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Anderson: Two Brief Works of the Heresiarch Apollinaris of Laodicea

Two Brief Works Of The Heresiarch Apollinaris Of Laodicea

With a translation and commentary by William P. Anderson

The immediate purpose in placing these two very brief works of the heretical bishop of Laodicea, Apollinaris, in this issue of the *University of Dayton Review* is to begin what is projected to be the large task of bringing the works of the lesser known Greek Fathers, and the lesser known works of the great Greek Fathers, into English for the use of students interested in historical theology.

First, a few introductory remarks about Apollinaris. The basic importance of the Laodicene for the historical theologian cannot be over-estimated for it was he who, with precision and clarity, raised the basic and crucial question for Christology, i.e. *the relation of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ*. When one analyzes Apollinaris' thought, what appears to be most significant, what communicates itself to be his greatest concern, is the redemption of man and the nature of the Redeemer necessary to achieve this redemption. Therefore, one would not be straying far in saying that religious piety and a deep commitment to the Christian faith are the proper keys toward an understanding of the motivation and thought of the Laodicene. The Christological position which he ingeniously sets forth, energetically develops, and repeats untiringly in almost all of his works, is perhaps *the one true attempt to deal logically with the problem of the relation of the two natures in Christ*. Every attack upon his Christology would be considered by Apollinaris as an attack on the basis and vitality of piety and faith and the efficacy of redemption. Only the *perfect unity* of the person of Christ guarantees the redemption of the human race and its acquiring of a divine life. A perfectly adequate redemption could only come through a perfectly adequate Savior. Belief in the full Godhead of Christ was not just a theologoumenon, it was a vital experience. Christ considered less than fully divine would have destroyed his inner most religion. ὧ καὶ κτῆσις καὶ μίξις θεοπέια, θεὸς καὶ ἄραξ μίαν ἀπετέλεσεν φύσιν. Nothing else matters for faith. The assumption of a human separate personality in Christ does away with His power as Redeemer. Such a personality would require the attribution of a separate human νόος. So far as Apollinaris was concerned this decided the matter; it was an impious impossibility.

The two brief treatises presented here are representative of Apollinaris' two periods in his theological development: his early dichotomous period in which he was mainly concerned with the unity of Christ and his later trichotomous period in which he was specifically concerned with the problem of redemption. For the Greek texts used here we are indebted to the very fine work of the German historian Hans Lietzmann entitled: *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule*.

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 τοῦ σου ἄδῃ τὸ κέντρον; ” (I Cor. 15:54,55) καὶ πάλιν ”χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς”. (I Cor. 15:3) ἀθάνατος δὲ καὶ ἀκράτητος τῷ θανάτῳ διαμείνας διὰ τὴν θεότητα, ὡς ἀπαθῆς τοῦ πατρὸς δύναμις, κατὰ τὸν λέγοντα Πέτρον ”οὐ γὰρ ἦν, φησὶ, δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου”. (Acts 2:24) ἀνελθὼν εἰς οὐρανοὺς καὶ καθήμενος ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ πατρὸς κατὰ τὴν ἀπό γῆς [εἰς οὐρανοὺς] ὑψουμένην σάρκα τοῦ λούου, κατὰ τὸ λεγόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ Δαβίδ ”εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου, κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου” (Psalms 110:1) καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ κυρίου βεβαιούμενον καὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων, κατὰ δὲ τὴν θεότητα ἀπερίληπτος πάντα τρόπον περιέχων μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξ αἰδίου ὡς πατρικὴ καὶ ἄρρητος δύναμις, κατὰ τὸν διδάσκοντα Παῦλον ”Χριστὸς θεοῦ καὶ θεός, ὡς ἐπηγγελίετο, κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, ὡς φησι ὁ ἀπόστολος ”τοῦ κρίνοντος τὰ κρυπτὰ τοῦ σκοτεινοῦ καὶ φανεροῦντος τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν καρδιῶν καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον καὶ τὴν μέμψιν κατ’ ἀξίαν φέροντος ἐκάστῳ”. (I Corinthians 4:5)

(3) εἰ δὲ τις παρὰ ταῦτα ἐκ τῶν θείων γραφῶν διδάσκει, ἕτερον λέγων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἕτερον τὸν ἐκ Μαρίας ἄνθρωπον κατὰ χάριν υἱοποιηθέντα ὡς ἡμεῖς, ὡς εἶναι δύο υἱούς, ἓνα κατὰ φύσιν υἱὸν θεοῦ, τὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, καὶ ἓνα κατὰ χάριν, τὸν ἐκ Μαρίας ἄνθρωπον, ἢ εἴ τις τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν σάρκα ἄνωθεν λέγει καὶ μὴ ἐκ τῆς παρθένου Μαρίας ἢ τραπεῖσαν τὴν θεότητα εἰς σάρκα ἢ συγχυθεῖσαν ἢ ἀλλοιωθεῖσαν, ἢ παθητὴν τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ θεότητα ἢ ἀπροσκύνητον τὴν τοῦ κθρίου ἡμῶν σάρκα ὡς ἀ,θρώπου, καὶ μὴ προσκυνητὴν ὡς κυρίου καὶ θεοῦ σάρκα, τοῦτον ἀναθεματίζει ἢ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία πειθομένη τῷ [θεῷ] ἀποστόλῳ λέγοντι ”εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐγγελίζεται παρὰ ὃ παρελάβετε, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω”. (Galatians 1:9)

Translation of Apollinaris of Laodicea's Epistle to Jovian

(1) We confess the Son of God, who was eternally begotten before the ages, to have been begotten according to the flesh from Mary in these last times for our salvation. As the holy apostle teaches, saying, “When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son,

born of a woman” Galatians 4:4). And [we confess] that the same is Son of God and God according to the Spirit, but Son of man according to the flesh. There are not two natures in the one Son, one to be worshipped and one not to be worshipped, but one incarnate nature of the Word of God to be worshipped together with his flesh in one worship. Nor are there two Sons, one the true Son of God who is worshipped, and the other from Mary, a man, who is not worshipped, and who became Son of God according to grace, just as men also do; but [we confess] the one who is from God, as I said, to be the one Son of God, and him, and not any other, to be begotten according to the flesh from Mary in these last days for us. When the angel appeared to Mary, the God-bearer, she said, “How is this (possible) since I do not know a man?” He said, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore, the holy thing to be born will be called, the Son of God.” (Luke 1:34-35)

(2) Hence, he who is begotten from the Virgin Mary is Son of God by nature and true God – and not by grace and participation. He is man only according to the flesh which is from Mary. According to the Spirit the same is Son of God and God who suffered the things we suffer according to the flesh. As it is written, “Christ suffered for us in the flesh.” (I Peter 4:1) And again, “Indeed he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us.” (Romans 8:32) He remained impassible and unchanged, however, with respect to his divinity. In the words of the prophet, “I am God (*θεός*), and I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6) He died our death according to the flesh for our sins in order that he might destroy death by his death for us. As the apostle says, “Death is swallowed up in victory! O Death, where is your victory? O Hades, where is your sting?” (I Corinthians 15:54-55) And again, “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” (I Corinthians 15:3) But he remained immortal and invincible by death because of the divinity as the impassible power of the Father. As Peter says, “For it was not possible for him to be held by death.” (Acts 2:24) He ascended into heavens and sits at the right hand of the Father according to the flesh of the Logos which is exalted from earth (into heaven). As it is said by David, “The Lord said to my Lord ‘sit at my right hand’.” (Psalm 110:1) And this is what has been firmly established by the Lord himself and the apostles: infinite according to his divinity, and compassing every sphere together with the Father from eternity as fatherly and ineffable power. According to the teaching of Paul, “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (I Corinthians 1:24) The same Son of God and God comes, as was promised, to judge living and dead. As the apostle says, “He renders judgment on that which is hidden in darkness and he discloses the secrets of the heart and gives the praise and blame (of men) to each according to his worth.” (I Corinthians 4:5 – not an exact quote by Apollinaris)

(3) If anyone should teach something contrary to this from the holy scriptures, saying that the Son of God is one and the man from Mary is another, being adopted a Son by grace even as we are, so that there are two Sons, one by nature Son of God, who is from God, and the other by grace, the man from Mary, or if anyone should say that the flesh of our Lord is from above and not from the Virgin Mary, or that the divinity has been changed or confused or altered into flesh, or that the divinity of the Son is passible, or

that the flesh of our Lord as being the flesh of a man is not worshipped instead of saying that it is worshipped as the flesh of him who is Lord and God, such persons the Catholic Church anathematizes obeying the apostle's words, "If any preach to you a gospel contrary to that which you have received, let him be anathema!" (Galatians 1:9)

Brief Notes on Apollinaris' Letter to Jovian

1. Even a cursory examination of the works of Apollinaris will reveal a remarkable similarity between the thought of the heresiarch and the respected bishop of the early church, St. Athanasius. Therefore, it is not surprising that this epistle to Jovian, which is a type of profession of faith, addressed to the emperor, should have been passed along under the great Nicene Father's name. The emperor referred to is Flavius Claudis Jovianus. The date of this letter, therefore, must be A.D. 363-364, since Jovian became emperor upon the death of Julian, who lost his life in a campaign against the Persians in A.D. 363, and since he himself died in A.D. 364 (cf. Voisin, *L'Apollinarisme*, pp. 182-185). This profession of faith is generally classified among Apollinaris' earlier dichotomous works.

2. *Paragraph 1:* Insofar as the body of Jesus Christ did not possess the human rational element, for Apollinaris, the body of Christ was not a complete man. Consequently, unlike the Orthodox Fathers, he could not, nor did he have any desire to, say that Jesus had two natures – a divine nature and a human nature. By human nature the Orthodox Fathers meant that a rational soul was present, inasmuch as man was, by definition, a rational animal. In the one nature conceived by Apollinaris there was one worship. There does not seem to be any doubt that he thought of only one real and biological unity in Christ, which links the deity directly with his body and forms one nature only (*μία φύσις*). He saw in this formulation the sole genuine explanation for the *communicatio idiomata*, for the conception of the Virgin, the redemptive power.

3. *Paragraph 2:* In the incarnation there has not been any change in the being of the Logos. In fact, as we see in this section, Apollinaris expressly anathematizes anyone who would maintain that the Logos has been changed into flesh by quoting the Old Testament, Malachi 3:6 (I am God, and I do not change), against them. He maintains that the Logos, while he has become incarnate still maintains his cosmic relations. Further in his becoming flesh he permeates all things and, in a particular sense, is commingled with the flesh. As one may also see very clearly in many of Apollinaris' other works, e.g. (*Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*), he points out very sharply that Christ is man only in a very special sense. In this epistle, he declares that Christ is only man according to the *flesh* from Mary.

4. *Paragraph 3:* Any duality, of any type, Apollinaris considered to be impious. Here he is specifically referring to the adoptionist type Christology. One should also note that here, as well as in his other treatises, there is a clear statement which seems to invalidate the

charges of the Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa, that Apollinaris taught that Jesus had a “heavenly flesh.” Very specifically he states that *the flesh of the Lord is from the Virgin Mary*. What he does emphasize, however, is the *unity* of the Logos and flesh and that in the commingling the deity and the flesh are to be worshipped; the deity because it is deity and the flesh because it has become the flesh of the deity.

ΤΟΜΟΣ ΣΥΝΟΔΙΚΟΣ

Ἀπολλινάριος καὶ οἱ σὺν ἔμοι τάδε φρονοοῦμεν περὶ τῆς θείας σαρκώσεως.

Σάρκα ὁμοούσιον τῇ ἡμετέρα σαρκὶ προσείληφεν ἀπὸ τῆς Μαρίας ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ζῶν λόγος καθ’ ἑνωσιν τὴν πρὸς θεότητα ἐκ τῆς πρώτης συλλήψεως τῆς ἐν τῇ παρθένῳ καὶ οὕτως γεγόνεν. ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ πνεῦμά ἐστὶν τὸ γενέσθαι σάρκα. καλεῖται γὰρ καὶ ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωπος. διὸ καὶ ἐπουράνιος ἕνεκα τοῦ ἰδίου πνεύματος, ἐπουρανίου τυγχάνοντος. ὧ τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς οὐκ ἀντετάξατο. καὶ οὕτως ἔλυετο ἐν Χριστῷ ἡ ἁμαρτία καὶ κατελύθη ὁ ἐκ τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος καὶ ἡμεῖς μετέχοντες τοῦ κατορθώματος πίστει σωζόμεθα καὶ <ἐν> ὁμοιώσει τῇ πρὸς τὸν ἐπουράνιον γινόμεθα ὄντες χοίκοῦ πατρὸς. ἀναθεμα οὖν ὁ μὴ λέγων ἐκ τῆς Μαρίας τὴν σάρκα καὶ τῆς ἀκτιστου φύσεως λέγων αὐτήν καὶ ὁμοούσιον τῷ θεῷ. ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ λέγων τὴν θεότητα παθητὴν καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τὰ ψυχικά.

Translation of the *Tomos Synodikos* of Apollinaris of Laodicea.

Apollinaris and those with me hold these views about the divine incarnation.

The living Logos of God took flesh from Mary, which is homoousios with our flesh, in accordance with the unity with the deity which he had from the very beginning of his conception in the virgin. Thus he also became man, because, according to the apostle, man is flesh and spirit. That is: the one who became flesh, the Logos, is united to the flesh after the manner of the human spirit. And man among us is called flesh. But the Lord over us is man. And so, as it turns out, he is heavenly precisely because of his own heavenly spiritual property, to whom the reason of the flesh offers no resistance. Thus sin was ransomed in Christ, and the death which comes from sin was destroyed and we are saved by participating in this event by faith; and we being of an earthly father are made to be in a likeness with the heavenly. Therefore, anathema be anyone who does not say that the flesh even of the uncreated nature is from Mary and says rather that it is also

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homousios with God. And furthermore (anathema be) anyone who says that the deity is passible and that as a result of this the soul suffers.

A Note on the Tomos Synodikos of Apollinaris of Laodicea.

This very brief Apollinarian statement, which belongs to the mature trichotomous period of the Laodicene bishop, presents his position clearly and concisely: the Logos becomes man (for us) by taking human flesh from the Virgin upon himself. In this way, and because he both is, and remains, Lord, our redemption is achieved. It is very reminiscent of the deification theory of Irenaeus and Athanasius. Upon examination one discovers that indeed this position is typical of the understanding of the Eastern Fathers; i.e. in the event of the Logos taking up flesh, an ontological relationship with humanity is established by the deity and this is a relationship in which we vicariously participate. Several points may be made: (1) the deity remains impassible; (2) the flesh is from Mary and therefore the Logos may be said to be consubstantial with us in this element; (3) by the taking up of this flesh the redemption of man is achieved; and (4) finally, we are made to be in a likeness with the deity (*τῷ γὰρ εἰγόνῳ*). The particular phrase of Irenaeus that comes to mind is: He (Christ) became what we are in order that we might become what He is. (Pref. *Against Heresies*)