

BASIL THE GREAT: Eighth Epistle

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St Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea:

EPISTLE VIII: A defence of his withdrawal, and concerning the faith.

(Called "to the Caesareans", but it may have been to a group of monks founded by Basil and fallen into Arianism. Date: 360.)

Translated by Rev. Blomfield Jackson

Edited by Friar Martin Fontenot, CANDLE Library

ONE.

I have often been astonished  
at your feeling towards me as you do,  
and how it comes about that an individual  
so small and insignificant,  
and having, maybe,  
very little that is lovable about him,  
should have so won your allegiance.  
You remind me of the claims of friendship and of fatherland,  
and press me urgently in your attempts  
to make me come back to you,  
as though I were a runaway from a father's heart and home.

That I am a runaway, I confess.  
I should be sorry to deny it;  
since you are already regretting me,  
you shall be told the cause.

I was astounded like a man stunned  
by some sudden noise.  
I did not crush my thoughts,  
but dwelt on them as I fled,  
and now I have been absent from you  
a considerable time.  
Then I began to yearn for the divine doctrines,  
and the philosophy that is concerned with them.  
How, said I,  
could I  
overcome the mischief dwelling with us?  
Who is to be my Laban,  
setting me free from Esau,  
and leading me to the supreme philosophy?  
By God's help, I have,  
so far as in me lies,  
attained my object.

I have found a chosen vessel;  
a deep well.  
I mean Gregory [of Nazianzus]: Christ's mouth.

Give me, therefore, I beg you,  
a little time.  
I am not embracing a city life.  
I am quite well aware how the evil one,  
by such means,  
devises deceit for mankind,  
but I do hold the society of saints most useful.  
For in the more constant changes of ideas  
about the divine dogmas  
I am acquiring a lasting habit of contemplation.  
Such is my present situation.

TWO.

Friends, godly and well beloved,  
do, I implore you,  
beware of the shepherds of the Philistines.  
Let them not choke your wills unawares.  
Let them not befoul the purity  
of your knowledge of the faith.  
This is ever their object,  
not to teach simple souls lessons  
drawn from Holy Scripture,  
but to mar the harmony of the truth  
by heathen philosophy.

Is not he an open Philistine  
who is introducing the terms "unbegotten" and "begotten"  
into our faith,  
and asserts that there was once a time  
when the Everlasting was not;  
that He, who is by nature and eternally a Father  
became a Father;  
and that the Holy Spirit is not eternal?  
He bewitches our patriarch's sheep  
that they may not drink  
"of the well of water springing up  
into everlasting life," [John 4:14],  
but may, rather,  
bring upon themselves  
the words of the prophet,  
"They have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed themselves out cisterns;  
broken cisterns that can hold no water." [Jer. 2:13]  
All the while they ought to confess  
that the Father is God,  
the Son is God,

and the Holy Spirit God,  
as they have been taught  
by the divine words,  
and by those who have understood them  
in their highest sense.

Against those who cast it in our teeth  
that we are Tritheists,  
let it be answered  
that we confess One God  
not in number, but in nature.  
For everything which is called one in number  
is not one absolutely,  
nor yet simple in nature.  
But God is universally confessed  
to be simple and not composite.  
God, therefore, is not one in number.  
What I mean is this:  
We say that the world is one in number,  
but not one by nature, nor yet simple;  
for we divide it into its constituent elements,  
fire, water, air and earth.  
Again, a man is called one in number.  
We frequently speak of one man,  
but man, who is composed of body and soul  
is not simple.  
Similarly we say one angel in number,  
but not one by nature nor yet simple,  
for we conceive of the hypostasis of the angel  
as essence with sanctification.  
If therefore everything which is one in number  
is not one in nature,  
and that which is one and simple in nature  
is not one in number;  
and if we call God one in nature  
how can number be charged against us,  
when we utterly exclude it  
from that blessed and spiritual nature?

Number relates to quantity;  
and quantity is conjoined with bodily nature.  
We believe our Lord to be Creator of bodies.  
Wherefore every number indicates  
those things which have received  
a material and circumscribed nature.  
Monad and Unity  
on the other hand  
signify the nature which is simple  
and incomprehensible.

Whoever therefore  
confesses either the Son of God  
or the Holy Ghost  
to be number or creature  
introduces unawares  
a material and circumscribed nature.

And by circumscribed  
I mean not only locally limited,  
but a nature which is comprehended  
in foreknowledge by Him  
who is about to educe it  
from the non-existent into the existent  
and which can be comprehended by science.  
Every holy thing, then,  
of which the nature is circumscribed,  
and of which the holiness is acquired,  
is not insusceptible of evil.  
But the Son and the Holy Spirit  
are the source of sanctification  
by which every reasonable creature  
is hallowed in proportion to its virtue.

### THREE.

We in accordance with the true doctrine  
speak of the Son as neither like,  
nor unlike the Father.  
Each of these terms  
is equally impossible,  
for like and unlike are predicated  
in relation to quality,  
and the divine is free from quality.  
We, on the contrary,  
confess identity of nature  
both accepting the consubstantiality,  
and rejecting the composition of the Father,  
God in substance,  
Who begat the Son, God in substance.  
From this the consubstantiality ["homoousion"] is proved.  
For God in essence or substance  
is co-essential or consubstantial  
with God in essence or substance.  
But when every man is called "god"  
as in the words, "I have said you are gods," [Ps. 81(82):6],  
or demon, as in the words,  
"The gods of the nations are demons," [Ps. 95(96):5 LXX],  
in the former case the name is given by favor,  
in the latter untruly.

God alone is essentially or substantially God.  
When I say "alone" I set forth  
the holy and uncreated essence of God.  
For the word "alone"  
is used in the case of any individual  
and generally of human nature.  
In the case of an individual:  
as for instance of Paul,  
that he alone was caught into the third heaven

and "heard unspeakable words  
which it is not lawful  
for a man to utter". [2 Cor. 12:4]  
And of human nature:  
as when David says,  
"as for man, his days are as grass." [Ps. 101(102):15],  
not meaning any particular man,  
but human nature in general;  
for every man is short lived and mortal.  
So we understand these words to be said of the nature  
"who alone has immortality" [1 Tim. 6:16],  
and "to God only wise" [Rom. 16:27],  
and "none is good save one, that is God" [Luke 18:19],  
for here "one"  
means the same as alone.

So also, "which alone spreads out the heavens," [Job 9:8],  
and again, "You shall worship the Lord your God  
and Him only shall you serve." [Deut. 6:13 LXX]  
"There is no God beside me." [Deut. 32:39 LXX]  
In Scripture "one" and "only"  
are not predicated of God  
to mark distinction from the Son  
and the Holy Spirit,  
but to except the unreal gods falsely so called.  
As, for instance,  
"The Lord alone did lead them  
and there was no strange god with them," [Deut. 32:12 LXX],  
and, "then the children of Israel  
did put away Baalim and Ashtaroath,  
and did serve the Lord only." [1 Sam. 7:4]

And so St Paul, "For as there be gods many  
and lords many, but to us, there is but one God,  
the Father, of whom are all things;  
and one Lord, Jesus Christ  
by whom all things are." [1 Cor. 8:5,6]  
Here we enquire why  
when he had said,  
"One God" he was not content,  
for we have said that "one" and "only"  
when applied to God,  
indicate nature.  
Why did he add the word Father  
and make mention of Christ?

Paul, a chosen vessel, did not,  
I imagine, think it sufficient only to preach  
that the Son is God and the Holy Ghost God,  
which he had expressed by the phrase, "One God"  
without, by the further addition of "The Father",  
expressing Him of Whom are all things;  
and, by mentioning the Lord,  
signifying the Word by Whom are all things;  
and, yet further, by adding the words Jesus Christ,  
announcing the incarnation,

setting forth the passion  
and publishing the resurrection.  
For the word Jesus Christ suggests all these ideas to us.

For this reason too,  
before His passion,  
our Lord deprecates the designation of Jesus Christ  
and charges his disciples  
to "tell no one that He was Jesus, the Christ." [Matt. 16:19]  
For His purpose was,  
after the completion of the -oeconomia-,  
after His resurrection from the dead  
and His assumption into heaven,  
to commit to them  
the preaching of Him as Jesus, the Christ.  
Such is the force of the words,  
"That they may know You  
the only True God,  
and Jesus Christ  
whom You have sent," [John 17:3],  
and again,  
"You believe in God,  
believe also in me." [John 14:1]  
Everywhere the Holy Ghost  
secures our conception of Him  
to save us from faling in one direction  
while we advance in the other,  
heeding the theology,  
but neglecting the economy,  
and so by ommision,  
falling into impiety.

FOUR.

Now let us examine,  
and to the best of our ability explain,  
the meaning of the words of Holy Scripture,  
which our opponents seize  
and wrest to their own sense  
and urge against us  
for the destruction of the glory  
of the Only Begotten.

First of all take the words,  
"I live because of the Father,"  
["ego zo dia ton patera", John 6:57]  
for this is one of the shafts hurled heavenward  
by those who impiously use it.  
These words I do not understand  
to refer to the eternal life,,  
for whatever lives because of something else  
cannot be self existant

just as that which is warmed by another  
cannot be warmth itself.  
But He, who is our Christ and God says,  
"I am the life". [John 11:25]  
I understand the life lived  
because of the Father  
to be this life in the flesh,  
and in this time.  
Of His own will He came to live  
the life of men.  
He did not say,  
"I have lived because of the Father,"  
but "I live because of the Father,"  
clearly indicating the present time,  
and the Christ, having the word of God in Himself,  
is able to call the life which he leads,  
life,  
and that this is His meaning  
we shall learn from what follows.

"He that eats me," He says,  
"he also shall live because of Me." [John 6:57]  
For we eat His flesh, and drink His blood,  
being made through His incarnation  
and His visible life  
partakers of His Word and His Wisdom.  
For all His mystic sojourn among us  
He called flesh and blood,  
and set forth the teaching  
consisting of all practical science,  
of physics, and of theology,  
whereby our soul is nourished  
and is meanwhile trained  
for the contemplation  
of actual realities.  
This is, perhaps,  
the intended meaning of what He says.

FIVE.

And again, [John 14:28],  
" My Father is greater than I."  
This passage is also employed  
by the ungrateful creatures,  
the brood of the evil one.  
I believe that even from this passage  
the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father  
is set forth.  
For I know that comparisons can be made  
between things which are of the same nature.  
We speak of angel as greater than angel,  
of man as juster than man,  
of bird as fleeter than bird.

If then, comparisons are made between things  
of the same species,  
and the Father, by comparison,  
is said to be greater than the Son,  
then the Son is of the same substance  
as the Father.

But there is another sense  
underlying the expression.  
In what is it extraordinary  
that He who  
"is the Word and was made flesh" [John 1:14]  
confesses His Father  
to be greater than Himself,  
when He was seen  
in glory inferior to angels,  
and in form to men?  
For, "You have made him a little lower  
than the angels," [Ps. 8:5],  
and again,  
"who was made a little lower than the angels," [Heb. 2:9],  
"we saw Him and He had neither form  
nor comeliness,  
his form was deficient beyond all men." [Isa. 53:2,3 LXX]  
All this He endured  
on account of His work,  
that He might save the lost sheep  
and bring it home  
when He had saved it,  
and bring back safe and sound  
to his own land  
the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho  
and so fell among thieves. [Luke 10:30]

Will the heretic cast in His teeth  
the manger out of which he  
in his unreasonableness  
was fed by the Word of reason?  
Will he, because the carpenter's son  
had no bed to lie on,  
complain of His being poor?  
This is why the Son is less than the Father;  
for your sakes  
He was made dead to free you from death  
and make you sharers  
in heavenly life.  
It is just as though any one  
were to find fault with the physician  
for stooping to sickness,  
and breathing its foul breath,  
that he may heal the sick.

SIX.



It is on your account  
that He knows not the hour and the day  
of judgement. [Mark 13:32]  
Yet nothing is beyond the ken  
of the real Wisdom,  
for, "all things were made by Him", [John 1:3];  
and even among men  
no one is ignorant of what has been made.  
But this is His dispensation ["oeconomia"]  
because of your own infirmity,  
that sinners be not plunged  
into despair  
by the narrow limits  
of the appointed period,  
no opportunity for repentance being left them;  
and that, on the other hand,  
those who are waging a long war  
with the forces of the enemy  
may not desert their post  
on account of the protracted time.  
For both of these classes He arranges ["economizes"]  
by means of His assumed ignorance;  
for the former cutting the time short  
for their glorious struggle's sake;  
for the latter providing an opportunity  
for repentance because of their sins.

In the gospels  
He numbered Himself among the ignorant,  
on account, as I have said,  
of the infirmity of the greater part  
of mankind.  
In the Acts of the Apostles [1:7],  
speaking, as it were,  
to the perfect apart, He says,  
"It is not for you  
to know the times or the seasons  
which the Father has put  
in His own power."  
Here He implicitly excepts Himself.

So much for a rough statement  
by way of preliminary attack.  
Now let us enquire  
into the meaning of the text  
from a higher point of view.  
Let me knock at the door of knowledge,  
if haply I may wake  
the Master of the House,  
Who gives the spiritual bread  
to them who ask Him,  
since they whom we are eager to entertain  
are friends and brothers.

## SEVEN

Our Savior's holy disciples,  
after getting beyond the limits  
of human thought,  
and then being purified  
by the word [John 15:3],  
are inquiring about the end,  
and longing to know  
the ultimate blessedness which our Lord declared  
to be unknown to His angels  
and to Himself. [Mark 13:32]  
He calls all the exact comprehension  
of the purposes of God, a day;  
and the contemplation of the One-ness and Unity,  
knowledge of which He attributes  
to the Father alone,  
an hour.

I apprehend, therefore,  
that God is said to know of Himself what is;  
and not to know what is not;  
God, Who is, of His own nature,  
very righteousness and wisdom,  
is said to know righteousness and wisdom;  
but to be ignorant  
of unrighteousness and wickedness;  
for God who created us  
is not unrighteousness and wickedness.  
If then, God is said to know about Himself  
that which is,  
and not to know that which is not;  
and if our Lord,  
according to the purpose of the Incarnation  
and the denser doctrine,  
is not the ultimate object of desire;  
then our Savior does not know the end  
and the ultimate blessedness.

But He says the angels do not know [Mark 13:32];  
that is to say,  
not even the contemplation which is in them,  
nor the methods of their ministries  
are the ultimate object of desire.  
For even their knowledge,  
which is face to face,  
is dense.

Only the Father, He says, knows,  
since He is Himself the end and the ultimate blessedness,  
for when we no longer know God in mirrors  
and not immediately, [cf. 1 Cor. 13:12, 2 Cor. 3:18],  
but approach Him as one and alone,

then we shall know  
even the ultimate end.

For all Material knowledge is said to be  
the kingdom of Christ;  
while immaterial knowledge,  
and so to say  
the knowledge of actual Godhead,  
is that of God the Father.

But our Lord is also  
Himself the end and the ultimate blessedness  
according to the purpose of the Word;  
for what does He say in the Gospel?  
"I will raise him up on the last day." [John 6:40]  
He calls the transition from material knowledge  
to immaterial contemplation  
a resurrection,  
speaking of that knowledge after which  
there is no other,  
as the last day:  
for our intelligence is raised up  
and roused to a height of blessedness  
at the time when it contemplates the Oneness  
and the Unity of the Word.  
But since our intelligence is made dense  
and bound to earth,  
it is both commingled with clay  
and incapable of gazing intently in pure contemplation,  
being led through adornments [-cosmon-]  
cognate to its own body.

It considers the operations of the Creator,  
and judges them meanwhile  
by their effects,  
to the end that growing little by little  
it may one day wax strong enough  
to approach even the actual unveiled Godhead.  
This is the meaning, I think,  
of the words  
"My Father is greater than I," [John 14:28],  
and also of the statement,  
"It is not mine to give  
save to those for whom  
it is prepared by my Father." [Matt. 20:23]  
This too is what is meant by Christ's  
"delivering up the kingdom to God  
even the Father," [1 Cor. 15:24];  
insamuch as according to the denser doctrine  
which, as I said,  
is regarded relatively to us  
and not to the Son Himself,  
He is not the end  
but the first of fruits.

It is in accordance with this view

that when His disciples asked Him  
"When will you restore the kingdom of Israel?"  
He replied, [Acts 1:6,7],  
"It is not for you  
to know the times and seasons  
which the Father has put in His own power."  
That is to say,  
the knowledge of such a kingdom  
is not for them that are bound to flesh and blood.  
This contemplation  
the Father has put away in His own power,  
meaning by "power"  
those that are empowered,  
and by "His own"  
those who are not held down  
by the ignorance of things below.

Do not, I beg you,  
have in mind times and seasons  
of sense  
but certain distinctions of knowledge  
made by the sun  
apprehended by our mental perceptions.  
For our Lord's prayer must be carried out.  
It is Jesus Who prayed,  
"Grant that they may be one in us  
as You and I are one, Father." [cf. John 17:22]  
For when God, Who is One, is in each,  
He makes all one;  
and number is lost  
in the indwelling of Unity.

This is my second attempt to attack the text.  
If anyone has a better interpretation to give,  
and can consistently  
with true religion amend what I say,  
let him speak  
and let him amend,  
and the Lord will reward him for me.  
There is no jealousy in my heart.  
I have not approached this investigation  
of these passages for strife and vain glory.  
I have done so to help my brothers,  
lest the earthen vessels which hold  
the treasure of God  
should seem to be deceived  
by stony hearted and uncircumcised men,  
whose weapons are the wisdom of folly.

EIGHT.

Again, as is said through Solomon the Wise

in the Proverbs [8:22 LXX],  
"He was created,"  
and He is named  
"Beginning of ways"  
of good news,  
which lead us to the kingdom of heaven.  
He is not  
in essence and substance  
a creature, but is made a "way"  
according to the economy.  
Being made and being created  
signify the same thing.  
As He was made a way,  
so He was made the door,  
a shepherd,  
an angel,  
a sheep,  
and again a High Priest  
and an Apostle, [Heb. 3:1],  
the names being used  
in other senses.

What again would the heretics say  
about God unsubjected  
and about His being made sin for us? [2 Cor. 5:21]  
For it is written,  
"But when all things shall be subdued to Him,  
then shall the Son also Himself  
be subject to Him  
and put all things under Him." [1 Cor. 15:28]  
Are you not afraid, sir,  
of God being called unsubjected?  
For He makes your subjection  
His own;  
and because of your struggling  
against goodness  
He calls himself unsubjected.

In this sense too  
He once spoke of Himself as persecuted.  
"Saul, Saul," He says, [Acts 9:4],  
"why do you persecute me?"  
on the occasion when Saul  
was hurrying to Damascus  
with a desire to imprison the disciples.  
Again, He calls Himself naked,  
when any one of His brethren is naked.  
"I was naked," He says, [Matt. 25:36],  
"and you clothed me;"  
and so when another is imprisoned,  
for He Himself took away our sins  
and bare our sicknesses. [Isa. 53:4, Matt. 8:17]  
Now, one of our infirmities  
is not being subject,  
and He bore this.  
So all the things that happen to us

to our hurt  
He makes His own,  
taking upon Him our sufferings  
in His fellowship with us.

NINE.

But another passage is also seized upon  
by those who are fighting against God  
to the perversion of their hearers:  
I mean the words,  
"The Son can do nothing of Himself." [John 5:19]  
To me, this saying too  
seems distinctly declamatory  
of the Son's being of the same nature  
as the Father.

For if every rational creature  
is able to do anything of himself,  
and the inclination which each has  
to the worse and to the better  
is in his own power,  
but the Son can do nothing of Himself,  
then the Son is not a creature.  
And if He is not a creature,  
then He is of one essence and substance  
with the Father.

Again [on the other hand, it might be argued]  
-no- creature can do what he likes.  
But the Son does what He wills in heaven  
and in earth.  
Therefore, the Son is not a creature.

Again; all creatures are either constituted  
of contraries, or receptive of contraries.  
But the Son is very righteousness,  
and immaterial.  
Therefore, the Son is not a creature,  
and if He is not a creature,  
He is of once essence and substance with the Father.

TEN.

This examination of the passages before us,  
is, so far as my ability goes,  
sufficient.  
Now let us turn the discussion on those who attack

the Holy Spirit,  
and cast down every high thing  
of their intellect  
that exalts itself  
against the knowledge of God. [2 Cor. 11:5]

You say that the Holy Ghost is a creature.  
And every creature  
is a servant of the Creator  
for "all are Your servants." [Ps. 18(19):1]  
If then He is a servant,  
His holiness is acquired;  
and everything of which the holiness is acquired  
is receptive to evil;  
but the Holy Ghost  
being holy in essence  
is called, "fount of holiness." [Rom. 8:2]

Therefore, the Holy Ghost is not a creature.  
If He is not a creature,  
He is of one essence and substance with the Father.  
How, tell me, can you give the name of servant  
to Him Who through your baptism  
frees you from your servitude?  
"The law," it is said,  
"of the Spirit of life  
has made me free from the law of sin." [Rom. 1:4]  
But you will never venture  
to call His nature even variable,  
so long as you have regard  
to the nature of the opposing power of the enemy,  
which, like lightning, is fallen from heaven,  
and fell out of the true life  
because its holiness was acquired,  
and its evil counsels  
were followed by its change.  
So when it had fallen away from the Unity  
and had cast from it its angelic dignity,  
it was named after its character  
"Devil" ["Diabolos", from "diaballein", to calumniate],  
its former and blessed condition  
being extinct  
and this hostile power  
being kindled.

Furthermore, if he calls the Holy Ghost  
a creature  
he describes His nature  
as limited.  
How then can the two following passages stand?  
"The Spirit of the Lord  
fills the world," [Wis. 1:7];  
and  
"Where can I go from your Spirit?" [Ps. 138(139):7]  
But he does not,  
it would seem,

confess Him to be simple in nature;  
for he describes Him as one in number.  
And, as I have already said  
everything that is one in number  
is not simple.  
And if the Holy Spirit is not simple,,  
He consists of essence and sanctification  
and is therefore composite.  
But who is mad enough  
to describe the Holy Spirit as composite,  
and not simple,  
and consubstantial with the Father  
and the Son?

ELEVEN.

If we ought to advance our argument yet further,  
and turn our inspection to higher themes,  
let us contemplate the divine nature  
of the Holy Spirit  
especially from the following point of view.  
In Scripture we find  
mention of three creations --  
the first being the evolution [-paragoge-]  
from non-being to being.  
The second is change  
from the worse to the better.  
The third is the resurrection  
of the dead.  
In these you will find  
the Holy Ghost co-operating  
with the Father and the Son.

There is a bringing into existence  
of the heavens.  
And what says David?  
"By the word of the Lord  
were the heavens made  
and all the host of them  
by the breath of His mouth." [Ps. 32(33):6 LXX]

Again, man is created through baptism,  
for,  
"if any man be in Christ  
he is a new creature." [2 Cor. 5:17]  
And why does the Savior say to the disciples,  
"Go, therefore, and teach all nations,  
baptizing them in the name  
Of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" [Matt. 28:19]  
Here too  
you see the Holy Ghost  
present with the Father and the Son.



And what would you say also  
as to the resurrection of the dead  
when we shall have failed  
and returned to dust?  
Dust we are and to dust we shall return.  
And He will send the Holy Ghost  
and create us  
and renew the face of the Earth. [Ps 102(103):30]  
For what the holy Paul calls resurrection  
David describes as renewal.

Let us hear, once more,  
him who was caught into the third heaven.  
What does he say?  
"You are the temple  
of the Holy Ghost  
which is within you." [1 Cor. 6:19]  
Now every temple  
is a temple of God,  
and if we are the temple of the Holy Ghost,  
then the Holy Ghost is God.  
It is also called Solomon's temple  
but this is in the sense  
of his being the builder.  
And if we are a temple  
of the Holy Ghost in this sense,  
then the Holy Ghost is God,  
for  
"He that built all things is God." [Heb. 3:4]  
If we are a temple of one who is worshipped,  
and who dwells in us,  
let us confess Him to be God,  
for, "you shall worship the Lord your God,  
and Him only shall you serve." [Matt. 6:10]

Supposing them to object to the word "God",  
let them learn what this word means.  
God is called "God" ["Theos"]  
either because He placed all things ["te-thei-kenai"]  
or because He beholds all things ["theasthai"].  
If he is called God because He "placed"  
or "beholds" all things,  
and the Spirit knows all the things of God,  
as the Spirit in us knows our things,  
then the Holy Spirit is God. [1 Cor. 2:10,11]

Again, if the sword of the spirit  
is the word of God, [Eph. 6:17],  
then the Holy Ghost is God,  
inasmuch as the sword belongs  
to Him of whom it is also called the word.  
Is He named the right hand of the Father?  
For, "the right hand of the Lord  
brings mighty things to pass," [Ps. 117(118):16 LXX];  
and

"Your right hand, O Lord,  
has dashed the enemy to pieces." [Ex. 15:6]  
But the Holy Ghost is the finger of God,  
as it is said,  
"if by the finger of God  
I cast out devils," [Luke 11:20],  
of which the version in another Gospel is,  
"if by the Spirit of God  
I cast out devils". [Matt. 12:28]  
So the Holy Ghost  
is of the same nature  
as the Father  
and the Son.

TWELVE.

So much must suffice for the present  
on the subject of the adorable  
and Holy Trinity.  
It is not now possible  
to extend the enquiry about it further.  
Take seeds from a humble person like me,  
and cultivate the ripe ears for yourselves,  
for, as you know,  
in such cases we look for interest.

But I trust God that you,  
because of your pure lives,  
will bring forth fruit  
thirty, sixty and an hundredfold.  
For it is said,  
"Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they shall see God."  
And, my brethren,  
entertain no other conception of the kingdom of the heavens  
than that it is the very contemplation  
of realities.  
This the divine Scriptures call blessedness.  
For "the kingdom of heaven  
is within you." [Luke 17:21]

The inner man consists of nothing  
but contemplation.  
The kingdom of the heavens, then,  
must be contemplation.  
Now we behold their shadows  
as in a glass;  
hereafter, set free from this earthly body,  
clad in the incorruptible  
and the immortal,  
we shall behold their archetypes,  
we shall see them, that is,

if we have steered our own life's course aright,  
and if we have heeded the right faith,  
for otherwise none shall see the Lord.  
For it is said,  
into a malicious soul  
Wisdom shall not enter,  
nor dwell in the body  
that is subject to sin. [Wis. 1:4]

And let no one urge in objection, that,  
while I am ignoring what is before our eyes,  
I am philosophizing to them  
about bodiless and immaterial being.  
It seems to me perfectly absurd,  
while the senses are allowed free action  
in relation to their proper matter,  
to exclude mind alone  
from its peculiar operation.  
Precisely in the same manner  
in which sense touches sensible objects,  
so mind apprehends  
the objects of mental perception.

This too must be said,  
that God our Creator  
has not included natural faculties  
among things which can be taught.  
No one teaches sight  
to apprehend color or form,  
nor hearing  
to apprehend sound and speech,  
nor smell  
pleasant and unpleasant scents,  
nor taste  
flavors and savors,  
nor touch,  
soft and hard, hot and cold.  
Nor would any teach the mind  
to reach objects of mental perception;  
and just as the senses  
in the case of their being  
in any way diseased, or injured,  
require only proper treatment  
and then readily fulfill their own functions;  
just so the mind,  
imprisoned in flesh,  
and full of the thoughts that arise thence,  
requires faith and right conversion  
which make "its feet like hinds' feet  
and set it on the high places." [Ps. 17(18):33]

The same advice is given us  
by Solomon the Wise,  
who in one passage [Prov. 6:6]  
offers us the example  
of the diligent worker ant

and recommends her active life;  
and in another [Sirach 11:3]  
the wise bee  
in forming its cells,  
and thereby suggests  
a natural contemplation  
wherein also  
the doctrine of the Holy Trinity  
is contained,  
if at least the Creator  
is considered in proportion  
to the beauty of the things created.

But, with thanks  
to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,  
let me make an end to my letter,  
for, as the proverb has it,  
"Pan metron ariston --  
Moderation is best in all things" [a saying of Cleobulus of Lindos].

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The St. Pachomius Orthodox Library, St. Dionysius' Day, 1995.

Have mercy, O Lord, upon Thy servants the translator Blomfield and the  
Friar Martin.

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THE END, AND TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

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