

A DISCOURSE BY THEOPHYLACT OF BULGARIA TO ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES REGARDING THE CHARGES AGAINST THE LATIN¹

Translated from Greek¹ by Bogomil Sabtchev

Abstract: Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria responds to a request by his spiritual son to discuss certain charges against the Latin Church. Theophylact calls for their slow, tolerant, and loving consideration, informed by the study of ecclesiastical history and scripture. He argues that the rigid insistence on correcting ecclesiastical and spiritual customs not adopted in the Orthodox Church, which zealous theologians from the East considered either out of ignorance or self-love to be grave errors, might lead to a much more serious offense – a division in the body of Christ. For Theophylact such errors are only those which affect the dogmas of the Church, such as the innovation in the Creed that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (Filioque). The discourse also shows that several decades after 1054, the year many consider to be the year of the ‘Great Schism’, there was no awareness of a total separation.

Keywords: Theophylact of Bulgaria, Theophylact of Ohrid, Great Schism, Filioque, East-West church relations

Your request was presented before me², my most pious son in the Lord, and I saw this as good and suitable for the eyes of a hierarch, who, at the present time, is cast out like the gatekeeper of some cruel and ungrateful master³. You requested of us to dispute briefly, as much as this is possible, the ecclesiastical errors of the Latins, which you claimed to be many and to exert no little force in dividing the churches. And we know that the others, almost all of them, think in a such way. We, however, do not think so: for we have neither known the errors to be many, nor are they able to divide the churches. Since none of the charges brought forth pertains to the very essence of our faith, we hesitate to oppose so many and

1 Patrologia Graeca 126, 222-254 and Thesaurus Linguae Graecae® Digital Library. Ed. Maria C. Pantelia. University of California, Irvine. <http://www.tlg.uci.edu>

2 Ps 118:170.

3 Most likely, blessed Theophylact is referring to the period of being an archbishop of Ohrid, Bulgaria with some bitterness since he didn't want to be away from Constantinople.

to disturb easily agitated souls, lest our love grows cold⁴. This coldness, as we have already heard, has been first of all dealt on me in this present time which abounds in inequity⁵. For we do not receive in a brotherly manner what has been presented by our brothers, but stand against them in opposition and each one of us strives to appear as one elbowing and pushing back his rival who is ahead of him; and we believe to be deemed wise in the presence of many and that it would be the ultimate divine doctrine if we should attach to our neighbors some heresy and to be men of vision if we should expose the dark-gleaming Lucifer. Therefore, on account of these things, it seems to me that this time is to be passed over in silence, as the old prophecy instructs.⁶ Nevertheless, I understand the loyalty of your love, not deeming it right to be hurt by the bad practices of others. For I let the Egyptians, on the one hand, be delayed by the palpable darkness⁷ and encounter blood in the waters, and on the other hand, I gladly see every Israelite enjoy the light for their work and the water for their salvation. Simply put, I'm glad to see the divine miracles be to the former, a punishment, but to the latter, salvation.

Thus, as I was saying, the Latins seem to be erroneous in many things: they use unleavened bread in their offering, fast on Saturdays, and calculate differently the period of the fast before the Passion; and while, on the one hand, they forbid the marriages of clergy, on the other hand they allow those of the laity indiscriminately and without any limits. Moreover, if you're able to hold your laughter, I would add that they shave their beards – both the laity and those in priestly offices, whose hands are flashing with golden rings and their priestly robes are woven from silken yarn and they dress in multi-colored fabrics. Moreover, the meat-eating monks, when they stretch forth their hands to worship the Lord, are dragged down to the earth⁸. Thus, they all sin together. But should you see bandits feasting on the meat of strangled animals, would you detest the church of the

4 Matt 24:12.

5 Referring again to his 'exile'.

6 Eccl 3:7.

7 Exod 10:21.

8 Eastern monks do not consume meat, imitating the angelic state and the state of Adam before the fall. The assumption is that meat eating is inappropriate in the strict ascetic life and weighs down the soul.

Romans for teaching such things? It is possible that one of those who are extremely faithful, of great fervor, and zealous for orthodoxy, would rise up and would not only accuse us of ignorance and confusion regarding the divine or of coldness and the betrayal of our own customs but would also enumerate many more accusations than those already mentioned. I think that some of these do not need any correction while others need one that is moderate and fitting. If such a correction succeeds, the church gains a little and if it fails no harm would be brought about. It seems to me that having communion with the Latins is to some inadequate and if this is not corrected it would inflict a great harm upon the inheritance of the Son, which He took from among the nations; this I will both show and prove to you inasmuch as this is possible. If this discourse doesn't seem too long to us, we will also examine in moderation some of the other matters.

Now, their greatest error, which in Solomon's words makes one fall into the trap of hell⁹, is the innovation in the Symbol of Faith, which was added by those who proclaim that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. It is necessary that the Symbol of the faithful is a Symbol which is free from every adulteration; for even the axe-bearers of whom Ezekiel speaks are not to spare the marked, unless the sign appears to them genuine.¹⁰ How then shall we answer to this innovation? Simply, plainly, and completely, as it befits the disciples of the fishermen. For if we had chosen to follow another teacher, we would have persuaded the disciples and defenders of contrary opinions using his own words. Since those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word from the very beginning¹¹ handed down to us this same Word, saying that the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and proceeds from the Father¹², then our argument is simple: either bring forth the other teacher who speaks more clearly than the Word and more wisely than the Wisdom, from whom you have taken this new dogma which is so exceedingly dear to you, or if you don't have such a teacher, accept our one teacher, Christ, Who teaches concerning His kindred Spirit, from Whom and how He has His existence and Who testifies with His own testimony that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. If indeed, as you think, He

9 Prov 9:18.

10 Ezek 9:2-4.

11 Luke 1: 2

12 John 15:26.

proceeds also from the Son, what would have prevented Him from saying: ‘The One who proceeds from the Father and Me?’ Thus, you have been found not following Christ, the Bearer of good news to the poor¹³, even though you claim to have taken up your cross¹⁴. But if you have been persuaded of this by some of the approved fathers¹⁵, show us this father and that would be sufficient for us. But if you’re not able to show us, despite your many labors, then either the approved father did not say that, or the one who has said it has not been approved.

And even if we concede to you in this argument, still, we shall not make the exception into a rule – a principle to which you yourselves adhere. For while countless theologians talk about the Holy Spirit, no one is saying such a thing, except that the Spirit has appeared through the Son and that He is from God through the Son. Should one or two be found to teach the opposite, this is an agreement not with these fathers, but with those who are full of the spirit of deception: ‘But it has been written:’, he would say, ‘the Spirit of the Son’¹⁶ and ‘the Spirit of Christ’¹⁷. And I affirm this, since He has also been called ‘the Spirit of Truth and ‘the Spirit of Life’¹⁸ for the Son is both Truth and Life¹⁹ and I would also add ‘of Wisdom’²⁰ and ‘of Power’²¹ for the Son is these as well; but this is not because the Spirit originates from Him but because He is related to Him, a kindred Spirit and not alien, and as One Who rests in Him²², and is sent through Him²³, and bestowed, and imparted to the worthy²⁴.

It is great that this discourse has advanced and reached the most important point. It seems to me, oh you, who are considering the things

13 Luke 4:18.

14 Mark 8:34.

15 The greatest church fathers, whose teachings have been approved by synods as dogmas and doctrines of the Church.

16 Gal 4:6.

17 Rom 8:9.

18 Rom 8:2.

19 John 14:6.

20 Eph 1:17.

21 Isa 11:2.

22 Isa 11:2, 1Pet 4:14.

23 John 16:7.

24 Gal 3:5.

above²⁵ that you do not err so much due to an evil intention as you do so out of ignorance of what is correct. For you think that the procession is equal to the bestowing and imparting; since the Spirit happens to be sent and bestowed and imparted the Son, you suppose that there is no offense even if you declare that He also proceeds from the Son. However, this is not the case. How so? We affirm that these differ utterly and completely from each other. For the procession is indicative of how the Spirit is. For just as the Son is from the Father, begotten and not by any other manner, so the Spirit also is from the same source, I mean from the Father, and not begotten, for there are not two Sons, but proceeding. Therefore, the procession is the manner by which the Spirit has His being from the Father and by which His uniqueness is made known. But the sending, bestowing, and imparting are not indicative of how the Spirit has His being, but rather through them some richness is revealed and likewise an abundance of goodness, which has its existence from the Father and is poured upon the worthy by the Son, to whom the Spirit is also said to have been revealed through the Son, for it is to those who receive the Word, and not to those who are ignorant of Him, that the Spirit manifests Himself; and of His divinity which was not previously known by anyone, we have learned clearly through the Son, when He associated Himself with the Father in the deifying baptism.

Thus, it is also said that the Lord breathed the Spirit²⁶ into the disciples after the Resurrection but not as His originator – for, if I may say so, the inbreathing of the Spirit is not an act of origination, especially because He is not given in His entirety then, but only one of His gifts, that of the forgiveness of sins. For the fullness of the Spirit had been appointed for the time of Pentecost, to be given by Him, Who has Him in essence whenever He wishes, and to whomever He wishes, and as He wishes, that is to some in the form of one gift, to others in the form of many, and to others the entire ‘other Comforter’²⁷ Himself. Let us stop, then, reconciling the irreconcilable – the bestowing and the procession, and interweaving the incompatible.

Moreover, if on the one hand, you should say that this is known by

25 Col 3:2.

26 John 20:22.

27 John 14:16.

you – that the Father is the cause of being to the Spirit in the manner of generation, just as He is to the Son in the manner of birth and, on the other hand, you say that the Spirit is from the Son, not according to this meaning, but according to the outpouring and imparting and having a sound mind, you are constrained in this by the poverty of words and the shallowness of the Latin language, then I shall show you the blessed poverty, blessed by the Spirit²⁸ and the brotherly acceptance²⁹ and you yourself shall detest the impurity of the haughty heart³⁰ and thus, in one spirit, believing the same, we shall glorify in one accord the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the first as begetting and sending forth, the second as being begotten, and the third as proceeding. For, if you are indeed poor in words and the richness of the language causes you confusion in thoughts and words and because of this you are not able to distinguish the pouring forth of the Spirit from the Son, or the imparting, or whatever else you may wish to call it, from the procession, in which the being of the Spirit is from the Father alone, then, elsewhere, I shall allow your use of these as your language allows you, and I mean in the communal talks and, if you wish, in ecclesiastical sermons but on the following condition in this matter – that you do not disregard those who hear in one word two meanings. However, in the Symbol of Faith, the procession from the Father only is proclaimed, for herein is for us the confession of faith, which must be pure and radiant and simple – for such are also the objects of belief, and it contains in itself nothing confused or dark or convoluted. Just such is also the exposition of our faith, being a proclamation of the prevailing Spirit in the second council; it is also the inspiration and the concord of the fathers regarding Him and is kept by all the churches, which you cannot look down upon as inferior in rank, for the rank is equal, while in numbers and victories they are greater.

Reflect with me also upon the following matter. If the bestowing of the Spirit by the Son is not different than the procession from the Father, then we come to one of two conclusions: either the Son also is the cause of the Spirit's being, or the Father also is a bestower, just as he Son is. But

28 Matt 5:3.

29 Rom 15:7.

30 Prov 16:5.

if the Son also is the cause, then we have to sources of the One. For one who owes his existence to many is either greater, or equal, or lesser than the one who has his being from one source, but he could not be equal, for then he, too, would have been from one source. Hence, what remain is that he is either greater or lesser, and then, the Spirit would either be greater than the Son – and behold what an impious innovation, for no one yet from those impudently disposed against the Son ever dared to say such a thing, or, on the other hand, he would be lesser, in which case Macedonius would return to life. And if He is bestowed also by the Father just as by the Son, He is either without a source – but what would happen then to the position of the Father? How has then His unique mode of being been made common? Or we shall search for a different cause of His being and then a tetrad of persons will be presented to us and a pair of divinities – one of the trinity and another of the external fourth person, who has come to us from your marvelous innovation.

Moreover, if the procession was identical to the bestowing, I would seek a different word that may show the manner, in which the Spirit is from the Father. Again, if the Father is greater than the Son with regards to the cause of being, He would also be greater than the Spirit in the same respect. But if the Son was the cause of being for the Spirit, He would thus be also greater than Him. And where have you encountered the saying that the Son is greater than the Spirit? Furthermore, if indeed, the inbreathing of the Lord to His disciples reveals, according to you, the procession of the Spirit from Him, namely of the whole Spirit and not just of one gift, then He gave them the Comforter but where, then, would go the saying: ‘If I do not go away, He will not come to you’³¹ Moreover, if the Comforter Himself, rather than the gift of the forgiveness of sins, was given then through the inbreathing – for the Word was in the habit of calling also the gifts spirits, then the arrival at Pentecost was either of this same Spirit and superfluous or of another spirit, Who that was, we must seek to find out.

The summary, thus, of what we have said is that the Spirit proceeds only from the Father but not ‘and from the Son’. Other arguments of ancient wise men³² could also be presented, but we have made use of none of them in this present discourse, taking into consideration what was said by

³¹ John 16:7.

³² Usually, referring to the prophets, apostles, and fathers.

Paul – not to build upon another man’s foundation³³ and to boast of work already done³⁴ but as much as possible to take pride in what is wholly ours, provided that our weakness has at least something good which is our own, even though it may not be the fullness of grace.

I also hear that some write voluminous books at present about this dogma and perhaps they have contributed gold, precious stones, and purple cloth to God’s tabernacle. But accept now the skins of flesh presented by me, if for no other reason than their having the red color from the Word who took on flesh for my sake and shed His blood, in order to initiate me into the mysteries, and especially those of the Spirit and show me to be royal and anointed, by sealing and anointing³⁵ me through His blood and the Spirit.

And many have a zeal regarding the offering of unleavened bread, which is great and hotter even than fire, that is, they would rather give up their soul than put an end to that opinion of theirs, but if some give in to their own lust, this is what Paul considers the condemnation and the snare of the devil³⁶. And what must be said to them, we shall say later, chastising the excessiveness of the zeal of some and to others showing as humble what they consider not to be humble at all. But we shall not misinterpret the ‘the first day of the feast of unleavened bread’³⁷ by saying to the Latins that it was the tenth day on which the lamb was consumed. For we have seen the law which calls the fifteenth day³⁸ ‘the first day of the feast of unleavened bread’ in which the night dawns upon the partaking of the Pascha. Thus, a certain holy father of ours, explaining the day which is called by the evangelist ‘the first of the feast of unleavened bread’ states that for Matthew the first day is called the day before the feast, knowing to which day the law has assigned this name and yet indicating that what is said by the evangelist is something new. But we shall not present the Lord either as not observing the lawful Pascha and thus demonstrating that He did not partake of the unleavened bread or as observing it, but before the time that

33 Rom 15: 20.

34 2Cor 10:16.

35 2Cor. 1:21–22.

36 1Tim 3:6–7.

37 Mark 14:12, Mt 26:17.

38 Exod 12:18.

removes the leaven, so that leavened bread was also present. Such things some of the zealots have already dared to say. And so I shall not put up myself with anyone of those who speak in such a way; for the tradition is not so eager as to build the mysteries of truth on a lie. But if Christ is the way and the truth, I shall neither voluntarily stray from the way, nor shall I be deceived by the lack of truth.

What then is my argument? On the one hand, the Lord at the right time and when the hour had come ate the Paschal meal, when it was prepared for Him by the disciples and the owner of the house³⁹, clearly according to the custom and not otherwise – or else, the Gospel would have indicated the innovation, just as it did with the other things which He made use of in order to surpass the law, and not only He, but also the disciples – namely, the making of clay on a Saturday⁴⁰, the command to take up the bed⁴¹, the rubbing of the heads of grain⁴², the eating of bread with unwashed hands⁴³. On the other hand, he ate the lawful meal first, and then He transmitted to the disciples the mystery of His own Pascha, clearly from the bread found around them, and, at that time, what was to be found was unleavened bread. But just because that bread was unleavened, because the necessity of the law made it so, doesn't mean that we, who fully enjoy the freedom in Christ, shall make unleavened bread out of necessity and throw away the leavened. Or consider the following, for there's no harm in so being concerned with the contents of the law in yet another way: because that bread was fitting, and rather more than fitting, and which happened to be frugal and made of barley flour – for neither the host, nor the guests were accustomed to luxurious living but were companions with the true frugality of life and were accustomed to barley loaves of bread, with which thousands were fed by them, so that you might learn the poverty which works wonders, what then prevents us from demanding such unleavened bread and banishing from the altar the available bread made of fine wheat flour, as if, even now, we would hear the Lord saying: 'if you should bring me wheat bread, it would be futile!'

39 Luke 22:11.

40 John 9:6.

41 John 5:8.

42 Luke 6:1.

43 Matt 15:2.

We could say the same also about the cup. For that, which was present then, would have been a watery and sour wine, in accordance with God's earthly humility, but now a wine of fine bouquet is often offered. Should we then reject this precious wine and accept the one which smells of poverty? Or should we consider worthy only such and such a Palestinian wine made from the field, from which was also filled the Lord's cup, which was also, if we should continue this nonsense, made of the same clay? That would truly be befitting to a great poverty of mind. Would you, also, after a meal, partake of the mystery and reclining at the table and being in the upstairs dining room ask for all the other things which were then carried out as demanded by the times, but now they are transformed into another type ordained to us by piety and faith. And, perhaps, whoever hears the book of Acts calling to mind in many places the breaking of bread⁴⁴ and finding the same thing in Paul⁴⁵ also, he would conclude that what was broken then mystically was of the same kind as what was served for a regular meal. And what was eaten was by no means the unleavened bread, for the latter had been allotted for certain prescribed days and sacrifices. But if these arguments are not compelling, then the scale of balance shall favor the other side, and yet to me it measures the greater part, for which victory is granted, for a runner wins the wreath even if he gets an advantage by a single step.

Besides, let the multitude of eastern servants of God and the reputation of the Church of Jerusalem, from which, as from a spring streams the fountain of faith and apostolic tradition, and which also offers leavened loaves, persuade you. Why do I tell you about the easterners, among whom you would also count the Indians and Ethiopians? Do me a favor and look towards Egypt and the parts of Libya which are near Cyrene ⁴⁶ and its desserts and you shall see that all are concerned for only one thing, abiding by the same rule about the loaves of bread of the mystical offering. But examine also the bread of the Church of the Corinthians, which you would not describe as one that does not hold fast to the traditions, for the one who established the tradition⁴⁷ praised it as holding fast to it and

44 Acts 20:7.

45 1Cor 10:16.

46 Acts 2:10.

47 1Cor 10: 16–17.

whenever opposed, as prevailing over every kind of, let's say, arrogance, so that I may not offend anyone by saying impiety. I know that you hear the Sardinians too witnessing against you concerning the offering of unleavened bread, but you pretend to be deaf. I, however, hear them clearly – both the old proverb which proclaims 'a witness from home'⁴⁸ and the one which gives me the white stone tablet.⁴⁹

Why then by contradicting the many and, I would say, those of great importance, do you think that you don't sin at all and by behaving against the tradition of the churches you raise your eyebrows? It is necessary that you concede, but you still try hard to subject us to your views and accuse us, who, had we wished, could have accused you more justly. But we are careful not to cause trouble for you on account of this and not to arouse further ambitious and contentious feelings, but you do not know how to show consideration to those who are considerate. Otherwise, if we should wish to examine harshly your fasting on Saturdays, we would show that it follows neither apostolic nor patristic teachings. For those who fast on Sunday or Saturday, with one exception,⁵⁰ are condemned by the apostles, the laity with excommunication and the clergy with deposition. And, perhaps, you shall not judge as illegally added those canons which the 6th council respected, for the delegates of your Agatho⁵¹ were present there for the formulation of dogmas and the instigator Basil⁵² was present for the establishment of laws. Thus, they were so many, that the place was filled by the whole synod of yours. But also the fathers in Laodicea, to whom the 6th council showed total respect, said that it was not necessary to offer bread⁵³ during the forty days of Lent, except on Saturday and Sunday. They would not have laid down that law, had they accepted Saturday as a day of fasting. We do not overlook that this is the case also with the birthdays of the martyrs, that is, their commemorations, which they ordained not to be celebrated during Great Lent except on Saturdays

48 'Οἴκοθεν ὁ μάρτυς' – proverb about a person lying and being exposed by some of his own people, whom he thought would be his accomplices.

49 Rev 2:17.

50 A reference to the appointed fast in the Orthodox Church on Great and Holy Saturday.

51 Agatho, Pope of Rome (c. 577 – January 10, 681).

52 Archbishop Basil of Gortyna – papal legate in Crete.

53 Reference to the celebration of the Eucharist.

and Sundays; for they pertain to celebration and not to affliction which the fast signifies to us. But what is brighter than the memory of the martyrs? Would you like me to show you also a royal⁵⁴ decree? That Basil, whose power in words and spirit extended over all the earth, and by which powers he spoke about fasting to the beautiful and great church of Caesarea, which became such because of him, reckons the fast to be five days and shows your calculation of six days to be an interpolation. He would have suitably employed towards you the words of Isaiah: ‘Not such is the fast that I choose, says the Lord.’⁵⁵

And so, what was necessary to be said to the westerners, by the student and teacher of the truth concerning the unleavened bread and the fasting on Saturdays has been said by us according to our ability. Someone might have considered also worthy of a discourse the topic of marriages, which seems to them as something wrongful, but I don’t have the free time to move Kamarina⁵⁶ other than to say that the marriage of our ordained priests is criticized by them and not just the marriage, but also other innumerable things as they say. For, this resembles the contentiousness which makes one blind to reality but clear-sighted to what does not exist, the former being the virtues and the latter being the vices. When, indeed, the time comes to defend ourselves against the charges brought against us, then it would also be time to speak about marriage, for it has been wronged either by them or by us or has been treated agreeably by both sides in regards to the purpose of marriage which we all uphold.

It remains to admonish also many of our own people – those who are zealous, but not according to knowledge, and those who, even more terribly, out of self-love tear apart the body of Christ. First of all, I shall speak to the former, those who are simple-minded.

Not all things are required of all people, my brothers, just as not to everyone all things should be conceded, but only those things are demanded, which if not cast down, will bring damage to what is vital, to which one should cling with both hands and feet. That removal would be like a

54 βασιλικὸν (play on words with Βασίλειος, the name of St. Basil the Great)

55 Isa 58:4.

56 ‘Καμάριναν κινεῖν’, lit. to move Kamarina – a lagoon providing a defense to the ancient city of Kamarina in Sicily, which was drained out of superstition, proving to be an unnecessary task that weakened the city’s defenses.

certain tax which is exacted by necessity, knowing that it's contribution would bring no small advantage wherever it is utilized. On the other hand, there are things which do no great harm but their removal by force causes the greatest damage – these should be discarded of, as does a reasonable man, who knows the rules of business and is willing to barter the small things for the greater, but never the greatest for the most insignificant. Thus, I observe also the doctors making judgements in the treatments of bodies: they bring in total attention to the ways of eating and medication of those who suffer from brain or heart or liver disorders. But there is a time when the teaching of the profession accomplishes nothing and they turn to natural antidotes and barbarously utter spells and tie rubbish of various materials on the one who suffers and they do not only hang these things on the sick person but also become attached themselves to the help of these trinkets. And if the doctors see some insignificant part of the body harmed from this treatment, they care for it little or not at all and certainly they pray that this part of the body is perfect and healthy, but if both are not possible, they chose the less harmful over what is more harmful; at the first symptoms of sickness in these insignificant parts the doctors stick to their treatment plan even though one of those insignificant parts is suffering, but if, as they treat the patient, they discover that some of the vital organs has fared ill, then they do cease the treatment.

That same principle must also be observed in the beautiful body of the Church by those who care for it, who, and I consider this praiseworthy, when the faith and the dogmas are suffering badly, utilize great speed for their healing and by words and deeds stand against the causes of sickness and by using their own remedies, or rather even before that, they ask for the true antidote from above and use the charm which prevails over all, which is the calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who lifted up our weaknesses and took away our sicknesses, and healed every depravity, Who is the Word of God, and the Wisdom, and the Power⁵⁷, and the right hand and the arm and all the other names of divine knowledge and power. But if such therapy is not successful on account of the stubbornness and malignancy of the disease, which Paul calls gangrene⁵⁸, then it is necessary to accept the steel of excommunication or anathema or the burning

57 Matt 8:17.

58 2Tim 2:17.

or the performance of surgical cutting, so that the evil teaching would not spread and attack those who are healthy. In such a way, that skilled doctor treated what he called gangrenes: some he handed over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme⁵⁹, and others who preached against his teaching he subjected to anathema⁶⁰, even if they had been well-recognized and possessing a higher rank - for this is what the angel that was introduced by the epistle of Paul signifies.⁶¹

And now let us address the westerners. If something concerning a dogma is wrong, then it shakes up the faith of the fathers. And this is certainly the case with the addition to the symbol of faith regarding the Holy Spirit. And there the danger is the greatest, for by considering this as not being worthy of correction, the one who forgives remains unforgiven, even though his teachings are uttered from the throne which the haughty have set forth high, even though they put forward the confession of Peter, even though they boast of its blessing, even though they dangle the keys to the Kingdom at us, which the more they consider him to have honored, the more they disgrace themselves, for the things he established they destroy and they pull out the foundations from underneath the church, which he is believed to have upheld. But here, you, for my sake, must become a fighter, who in other respects are meek, gird yourself with the sword of the spirit, proclaim through the word of God which separates flesh from spirit⁶², worldly delusion from divine mysteries, and which is able to discern the human and the perilous thoughts. Pierce, then, as a Levite and a servant of God those who make into idols the creations of their own delusions and who bow down their heads in worship and who require everyone to prostrate before the high rank of that wicked power.

But if that dogma of theirs is rejected by them and the innovation gives way to the older traditions, then the matters of unleavened bread and the fasts would be accepted and overlooked by us who would ask in the spirit of gentleness that in these things also there would be oneness of mind. Thus, become like Paul in this matter who appears to those under the law as one under the law and with those who have made a vow he

59 1Tim 1:20.

60 Gal 1: 8-9.

61 Ibid.

62 Heb 4: 12.

purifies himself, and shaves, and spends money for the offerings of purification and circumcises Timothy, who regards the righteousness in the law as rubbish, who shows how Christ and the name of the faith in Him might be useless to the circumcised Galatians⁶³ and stops the flow of his preaching being provoked by an apparent disagreement. Likewise, do also the helmsmen who loosen the foot of the sail, so that they could empty the submerged sail and so that the ship would be saved together with the crew.

He would demand this from your steering as well: to not always keep the sail tight and especially where the spirit of delusion and ethnic conceit abounds but to loosen it knowledgeably and to make the journey life-saving by means of slowness rather than deadly by means of speed and to safeguard the journey by means of slackening rather than cause shipwreck by means of unyielding. It would be best if the body of the faithful were perfect in all its members, with beautiful hair and nails, as the body of the daughter of a king, the bride of Christ, Who is beautiful in appearance, surpassing the sons of men, and Who fully, and perfectly, and gladly joins what is of His own kind. It would be good also if none of the members of the body were missing and especially the eyes, by which we see the sun of the Trinity and therefore also all the other senses which we need for the acquisition of the Spirit. However, this body's hair and nails do not correspond to the beauty of the other parts, for the hair, on the one hand, is not quite as black and not like that of king David who was ruddy and with beautiful eyes, or like that of the shining and fiery brother of the bride⁶⁴, and the nails, likewise, are either too long, or too short, so that even the small straws either cannot be grasped at all or can be grasped but very clumsily.

Therefore, you shall not despise the rest of the body, on account of those things, but, on the contrary, you shall not even notice them, being enamored by the others and having your eyes fixed upon the beauty of some of the members in order not to incline in a different direction. Thus, you might, all the more, warm the spirit and might serve the Lord⁶⁵ with the service of a good and faithful person, should you appear concerned for the Lord's house. But you would be concerned if you cannot tolerate when

63 Gal 5:2–6.

64 Song 5:10.

65 Rom 12:11.

it suffers a loss. And it suffers a loss, when its fullness is diminished. It is diminished when we drive out our co-servants. We drive them out when we are hardened towards them. We are hardened towards them, when we do not condescend. Let us therefore condescend, so that we would not appear harsh. For when we are not harsh, we shall extend a welcome. When we extend a welcome, we shall fill the house of the Lord. And filling it, we shall make it richer. And from this good will, we shall be attested as good and faithful servants, and because of this we shall be led into the joy of the Lord. Do you see where this condescension takes us and exalts us? Hence, we shall not be hardened either about the unleavened bread or about the fasts by exercising the rigid thinking of the pagans: for this is like gluing earthenware with earthenware without inserting something of a more pliable nature, which would likely become the glue.

It is not necessary to argue much about the rest of the enumerated things which they themselves acknowledge to keep, except for the devouring of strangled animals, for not even the name of this practice is tolerable for the reasonable Latins, just as the name of robbery or fornication is not tolerable for us, even though the wild and beastlike men would practice these. So, the remaining charges seem to many to be unpardonably wrong, but this is not the case, according to the reasoning of a man, who I suppose, is well-instructed in the ecclesiastical histories and who has learnt that not every custom is able to divide the churches but only the one that leads to the corruption of dogma. And certainly, the very errors of those illustrious judges are such customs as well: some are out of piety, such as the offering of salutations to the holy pavements⁶⁶ – we shall not really accept that satanic slander, that the veneration of icons is not acceptable to the Latins, others are out of economy, which pardons the weakness, perhaps even of the soul, but surely that of the body, as when the monks eat meat when they are sick and they do that in a disciplined manner and indeed spiritually. But if some abuse this practice on account of their carelessness, then the argument towards them should be different, but not to the former who make reasonable arrangements. There are other issues according to other principles which are implemented by the Western churches, but none of them is able to tear us asunder, even if the critics had the supporting evidence of being followers of the canons of the fathers.

66 Likely a reference to statues, made of similar materials as the pavements.

And if my address had not become too long and hadn't gotten close to being a history, I would have shown you thousands upon thousands of customs which were overlooked by the ancient fathers for the sake of saving the souls of their brothers. For they had known well not to please themselves, and they knew that each of them should please his neighbor for his own good and build him up⁶⁷. But now, woe to our swelling burden and we ask 'who is my neighbor⁶⁸?' Thus, we strike down countless people who are standing up so that we might raise up our own will, and we raise it up, not so that it simply stands, but so that it is able to bury others into oblivion. We transform and transpose all things in order to give substance to what is non-existent and to form the formless. And if we come to the point to utter some word, even though it might appear most ridiculous, we shall hasten to prove that is the voice of God, worthy of the hearing of Moses and Aaron, for it would be too lowly to say the hearing of Ithamar and Eleazar, and even more lowly to say the multitudes of Israel, even though they had been cleansed three days in advance.⁶⁹ And we do not realize that we behave indecently twice: by defaming the authority and by continuing to argue. For blessed is he who does not sin in word, as someone has declared; but praised is also he who, after having sinned, finds the sin and knows it and abhors it as something detestable, just as some monster, which is born in the night, but then in the day it is seen, and abhorred, and therefore rejected.

Shall we not imitate the humility of the Lord, Who did not please Himself⁷⁰ but us, who are many, and Who was bound as an outcast, in order that He might bind us to Himself and each other in the bond of peace, and Who shed His blood, in order that He might bring together into one the children of God, who had been scattered, and so that one flock might be formed from all the sheep, being tended by one shepherd⁷¹ and avoiding the distraction in front of wolves, which no less contributes for their dispersion, but rather it enables them to cause the scattering of the flock. What caused the Pharisees to be blamed? Wasn't it the coveting

67 Rom 15:1-2.

68 Luke 10:21.

69 Exod 19:10-11.

70 Rom 15:3.

71 John 10:16.

of honor and of being first and the desiring to be called ‘rabbi’ by other men? Didn’t that very thing make those miserable people God-killers? What is the smoke of the wrath of the Lord, I seek to learn, and Isaiah⁷² answers me that the expression ‘do not touch me’ was said by the proud, whom the Lord opposes⁷³. I will also show you a Pharisee worthy of emulation, Gamaliel, who suggested nothing pharisaic against the apostles, but everything which was in opposition he piously and devoutly exposed in defense of the apostles. And I do not know whether we, who are obliged to exceed in righteousness⁷⁴ the important Pharisees, since in no other way can we enter the kingdom, into which we believe to have been invited and for which to have been destined more than the Pharisees, shall exclude our brothers from the church or whether we shall exclude ourselves from the kingdom.

Don’t you see Paul who overpowers the critics of his preaching who were associated with Peter? Don’t you see Peter being reproved by him and bearing the reproaches in meekness? But you yourself, unless you see everyone cower before the thunder of your word and bow their head to the ground before its lightning, as did the disciples when on Mount Tabor the Lord led them to experience the radiance of the revealed divinity, time and again you dig out and present the Simons and Marcions, whom time has done well to bury and conceal, and the mud of the gnostics is stirred up, and the illusion of Samellius is formed anew, and the madness of Arius and the dark Photinus and the rest of the group of the sons of perdition... but lest I defile this discourse, I shall not enumerate all of them by name. And will you attach these heresies to your brother? Oh, what blindness! To that same brother you attribute the heresies of those who do not agree even among themselves. You bind him with those as if with some long ropes in order to seize the one who is running away and you don’t do this to him alone, but you also take hold of other accomplices, whom you challenge under the pretense of piety. However, often times you do not know what is piety, but desire to make a name for yourselves by the condemnation of your brother. Oh, the machinations of the wicked one, who makes even now the idols into gods, who records the vice as virtue and who succeeds

72 Isa 65:5.

73 1Pet 5:5.

74 Matt 5:20.

to be venerated and respected! But not so for us, servants of Christ, and friends, and brothers, let us not thus alienate ourselves from God, who draws all people on account of his goodness. Let us not drive away almost everyone on account of our arrogance. Let us not make our thrones a foundation of evil, nor the height of our office, a tower of triviality – for this is to me a situation created on account of ambition and conceit. But as long as we are strong, let us support the weak, or if we are doctors, let us heal the afflicted. But if we afflict them, even though I don't want to say it, I shall say it: this is the work of thieves and not doctors!

These things I am saying to you and against the conceited and the scoffers, who will not accomplish anything, as the Holy Spirit says. But you are like the banker who receives the talent from me. Be careful then to return the interest in time, which in my opinion is the criterion which adds to whatever the Spirit gives to the industrious person. Empowered by the grace of the Spirit, may we purely and without adulteration proclaim Him, according to the patristic definitions and teach others the same, in God the Father, Who teaches knowledge to the human person and in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to Whom belongs the glory unto the ages. Amen.