predecessors of Agatho, who were charged in the person of Peter to strengthen their brethren, had ever discharged that office, this the Fathers of the Council hear and receive.

But not the less they examine the matter, they inquire into the decrees of Roman Pontiffs, and, after inquiry held, approve Agatho's decrees, condemn those of Honorius: a certain proof that they did not understand Agatho's expressions as if it were necessary to receive without discussion every decree of Roman Pontiffs even deride, inasmuch as they are subjected to the supreme and final examination of a General Council: but as if these expressions taken as a whole, in their total, hold good in the full and complete succession of Peter, as we have often said, and in its proper place shall say at greater length.

(Found in Migne, Pat. Lat., Tom. LXXXVII., col. 1161; L. and C., Tom. VI., col. 630.) Agatho a bishop and servant of the servants of God to the most devout and serene victors and conquerors, our most beloved sons and lovers of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Emperor Constantine the Great, and to Heraclius and Tiberius, Augustuses.

While contemplating the various anxieties of human life, and while groaning with vehement weeping before the one true God, in prayer that he might impart to my wavering soul the comfort of his divine mercy, and might lift me by his right hand out of the depths of grief and anxiety, I most gratefully recognize, my most illustrious lords and sons, that your purpose [i.e. of holding a Council] afforded me deep and wonderful consolation. For it was most pious and emanated from your most meek tranquillity, taught by the divine benignity for the benefit of the Christian commonwealth divinely entrusted to your keeping, that your imperial power and clemency might have a care to enquire diligently concerning the things of God (through whom Kings do reign, who is himself King of Kings and Lord of Lords) and might seek after the truth of his spotless faith as it has been handed down by the Apostles and by the Apostolic Fathers, and be zealously affected to command that in all the churches the pure tradition be held. And that no one may be ignorant of this pious intention of yours, or suspect that we have been compelled by force, and have not freely consented to the carrying into effect of the imperial decrees touching the preaching of our evangelical faith which was addressed to our predecessor Donus, a pontiff of Apostolic memory, they have through our ministry been sent to and entirely approved by all nations and peoples;

for these decrees Holy Spirit by his grace dictated to the tongue of the imperial pen, out of the treasure of a pure heart, as the words of an adviser not of an oppressor, defending himself, not looking with contempt upon others; not afflicting, but exhorting; and inviting to those things which are of God in godly wise, because he, the Maker and Redeemer of all men, who had he come in the majesty of his Godhead into the world, might have terrified mortals, preferred to descend through his inestimable clemency and humility to the estate of us whom he had created and thus to redeem us, who also expects from us a willing confession of the true faith.

And this it is that the blessed Peter, the prince of the Apostles, teaches: ”Feed the flock of Christ which is among you, not by constraint, but willingly, exhorting it according to God. Therefore, encouraged by these imperial decrees, O most meek lords of all things, and relieved from the depths of affliction and raised to the hope of consolation, I have begun, refreshed somewhat by a better confidence, to comply with promptness with the flyings which were sometime ago bidden by the Sacra of your gentlest fortitude, and am endeavouring in obedience therewith to find persons, such as our deficient times and the quality of this obedient province permit, and taking advice with my fellow-servant bishops, as well concerning the approaching synod of this Apostolic See, as concerning our own clergy, the lovers of the Christian Empire, and, afterwards concerning the religious servants of God, that I might exhort them to follow in haste the footsteps of your most pious Tranquillity. And, were it not that the great compass of the provinces, in which our humility’s council is situated had

caused so great a loss of time, our servitude a while ago could have fulfilled with studious obedience what even now has scarcely been done.

For while from the various provinces a council has been gathering about us, and while we have been able to select some persons of those from this very Roman city immediately subject to your most serene power, or from those near by, others again we have been obliged to wait for from far distant provinces, in which the word of Christian faith was preached by those sent by the predecessors of my littleness; and thus quite a space of time has elapsed: and I pass over my bodily pains in consequence of which life to a perpetually suffering person is neither possible nor pleasant. Therefore, most Christian lords and sons, in accordance with the most pious jussio of your God-protected clemency, we have had a care to send, with the devotion of a prayerful heart (from the obedience we owe you, not because we relied on the [superabundant] knowledge of those whom we send to you), our fellow-servants here present, Abundantius, John, and John, our most reverend brother bishops, Theodore and George our most beloved sons and presbyters, with our most beloved son John, a deacon, and with Constantine, a subdeacon of this holy spiritual mother, the Apostolic See, as well as Theodore, the presbyter legate of the holy Church of Ravenna and the religious servants of God the monks.

For, among men placed amid the Gentiles, and earning their daily bread by bodily labour with considerable distraction, how could a knowledge of the Scriptures, in its fulness, be found unless what has been canonically defined by our holy and apostolic predecessors, and by the venerable five councils, we preserve in simplicity of heart, and without any distorting keep the faith come to us from the Fathers, always desirous and endeavouring to possess that one and chiefest good, viz.: that nothing be diminished from the things canonically defined, and that nothing be changed nor added thereto, but that those same things, both in words and sense, be guarded untouched? To these same commissioners we also have given the witness of some of the holy Fathers, whom this Apostolic Church of Christ receives, together with their books, so that, having obtained from the power of your most benign Christianity the privilege of suggesting, they might out of these endeavour to give satisfaction, (when your imperial Meekness shall have so commanded) as to what this Apostolic Church of Christ, their spiritual mother and the mother of your God-sprung empire, believes and preaches, not in words of worldly eloquence, which are not at the command of ordinary men, but in the integrity of the apostolic fifth, in which having been taught from the cradle, we pray that we may serve and obey the Lord of heaven, the Propagator of your Christian empire, even unto the end.

Consequently, we have granted them faculty or authority with your most tranquil mightiness, toafford satisfaction with simplicity whenever your clemency shall command, it being enjoined on them as a limitation that they presume not to add to, take away, or to change anything; but that they set forth this tradition of the Apostolic See in all sincerity as it has been taught by the apostolic pontiffs, who were our predecessors. For these delegates we most humbly implore with bent knees of the mind your clemency ever full of condescen-

sion, that agreeably to the most benign and most august promise of the imperial Sacra, your Christlike Tranquillity may deem them worthy of acceptance and may deign to give a favourable hearing to their most humble suggestions. Thus may your meekest Piety find the ears of Almighty God open to your prayers, and may you order that they return to their own unharmed in their rectitude of our Apostolic faith, as well as in the integrity of their bodies. And thus may the supernal Majesty restore to the benign rule of your government through the most heroic and unconquerable labours of your God-strengthened clemency, the whole Christian commonwealth, and may he subdue hostile nations to your mighty sceptre, that there may be satisfaction from this time forth to every soul and to all nations, because what you deigned to promise solemnly by your most august letters about the immunity and safety of those who came to the Council, you have fulfilled in all respects.

It is not their wisdom that gave us confidence to make bold to send them to your pious presence; but our littleness obediently complied with what your imperial benignity, with a gracious order, exhorted to. And briefly we shall intimate to your divinely instructed Piety, what the strength of our Apostolic faith contains, which we have received through Apostolic tradition and through the tradition of the Apostolical pontiffs, and that of the five holy general synods, through which the foundations of Christ's Catholic Church have been strengthened and established; this then is the status [and the regular tradition] of our Evangelical and Apostolic faith, to wit, that as we confess the holy and inseparable Trinity, that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to be of one deity, of one nature and substance or essence, so we will profess also that it has one natural will, power, operation, domination, majesty, potency, and glory. And whatever is said of the same Holy Trinity essentially in singular number we understand to refer to the one nature of the three consubstantial Persons, having been so taught by canonical logic.

But when we make a confession concerning one of the same three Persons of that Holy Trinity, of the Son of God, or God the Word, and of the mystery of his adorable dispensation according to the flesh, we assert that all things are double in the one arm the same our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the Evangelical tradition, that is to say, we confess his two natures, to wit the divine and the human, of which and in which he, even after the wonderful and inseparable union, subsists. And we confess that each of his natures has its own natural propriety, and that the divine, has all filings that are divine, without any sin. And we recognize that each one (of the two natures) of the one and the same incarnated, that is, humanated (humanati) Word of God is in him unconfusedly, inseparably and unchangeably, intelligence alone discerning a unity, to avoid the error of confusion. For we equally detest the blasphemy of division and of commixture. For when we confess two natures and two natural wills, and two natural operations in our one Lord Jesus Christ, we do not assert that they are contrary or opposed one to the other (as those who err from the path of truth and accuse the apostolic tradition of doing.

Far be this impiety from the hearts of the faithful!), nor as though separated (per se separated) in two persons or subsistences, but we say that as the same our Lord Jesus Christ

has two natures so also he has two natural wills and operations, to wit, the divine and the human:the divine will and operation he has in common with the coessential Father from all eternity: the human, he has received from us, taken with our nature in time. This is the apostolic and evangelic tradition, which the spiritual mother of your most felicitous empire, the Apostolic Church of Christ, holds.

This is the pure expression of piety. This is the true and immaculate profession of the Christian religion, not invented by human cunning, but which was taught by the Holy Ghost through the princes of the Apostles. This is the firm and irreprehensible doctrine of the holy Apostles, the integrity of the sincere piety of which, so long as it is preached freely, defends the empire of your Tranquillity in the Christian commonwealth, and exults [will defend it, will render it stable; and exulting], and (as we firmly trust) will demonstrate it full of happiness. Believe your most humble [servant], my most Christian lords and sons, that I am pouring forth these prayers with my tears, or its stability and exultation [in Greek exaltation]. And these things I (although unworthy and insignificant) dare advise through my sincere love, because your God-granted victory is our salvation, the happiness of your Tranquillity is our joy, the harmlessness of your kindness is the security of our littleness. And therefore I beseech you with a contrite heart and rivers of tears, with prostrated mind, deign to stretch forth your most clement right hand to the Apostolic doctrine which the co-worker of your pious labours, the blessed apostle Peter, has delivered, that it be not hidden under a bushel, but that it be preached in the whole earth more shrilly than a bugle:

because the true confession thereof for which Peter was pronounced blessed by the Lord of all things, was revealed by the Father of heaven, for he received from the Redeemer of all himself, by three commendations, the duty of feeding the spiritual sheep of the Church; under whose protecting shield, this Apostolic Church of his has never turned away from the path of truth in any direction of error, whose authority, as that of the Prince of all the Apostles, the whole Catholic Church, and the Ecumenical Synods have faithfully embraced, and followed in all things; and all the venerable Fathers have embraced its Apostolic doctrine, through which they as the most approved luminaries of the Church of Christ have shone; and the holy orthodox doctors have venerated and followed it, while the heretics have pursued it with false criminations and with derogatory hatred. This is the living tradition of the Apostles of Christ, which his Church holds everywhere, which is chiefly to be loved and fostered, and is to be preached with confidence, which conciliates with God through its truthful confession, which also renders one commendable to Christ the Lord, which keeps the Christian empire of your Clemency, which gives far-reaching victories to your most pious Fortitude from the Lord of heaven, which accompanies you in battle, and defeats your foes;

which protects on every side as an impregnable wall your God-sprung empire, which throws terror into opposing nations, and smites them with the divine wrath, which also in wars celestially gives triumphal palms over the downfall and subjection of the enemy, and ever guards your most faithful sovereignty secure and joyful in peace. For this is the rule of the

true faith, which this spiritual mother of your most tranquil empire, the Apostolic Church of Christ, has both in prosperity and in adversity always held and defended with energy; which, it will be proved, by the grace of Almighty God, has never erred from the path of the apostolic tradition, nor has she been depraved by yielding to heretical innovations, but from the beginning she has received the Christian faith from her founders, the princes of the Apostles of Christ, and remains undefiled unto the end, according to the divine promise of the Lord and Saviour himself, which he uttered in the holy Gospels to the prince of his disciples: saying, "Peter, Peter, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that (thy) faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Let your tranquil Clemency therefore consider, since it is the Lord and Saviour of all, whose faith it is, that promised that Peter's faithshould not fail and exhorted him to strengthen his brethren, how it is known to all that the Apostolic pontiffs, the predecessors of my littleness, have always confidently done this very thing: of whom also our littleness, since I have received this ministry by divine designation, wishes to be the follower, although unequal to them and the least of all. For woe is me, if I neglect to preach the truth of my Lord, which they have sincerely preached. Woe is me, if I cover over with silence the truth which I am bidden to give to the exchangers, i.e., to teach to the Christian people and imbue it therewith. What shall I say in the future examination by Christ himself, if I blush (which God forbid! to preach here the truth of his words? What satisfaction shall I be able to give for myself, what for the souls committed to me, when he demands a strict account of the office I have received? Who, then, my most clement and most pious lords and sons, (I speak trembling and prostrate in spirit) would not be stirred by that admirable promise, which is made to the faithful: "Whoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father, who is in heaven"?

And which one even of the infidels shall not be terrified by that most severe threat, in which he protests that he will be full of wrath, and declares that "Whoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father, who is in heaven"? Whence also blessed Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, gives warning and says: "But though we, or an angel from the heaven should preach to you any other Gospel from what we have evangelized to you, let him be anathema. Since, therefore, such an extremity of punishment overhangs the corruptors, or suppressors of truth by silence, would not any one flee from an attempt at curtailing the truth of the Lord's faith? Wherefore the predecessors of Apostolic memory of my littleness, learned in the doctrine of the Lord, ever since the prelates of the Church of Constantinople have been trying to introduce into the immaculate Church of Christ an heretical innovation, have never ceased to exhort and warn them with many prayers, that they should, at least by silence, desist from the heretical error of the depraved dogma, lest from this they make the beginning of a split in the unity of the Church, by asserting one will, and one operation of the two natures in the one Jesus Christ our Lord:

a thing which the Arians and the Apollinarists, the Eutychians, the Timotheans, the Acephali, the Theodosians and the Gaianitae taught, and every heretical madness, whether of those who confound, or of those who divide the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. Those that confound the mystery of the holy Incarnation, inasmuch as they say that there is one nature of the deity and humanity of Christ, contend that he has one will, as of one, and (one) personal operation. But they who divide, on the other hand, the inseparable union, unite the two natures which they acknowledge that the Saviour possesses, not however in an union which is recognized to be hypostatic; but blasphemously join them by concord, through the affection, of the will, like two subsistences, i.e., two somebodies. Moreover, the Apostolic Church of Christ, the spiritual mother of your God-founded empire, confesses one Jesus Christ our Lord existing of and in two natures, and she maintains that his two natures, to wit, the divine and the human, exist in him unconfused even after their inseparable union, and she acknowledges that each of these natures of Christ is perfect in the proprieties of its nature, and she confesses that all things belonging to the proprieties of the natures are double, because the same our Lord Jesus Christ himself is both perfect God and perfect man, of two and in two natures: and after his wonderful Incarnation, his deity cannot be thought of without his humanity, nor his humanity without his deity.

Consequently, therefore, according to the rule of the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, she also confesses and preaches thatthere are in him two natural wills and two natural operations. For if anybody should mean a personal will, when in the holy Trinity there are said to be three Persons, it would be necessary that there should be asserted three personal wills, and three personal operations (which is absurd and truly profane). Since, as the truth of the Christian faith holds, the will is natural, where the one nature of the holy and inseparable Trinity is spoken of, it must be consistently understood that there is one natural will, and cue natural operation.

But when in truth we confess that in the one person of our Lord Jesus Christ the mediator between God and men, there are two natures (that is to say the divine and the human), even after his admirable union, just as we canonically confess the two natures of one and the same person, so too we confess his two natural wills and two natural operations. But that the understanding of this truthful confession may become clear to your Piety's mind from the God-inspired doctrine of the Old and the New Testament, (for your Clemency is incomparably more able to penetrate the meaning of the sacred Scriptures, than our littleness to set it forth in flowing words), our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who is true and perfect God, and true and perfect man, in his holy Gospels shews forth in some instances human things, in others, divine, and still in others both together, making a manifestation concerning himself in order that he might instruct his faithful to believe and preach that he is both true God and true man. Thus as man he prays to the Father to take away the cup of suffering, because in him our human nature was complete, sin only excepted, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And in another passage: "Not my will, but thine be done.

If we wish to know the meaning of which testimony as explained by the holy and approved Fathers, and truly to understand what "my will," what "thine" signify, the blessed Ambrose in his second book to the Emperor Gratian, of blessed memory, teaches us the meaning of this passage in these words, saying: "He then, receives my will, he takes my sorrow, I confidently call it sorrow as I am speaking of the cross, mine is the will, which he calls his, because he bears my sorrow as man, he spoke as a man, and therefore he says: 'Not as I will but as thou wilt.'" Mine is the sadness which he has received according to my affection. See, most pious of princes, how clearly here this holy Father sets forth that the words our Lord used in his prayer, "Not my will," pertain to his humanity; through which also he is said, according to the teaching of Blessed Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, to have "become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore also it is taught us that he was obedient to his parents, which must piously be understood to refer to his voluntary obedience, not according to his divinity (by which he governs all things), but according to his humanity, by which he spontaneously submitted himself to his parents. St.

Luke the Evangelist likewise bears witness to the same thing, telling how the same our Lord Jesus Christ prayed according to his humanity to his Father, and said, "Father, if it be possible let the cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will but thine be done,"-which passage Athanasius, the Confessor of Christ, and Archbishop of the Church of Alexandria, in his book against Apollinaris the heretic, concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, also understanding the wills to be two, thus explains: And when he says, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done," and again, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; he shews that there are two wills, the one human which is the will of the flesh, but the other divine. For his human will, out of the weakness of the flesh was fleeing away from the passion, but his divine will was ready for it. What truer explanation could be found? For how is it possible not to acknowledge in him two wills, to wit, a human and a divine, when in him, even after the inseparable union, there are two natures according to the definitions of the synods? For John also, who leaned upon the Lord's breast, his beloved disciple, shews forth the same self-restraint in these words: "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of the Father that sent me. And again:

"This is the will of him that sent me, thatof all that he gave me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. Again he introduces the Lord as disputing with the Jews, and saying among other things: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. On the meaning of which divine words blessed Augustine, a most illustrious doctor, thus writes in his book against Maximinus the Arian. He says, "When the Son says to the Father 'Not what I will, but what thou wilt,' what doth it profit thee, that thou broughtest thy words into subjection and sayest, It shews truly that his will was subject to his Father, as though we would deny that the will of man should be subject to the will of God? For that the Lord said this in his human nature, anyone will quickly see who studies attentively this place of the Gospel. For therein he says, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' Can this possibly be said of the nature of the One Word? But, O man, who thinkest to make

the nature of the Holy Ghost to groan, why do you say that the nature of the Only-begotten Word of God cannot be sad?

But to prevent anyone arguing in this way, he does not say 'I am sad;' (and even if he had so said, it could properly only have been understood of his human nature) but he says 'My soul is sad,' which soul he has as man; however in this also which he said, 'Not what I will' he shewed that he willed something different from what the Father did, which he could not have done except in his human nature, since he did not introduce our infirmity into his divine nature, but would transfigure human affection. For had he not been made man, the Only Word could in no way have said to the Father, 'Not what I will.' For it could never be possible for that immutable nature to will anything different from what the Father willed. If you would but make this distinction, O ye Arians, ye would not be heretics."

In this disputation this venerable Father shews that when the Lord says "his own" he means the will of his humanity, and when he says not to do "his own will," he teaches us not chiefly to seek our own wills but that through obedience we should submit our wills to the Divine Will. From all which it is evident that he had a human will by which he obeyed his Father, and that he had in himself this same human will immaculate from all sin, as true God and man. Which thing St. Ambrose also thus treats of in his explanation of St. Luke the Evangelist. [After this follows a catena of Patristic quotations which I have not thought worth while to produce in full. After St. Ambrose he cites St. Leo, then St. Gregory Nazianzen, then St. Augustine. (L. & C., col. 647.)]

From which testimonies it is clear that each of those natures which the spiritual Doctor has here enumerated has its own natural property, and that to each one a will ought to be assigned. For an angelic nature cannot have a divine or a human will, neither can a human nature have a divine or an angelic will. For no nature can have anything or any motion which pertains to another nature but only that which is naturally given by creation. And as this is the truth of the matter it is most certainly clear that we must needs confess that in our Lord Jesus Christ there are two natures and substances, to wit, the Divine and human, united in his one subsistence or person, and that we further confess that there are in him two natural wills, viz.: the divine and the human, for his divinity so far as its nature is concerned could not be said to possess a human will, nor should his humanity be believed to have naturally a divine will: And again, neither of these two substances of Christ must be confessed as being without a natural will; but his human will was lifted up by the omnipotency of his divinity, and his divine will was revealed to men through his humanity. Therefore it is necessary to refer to him as God such things as are divine, and as man such things as are human;

and each must be truly recognized through the hypostatic union of the one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ, which the most true decree of the Council of Chalcedon sets forth- [Here follows citation. This same thing also the holy synod which was gathered together in Constantinople in the time of the Emperor Justinian of august memory, teaches in the viith. chapter of its definitions. [Here follows the citation,] Moreover it is necessary that we

should faithfully keep what those Venerable Synods taught, so that we never take away the difference of natures as a result of the union, but confess one Christ, true and perfect God and also true and perfect man, the propriety of each nature being kept intact. Wherefore, if in no respect the difference of the natures of our Lord Jesus Christ has been taken away, it is necessary that we preserve this same difference in all its proprieties. For whoso teaches that the difference is in no respect to be taken away, declares that it must be preserved in all things. But when the heretics and the followers of heretics say that there is but one will and one operation, how is this difference recognized? Or where is the difference which has been defined by this holy Synod preserved?

While if it is asserted that there is but one will in him (which is absurd), those who make this assertion must needs say that that will is either human or divine, or else composite from both, mixed and confused, or (according to the teaching of all heretics) that Christ has one will and one operation, proceeding from his one composite nature (as they hold). And thus, without any doubt, the difference of nature is destroyed, which the holy synods declared to be preserved in all respects even after the admirable union. Because, though they taught that Christ was one, his person and substance one, yet on account of the union of the natures which was made hypostatically, they likewise decreed that we should clearly acknowledge and teach the difference of those natures which were united in him, after the admirable union. Therefore if the proprieties of the natures in the same our one Lord Jesus Christ were preserved on account of the difference [of the natures], it is congruous that we should with full faith confess also the difference of his natural wills and operations, in order that we may be shown to have followed in all respects their doctrine, and may admit into the Church of Christ no heretical novelty.

And although there exist numerous works of the other holy Fathers, nevertheless we subjoin to this our humble exposition a few testimonies out of the books which are in Greek, for the sake of fastidiousness. [Here follows a catena of passages from the Greek fathers, viz.: St. Gregory Theologus, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. John bishop of Constantinople, St. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria. (L. & C., col. 654.)] From these truthful testimonies it is also demonstrated that these venerable fathers predicated in the one and the same Lord Jesus Christ two natural wills, viz.: a divine and a human, for when St. Gregory Nazianzen says," The willing of that man who is understood to be the Saviour," he shows that the human will of the Saviour was deified through its union with the Word, and therefore it is not contrary to God. So likewise he proves that he had a human, although deified will, and this same he had (as he teaches in what follows) as well as his divine will, which was one and the same with that of the Father. If therefore he had a divine and a deified will, he had also two wills. For what is divine by nature has no need of being deified; and what is deified is not truly divine by nature. And when St. Gregory Nyssen, a great bishop, says that the true confession of the mystery is, that there should be understood one human will and another a divine will in Christ, what does he bid us understand when he says one and another will, except that there are manifestly two wills?

[He next proceeds to comment upon the passage cited from St. John, then upon that from St. Cyril of Alexandria. After this follow quotations from St. Hilary, St. Athanasius, St. Denys the Areopagite, St. Ambrose, St. Leo, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. Cyril of Alexandria, which are next commented on in their order. He then proceeds: (L. & C., col. 662.)]

There are not lacking most telling passages in other of the venerable fathers, who speak clearly of the two natural operations in Christ, not to mention St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John of Constantinople, or those who afterwards conducted the laborious conflicts in defence of the venerable council of Chalcedon and of the Tome of St. Leo against the heretics from whose error the assertion of this new dogma has arisen: that is to say, John, bishop of Scythopolis, Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, Euphraemius and Anastasius the elder, most worthy rulers of the church of Theopolis, and above all that emulator of the true and apostolic faith, the Emperor Justinian of pious memory, whose uprightness of faith exalted the Christian State as much as his sincere confession pleased God. And his pious memory is esteemed worthy of veneration by all nations, whose uprightness of faith was disseminated with praise throughout the whole world by his most august edicts: one of these, to wit, that addressed to Zoilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, against the heresy of the Acephali to satisfy them of the rectitude of the apostolic faith, we offer to your most tranquil Christianity, sending it together with this paper of our lowliness through the same carriers.

But lest this declaration should be thought burdensome on account of its length, we have inserted in this declaration of our humility only a few of the testimonies of the Holy Fathers, especially [when writing to those] on whom the care and arrangement of the whole world as on a firm foundation are recognized to rest; since this is altogether incomparable and great, that the care of the whole Christian State being laid aside for a little out of love and zeal for true religion, your august and most religious clemency should desire to understand more clearly the doctrine of apostolical preaching. For from the different approved fathers the truth of the Orthodox faith has become clear although the treatment is short. For the approved fathers thought it to be superfluous to discourse at length upon what was evident and clear to all; for who, even if he be dull of wit, does not perceive what is evident to all? For it is impossible and contrary to the order of nature that there should be a nature without a natural operation: and even the heretics did not dare to say this, although they were, all of them, hunting for human craftiness and cunning questions against the orthodoxy of the faith, and arguments agreeable to their depravities.

How then can that now be asserted which never was said by the holy orthodox fathers, nor even was presumptuously invented by the profane heretics, viz.: that of the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, the proprieties of each of which are recognized as being preserved in Christ, that anyone in sound mind should declare there was but one operation? Since if there is one, let them say whether it be temporal or eternal, divine or human, uncreated or created: the same as that of the Father or different from that of the Father. If therefore it is one, that one and the same must be common to the divinity anti to the humanity (which is absurd), therefore while the Son of God, who is both God and man,

wrought human things on earth, likewise also the Father worked with him according to his nature (naturaliter, fusikwj); for what things the Father doeth these the Son also doeth likewise. But if (as is the truth) the human acts which Christ did are to be referred to his person alone as the Son, which is not the same as that of the Father; in one nature Christ worked one set of works, and in the other another, so that according to his divinity the Son does the same things that the Father does; and likewise according to his humanity, what things are proper to the manhood, those same, he as man, did because he is truly both God and man.

For which reason we rightly believe that that same person, since he is one, has two natural operations, to wit, the divine and the human, one uncreated, and the other created, as true and perfect God and as true and perfect man, the one and the same, the mediator between God and men, the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore from the quality of the operations there is recognized a difference void of offence (aproskopoj) of the natures which are joined in Christ through the hypostatic union. We now proceed to cite some passages from the execrable writings of the heretics hated of God, whose words and sayings we equally abominate, for the demonstration of those things which our inventors of new dogma have followed teaching that in Christ there is but one will and one operation.

[Then follow quotations from Apollinaris, Severus, Theodosius of Alexandria. (L. & C., col. 667.)] Behold, most pious lords and sons, by the testimonies of the holy Fathers, as by spiritual rays, the doctrine of the Catholic and ApostolicChurch has been illustrated and the darkness of heretical blindness, which is offering error to men for imitation, has been revealed. Now it is necessary that the new doctrine should follow somebody, and by whose authority it is supported, we shall note. [Here follow quotations from Cyrus of Alexandria, Theodore of Pharon, Sergius of Constantinople, Pyrrhus, Paulus his succes- sor, Peter his successor. (L. & C., col. 670.)] Let then your God-rounded clemency with the internal eye of discrimination, which for the guidance of the Christian people you have been deemed worthy to receive by the Grace of God, take heed which one of such doctors you think the Christian people should follow, the doctrine of which one of these they should embrace so as to be saved; for they condemn all, and each one of them the other, according as the various and unstable definitions in their writings assert sometimes that there is one will and one operation, sometimes that there is neither one nor two operations, sometimes one will and operation, and again two wills and two operations, likewise one will and one operation, and again neither one, nor two, and somebody else one and two.

Who does not hate, and rage against, and avoid such blind errors, if he have any desire to be saved and seek to offer to the Lord at his coming a right faith? Therefore the Holy Church of God, the mother of your most Christian power, should be delivered and liberated with all your might (through the help of God) from the errors of such teachers, and the evangelical and apostolic uprightness of the orthodox faith, which has been established upon the firm reek of this Church of blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, which by his grace and guardianship remains free from all error, [that faith I say] the whole number of rulers and

priests, of the clergy and of the people, unanimously should confess and preach with us as the true declaration of the Apostolic tradition, in order to please God and to save their own souls.

And these things we have taken pains to insert in the tractate of our humility, for we have been afflicted and have groaned without ceasing that such grievous errors should be entertained by bishops of the l Church, who are zealous to establish their own peculiar views rather than the truth of the faith, and think that our sincere fraternal admonition has its spring in a contempt for them. And indeed the apostolic predecessors of my humility admonished, begged, upbraided, besought, reproved, and exercised every kind of exhortation that the recent wound bright receive a remedy, moved thereto not by a mind filled with hatred (God is my witness) nor through the elation of boasting, nor through the opposition of contention, nor through an inane desire to find some fault with their teachings, nor through anything akin to the love of arrogance, but out of zeal for the uprightness of the truth, and for the rule of the confession of the pure Gospel, and for the salvation of souls, and for the stability of the Christian state, and for the safety of those who rule the Roman Empire. Nor did they cease from their admonitions after the long duration of this domesticated error, but always exhorted and bore record, and that with fraternal charity, not through malice or pertinacious hatred (far be it from the Christian heart to rejoice at another's fall, when the Lord of all teaches, "I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live;

and who rejoiceth over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety-and-nine just persons: who came down from heaven to earth to deliver the lost sheep, inclining the power of his majesty), but desiring them with outstretched spiritual arms, and exhorting to embrace them returning to the unity of the orthodox faith, and awaiting their conversion to the full rectitude of the orthodox faith: that they might not make themselves aliens from our communion, that is from the communion of blessed Peter the Apostle, whose ministry, we (though unworthy) exercise, and preach the faith he has handed down, but that they should together with us pray Christ the Lord, the spotless sacrifice, for the stability of your most strong and serene Empire.

We believe, most pious lords [singular in the Latin] of all things, that there has been left no possible ambiguity which can prevent therecognizing of those who have followed the inventors of new dogma. For the sweetness of spiritual understanding with which the sayings of the Fathers are full has become evident to the eyes of all; and the stench of the heretics, to be avoided by all the faithful, has been made notorious. Nor has it remained unknown that the inventors of new dogma have been shewn to be the followers of heretics, and not the walkers in the footsteps of the holy Fathers: therefore whoever wishes to colour any error of his whatever, is condemned by the light of truth, as the Apostle of the Gentiles says, "For everything that doth make manifest is light," for the truth ever remains constant and the same, but falsehood is ever varying, and in its wanderings adopting things mutually contradictory. On this account the inventors of the new dogma have been shewn to have taught things mutually contradictory, because they were not willing to be followers of the Evan-

gelical and Apostolic faith. Wherefore since the truth has shone forth by the observations of your God-inspired piety, and falsity which has been exposed has attained the contempt which it deserved, it remains that the crowned truth may shine forth victoriously through the pious favours of your God-crowned clemency;

and that the error of novelty with it inventors and with those who follow their doctrine, may receive the punishment due their presumption, and be cast forth from the midst of the orthodox prelates for the heretical pravity of their innovation, which into the holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ they have endeavoured to introduce, and to stain with the contagion of heretical pravity the indivisible and unspotted body of the Church [of Christ]. For it is not just that the injurious should injure the innocent, nor that the offences of some should be visited upon the inoffensive, for even if in this world to the condemned mercy is extended, yet they who are thus spared reap for that sparing no benefit in the judgment of God, and by those thus sparing them there is incurred no little danger for their unlawful compassion.

But we believe that Almighty God has reserved for the happy days of your gentleness the amending of these things, that filling on earth the place and zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who has vouchsafed to crown your rule, ye may judge just judgment for his Evangelical and Apostolical truth: for although he be the Redeemer and Saviour of the human race yet he suffered injury, and bore it even until now, and inspired the empire of your fortitude, so that you should be worthy to follow the cause of his faith (as equity demanded, and as the determination of the Holy Fathers and of the Five General Synods decreed), and that you should avenge, through his guardianship, on the spurners of his faith, the injury done your Redeemer and Colleague in reigning, thus fulfilling magnanimously with imperial clemency that prophetic utterance with which David the King and Prophet, spake to God, saying, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Wherefore having been extolled for so God-pleasing a zeal, he was deemed fit to hear that blessed word spoken by the Creator of all men, "I have found David, a man after my heart, who will do all my will. And to him also it was promised in the Psalms, "I have found David, my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him:

My hand shall aid him and my arm shall comfort him," so that the most pious majesty of your Christian clemency may work to further the cause of Christ with burning zeal for the sake of remuneration, and may he make all the acts of your most powerful empire both happy and prosperous, who hath stored up his promise in the Holy Gospels, saying," Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you. For all, to whom has come the knowledge of the sacred heads, have been offering innumerable thanksgivings and unceasing praises to the defender of your most powerful dominion, being filled with admiration for the greatness of your clemency, in that you have so benignly set forth the kind intention of your august magnanimity; for in truth, as most pious and most just princes, you have deigned to treat divine things with the fear of God, having promised every immunity to those persons sent to you from our littleness.

And we are confident that what your pious clemency has promised, you are powerful to carry out, in order that what has been vowed and promised to God by the religious philanthropy beyond your Christian power, may nevertheless be fulfilled by the aid of his omnipotency. Wherefore let praise by all Christian nations, and eternal memory, and frequent prayer be poured forth before the Lord Christ, whose is the cause, for your safety, and your triumphs, and your complete victory, that the nations of the Gentiles, being impressed by the terror of the supernal majesty, may lay down most humbly their necks beneath the sceptre of your most powerful rule, that the power of your most pious kingdom may continue until the ceaseless joy of the eternal kingdom succeeds to this temporal reign. Nor could anything be found more likely to commend the clemency of your unconquerable fortitude to the divine majesty, than that those who err from the rule of truth should be repelled and the integrity of our Evangelical and Apostolic faith should be everywhere set forth and preached.

Moreover, most pious and God-instructed sons and lords, if the Archbishop of the Church of Constantinople shall choose to hold and to preach with us this most unblameable rule of Apostolic doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures, of the venerable synods, of the spiritual Fathers, according to their evangelical understanding, through which the form of the truth has been set forth by us through the assistance of the Spirit, there will ensue great peace to them that love the name of God, and there will remain no scandal of dissension, and that will come to pass which is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, when through the grace of the Holy Spirit the people had come to the acknowledging of Christianity, all of us will be of one heart and of one mind. But if (which God forbid! he shall prefer to embrace the novelty but lately introduced by others;

and shall ensnare himself with doctrines which are alien to the rule of orthodox truth and of our Apostolic faith, to decline which as injurious to souls' these have put off, despite the exhortation and admonitions of our predecessors in the Apostolic See, down to this day, he himself should know what kind of an answer he will have to give for such contempt in the divine examination of Christ before the judge of all, who is in heaven, to whom when he cometh to judgment also we ourselves are about to give an account of the ministry of preaching the truth which has been committed to us, or for the toleration of things contrary to the Christian religion: and may we (as I humbly pray) preserve unconfusedly and freely, with simplicity and purity, whole and undefiled, the Apostolic and Evangelical rule of the right faith as we have received it from the beginning. And may your most august serenity, for the affection and reverence which you bear to the Catholic and Apostolic right faith, receive the perfect reward of your pious labours from our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the ruler with you of your Christian empire, whose true confession you desire to preserve undefiled, because nothing in any respect has been neglected or omitted by your God-crowned clemency, which could minister to the peace of the churches, provided always that the integrity of the true faith was maintained:

since God, the Judge of all, who disposes the ending of all matters as he deems most expedient, seeks out the intent of the heart, and will accept a zeal for piety. Therefore I exhort you,

O most pious and clement Emperor, and together with my littleness every Christian man exhorts you on bended knee with all humility, that to all the God-pleasing goodnesses and admirable imperial benefits which the heavenly condescension has vouchsafed to grant to the human race through your God-accepted care, this also you would order, for the redintegration of perfect piety, to offer an acceptable sacrifice to Christ the Lord your fellow-ruler, granting entire impunity, and free faculty of speech to each one wishing to speak, and to urge a word in defence of the faith which he believes and holds, so that it may most manifestly be recognized by all that by no terror, by no force, by no threat or aversion any one wishing to speak for the truth of the Catholic and Apostolic faith, has been prohibited or repulsed, and that all unanimously may glorify your imperial (divinam) majesty, throughout the whole since of their lives for so great and so inestimable a good, and may pour forth unceasing prayers to Christ the Lord that your most strong empire may be preserved untouched and exalted. The Subscription. May the grace from above keep your empire, most pious lords, and place beneath its feet the neck of all the nations.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.