

A Sectional Confession of Faith, Part II

Gregory Thaumaturgus

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A FRAGMENT OF THE SAME DECLARATION OF FAITH, ACCOMPANIED BY GLOSSES.(1)

FROM GREGORY THAUMATURGUS, AS THEY SAY, IN HIS SECTIONAL CONFESSION OF FAITH.

To maintain two natures(2) in the one Christ, makes a Tetrads of the Trinity, says he; for he expressed himself thus: "And it is the true God, the unincarnate, that was manifested in the flesh, perfect with the true and divine perfection, not with two natures; nor do we speak of worshipping four (persons), viz., God, and the Son of God, and man, and the Holy Spirit." First, however, this passage is misapprehended, and is of very doubtful import. Nevertheless it bears that we should not speak of two persons in Christ, lest, by thus acknowledging Him as God, and as in the perfect divinity, and yet speaking of two persons, we should make a Tetrads of the divine persons, counting that of God the Father as one, and that of the Son of God as one, and that of the man as one, and that of the Holy Spirit as one. But, again, it bears also against recognising two divine natures,(3) and rather for acknowledging Him to be perfect God in one natural divine perfection, and not in two; for his object is to show that He became incarnate without change, and that He retains the divinity without duplication.(4) Accordingly he says shortly: "And while the affections of the flesh spring, the energy(5) retains the impassibility proper to it. He, therefore, who introduces the (idea of) passion into the energy is impious; for it was the Lord of glory that appeared in human form, having taken to Himself the human economy."

ELUCIDATION.

(The minister ... to the Gentiles, p. 43.)

IF St. Peter had been at Rome, St. Paul would not have come there (2 Cor. x. 16). The two apostles had each his jurisdiction, and they kept to their own "line of things" respectively. How, then, came St. Peter to visit Rome? The answer is clear: unless he came involuntarily, as a prisoner, he came to look after the Church of the Circumcision,(1) which was "in his measure;" and doubtless St. Paul urged him to this, the Hebrew Christians there being so large a proportion of the Church. St. Peter came "at the close of his life," doubtless attended by an apostolic companion, as St. Paul was, and Barnabas also (Acts xv. 39, 40). Linus probably laboured for St. Paul (in prison) among the Gentile Romans,(2) and Cletus for St. Peter among Jewish Christians. St. Peter survived all his martyred associates, and left Clement in charge of the whole Church. This most probable theory squares with all known facts, and reconciles all difficulties. Clement, then, was first bishop of Rome (A.D. 65); and so says Tertullian, vol. iii. p. 258, note 9.

That compendious but superficial little work, Smith's History of the First Ten Centuries,(3) justly censures as "misleading" the usage, which it yet keeps up, of calling the early bishops of Rome "Popes."(4) The same author utterly misunderstands Cyprian's references to Rome as "a principal cathedra," "a root and matrix," etc.; importing into the indefinite Latin a definite article. Cyprian applies a similar principle, after his master Tertullian (vol. iii. p. 260, this series), to all the Apostolic Sees, the matrices of Christian churches.