

The Response to the Letter of Photius, Written by the Armenian *Vardapet* Sahak M̄rut, at the Order of King Ašhot Bagratuni of Armenia. (c. 882 AD)

Arméniens et Byzantins à l'époque de Photius:
Deux Débats Théologiques Après Le Triomphe de l'Orthodoxie
— Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev (2004), pages 33-56

1. Address and Salutation

“To Photius, enlightened High Priest, sober and virtuous, who conducts himself according to Christ, and Patriarch who watches over the great imperial city of the New Rome; From Ashot, Prince of Princes of Greater Armenia.

I have read the writing of your wise reflection, O man of God, and with great joy I have blessed the heavenly Christ, our Savior and Giver of Life, when I saw that Your Holiness has remained preserved in good health, and that the bond of our ancient mutual friendship, which you have recalled with words full of praise, has likewise remained intact. For this I give abundant thanks to Your Holiness, and I shall never cease to do so.

However, as for myself, who crawl upon the earth, I remain in the lowest place, entangled in the cares of this world and in material reality. Thus I remain continually unfit to contemplate the beauty of heaven and the splendor of the sun, because within me the faculty of contemplation instinctively turns downward. Whereas you, a pure man and filled with ...

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... virtue, you have continued the study of the divine Scriptures and of the commandment that has been handed down to us: "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you love one another.*"¹ Indeed, by your words of such wise exhortation, you have renewed the bond of our friendship. Had we not possessed this friendship, the whole appearance of our image would have been altered and overturned.

Even without labor, the seeds of the virtue of Him whose praises come not from man nor from the hand of man, but from the awesome heavenly powers themselves, are gathered together, those powers which confess that God is Love, One whom none of created beings can equal in such exalted greatness.

¹ John 13:35

Thus, by possessing this friendship, may we also become partakers of incomparable graces. Yet far more blessed would we be if faith permitted us to establish together the bond of a holy and true confession of faith, so that together we might shine forth and dwell in the house of God as fellow believers.

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2. Rejection of Chalcedon and of Eutychianism

Nevertheless, certain people departed from the holy, right, and true confession that had been handed down by the holy Apostles and further developed by the first Three Holy Councils, which had been assembled by the blessed and holy Emperors in order to reject the sects of Arius, Macedonius, and Nestorius, and to preserve the purity of the faith.

Then Marcian disagreed with them and, under the constraint of an imperial decree, convened the Fourth Council, having been influenced by his wife Pulcheria, who had formerly defended Nestorius.

Some attended that council out of fear, while others did so in cooperation with the Emperor. It is unnecessary to discuss those matters now because the arguments are lengthy. The important point is simply to make known, even if only briefly, to Your Holiness that the reasons why we reject that council are by no means unknown to us. In your letter, Your Holiness gave precedence to the memory of the Fourth Council, placing it on the same level as the first Three Holy Councils, and you ask us to give it the same assent.

However, our Fathers and Doctors have never accepted that Council, because they recognized both the foreignness of its teaching and the corruption of the definitions that had universally been handed down by the earlier Councils. They had proclaimed to the whole world Christ as one Lord and one Son, united from two...

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...natures by an unconfused and indestructible union, whereas those people [the Chalcedonians] divided Him into two natures, two operations, and two wills, thereby following the errors of Nestorius. Yet, by saying "*united*," they persuaded the simple-minded that they themselves were free from Nestorian teaching.

In the present discourse, we set forth the definitions of each of the two confessions, namely, that of Nestorius and that of Chalcedon, including the Tome of Leo, upon which the Council of Chalcedon established the strange and alien definitions of its confession.

3. Affinity Between Nestorius and Chalcedon

Nestorius writes as follows in his principal discourse on the faith: "*I confess two immutable and unchangeable natures of the Word of God: true God from the true God, and a perfect man from the offspring of David and Abraham...*"

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Leo writes in his Tome: "*I confess that He is God, inasmuch as 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'; and I confess that He is man, inasmuch as 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'*"²

Nestorius writes: "*It was not God the Word whom Joseph wrapped in a burial shroud, but His body.*"³ Leo writes: "*One shone forth in the performance of miracles, and the other was subjected to the Passion.*"⁴ Nestorius writes: "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*"

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Leo writes: "*To the wise builder belongs his house, for 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'*" Nestorius writes: "*I discern a dual nature in Christ, for He is indeed twofold according to nature, while according to dignity He is one alone.*"⁵

Leo writes: "*To hunger, to thirst, to grow weary, and to sleep all compel us to confess the man; whereas to feed and satisfy five thousand men with five loaves, to grant the Samaritan woman the water of life, to walk upon the surface of the sea, and likewise to calm the storm by rebuking the raging waves, all these undoubtedly belong to God.*"⁶

Have You seen, O Grace, the agreement that exists between Nestorius and Leo concerning the distinction of the natures and the distinction of the kinds of operations? How, then, are we to understand all this, that I should be obliged by Your Holiness to accept the Council of Chalcedon?

Since our Lord has said, "*Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,*"⁷ we cannot love Chalcedon, which...

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...divide into two the one Christ and hate the Christ who saved us by His precious Blood.

² Leo's Tome to Flavian "Epistle 28" §4

³ Nestorius, Sermon 10 'nestoriana' 1905 p. 166

⁴ Leo's Tome to Flavian "Epistle 28" §4

⁵ Response of Nestorius to Cyril §6, ACOI,II, p. 29-32

⁶ Leo's Tome to Flavian "Epistle 28" §4

⁷ Matthew 10:37

4. Disagreement Between Saint Cyril and Chalcedon

I shall again recall brief excerpts from the Chalcedonian definitions of the faith and, alongside them, those of Saint Cyril. Thus we shall see whether they bear any affinity to one another.

The Council of Chalcedon writes: "*It did not abolish the differences of the natures because of the union, but rather preserved more fully the distinctive property of each of the two natures.*"

Saint Cyril writes in his first letter to Succensus: "*We confess one only Son, just as the Fathers also confessed one incarnate nature of the Word.*"⁸

What communion, then, could there be between Chalcedon and Cyril, if the latter defined one unified nature constituted from the two, according to the holy Council of Ephesus, whereas Chalcedon determined and defined "*in two natures*"?

Since, in the letter you wrote to us, we perceived no concern to cite the holy Doctors and Fathers, neither have we made a display of them ourselves, although we possess many Fathers and Doctors. Rather, it is only in response to your questions, O Grace, that we have set forth our replies.

5. Armenian Orthodoxy with Respect to Eutychianism

Your Holiness has written to us: "*Those who affirm one nature in Christ are Eutychians, and they shall receive their recompense.*"⁹

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Here, you have not judged rightly, for that impious Eutyches affirmed one single nature by way of transmutation, giving as an example something like this: "*Just as raw gold acquires the appearance of an image through the work of iron, yet receives nothing of the material element of the iron except its form, so likewise,*" he said, "*our Lord received nothing of human nature from the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary; rather, while remaining in the Virgin's womb, He merely effected a transmutation into humanity by His divine nature.*"

Have you seen the evil design of his impious thoughts, his treacherous deceit, and into what abyss of blasphemy he has fallen? Why, then, does it please you, O most perfect Intelligence, to bind us to so foreign a doctrine and so strange a language, so that we should be dishonored?¹⁰ It

⁸ Cyril of Alexandria - *Epistula prima ad Succensum* §6 ACO, 1, 6 p. 153.22-23

⁹ Photius à Ašhot 1. 153-155 §B.V

¹⁰ Photius à Ašhot 1. 122-137 §B.III

does not befit Your Holiness to attach us to one who has been struck with anathema and has fallen outside the divine dwelling places.

Therefore we declare: *"Those who affirm one nature in Christ with such an intention, or who accept the doctrine of Eutyches, let them remain forever shut up under his anathemas!"*

6. Defense of the Armenian Christological Confession

We shall therefore set forth, in a detailed discourse, our confession, according to which we affirm one nature in Christ, as is well known to everyone.

It is acknowledged and spoken of with certainty that there is one nature in two senses. For there is that which is one by simplicity, that is, not composite, such as the Archangels Gabriel and Michael; and there is that which is one by composition, such as Adam and Noah.

Therefore, if we say one nature in Christ in the sense that it is simple, then we could not call Him God made man. But if we say...

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...in the sense of one composite nature, then there would be no abolition either of the divine nature or of the human nature.

Let man, therefore, serve as our example. As I said above, there is that which belongs to the body and that which belongs to the soul, yet a man is said to possess not two natures, but one single nature. And if someone should object and say, *"two natures of Christ,"* then he will actually have affirmed three: two human natures and one divine nature. Which, then, of these three do they wish to eliminate when they say *"in two natures,"* by reason of the one nature they have omitted?

If one eliminates the body, he is a Eutychian. If one eliminates the human soul, he is an Apollinarian. And if one eliminates the divine nature, he resembles the Jews, who said: *"You are a man, and you make yourself God."*¹¹

We have therefore demonstrated that the *"one nature"* which we confess exists through the unification of the two natures, in which there is no confusion.

¹¹ John 10:33

7. Communicatio Idiomatum: Examples from Scripture

For this reason also, when the divine history refers to the constitution of man, it sometimes mentions only his soul, saying: "*He created man in the image of God*,"¹² and at other times it mentions only his body, while, because of the union of the two natures, it intends the whole man.

Moreover, at times, by mentioning the soul, it designates the body; and by mentioning the body, it designates the soul. For example, when it says: "*Do not be anxious for your souls, about what they shall eat, nor about what they shall wear*."¹³ By mentioning the soul, Scripture has designated the body.

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It also says: "*Do you not know that your bodies are a temple of God?*"¹⁴ By mentioning the body, it designates the soul, for God dwells in souls. Again it says: "*Seventy-five souls entered into Egypt*."¹⁵ By mentioning the soul, it designates the whole persons. And again: "*To You all flesh shall come*."¹⁶ By mentioning bodies (flesh), it designates the whole human beings.

By such examples, Holy Scripture likewise speaks of the united natures of Christ God. Thus the Apostle writes: "*Through Christ all things were made, both those in heaven and those on earth*,"¹⁷ thereby referring only to His divinity.

Again, it writes: "*There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*,"¹⁸ thereby referring to His humanity. And Scripture speaks in this way because there exists an indivisible union constituted from two natures.

Furthermore, by mentioning the divinity, it designates the humanity, and by mentioning the humanity, it designates the divinity. As St. John says: "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and which our hands have touched concerning the Word of Life*."¹⁹

In speaking of what was "*seen*" and "*touched*," it designates the divinity, for it was the Word who was with the Father and alongside the Father,

¹² Genesis 1:27

¹³ Luke 12:22

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19

¹⁵ Genesis 46:27

¹⁶ Psalm 65:2

¹⁷ Colossians 1:16

¹⁸ 1 Timothy 2:5

¹⁹ 1 John 1:1

whereas what was touched was the body. Again, it says: "*No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven, the Son of...*"

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"...*the Son of Man who is in heaven.*"²⁰ By mentioning the Son of Man, Scripture designates the Son of God. It is the ineffable union that accomplishes all this.

8. The One Subject of the Attribution of Properties

Therefore, when we speak of Him who existed from the Nativity until the Ascension, we speak neither of a mere man nor of the divinity alone. For the pure God can neither be seen nor touched, whereas a mere man is not capable of saying, "*Before Abraham was, I AM,*"²¹ nor, "*The glory which I had before the world existed.*"²²

But I attribute these expressions to the incarnate Word, and, besides these, both designations belong to Him. Nevertheless, the sufferings and the operations that arise from the two natures are not distinguished. For if we distinguish the natures, their two proper and natural attributes will also necessarily appear²³, according to the error of Nestorius.

Furthermore, concerning what Your Holiness wrote, namely: "*Those who profess 'one nature' are weak in their understanding, even though they have offered our Savior Jesus Christ in sacrifice and have been eyewitnesses of Him,*"²⁴ we answer that, when we offer the life-giving sacrifice, we acknowledge it to be the Body and the Blood, but not as though they belonged...

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...as though they belonged to some mere man. For a mere body cannot give life, according to what the Savior said: "*The flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit who gives life.*"²⁵ From this it is recognized that the Life-Giver is the One of whom the Savior said: "*As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats Me will live because of Me.*"²⁶

Let us wisely contemplate the mystery of this saying. It is therefore the Word who is sent by the Father, and it is the Body that is eaten upon the earth.

However, if the natures are divided, as you say, then it is evident that those who partake of the meal eat the Word, the "*Living One,*" the One

²⁰ John 3:13

²¹ John 8:58

²² John 17:24

²³ Leo's Tome to Flavian "Epistle 28" §3 states "*with the property of each nature being preserved, and coming together into one person*"

²⁴ Photius à Ašhot 1. 122-124 §B.III

²⁵ John 6:63

²⁶ John 6:57

"sent by the Father," according to the words, "Whoever eats Me," which would be a dreadful thing to admit! But if they eat the Body, and the Body is life-giving, then it is evident that the Body is united with Him who was sent by the Father, and that there is therefore no division.

9. Mixture Without Confusion

Furthermore, I was greatly astonished by what you wrote in that letter, saying: "*If you speak of 'mixture' with regard to Christ who came from two natures, then it is clear that neither of those natures remained or persisted in its own proper characteristics; rather, both of them, having been dissolved, were emptied of themselves. If this mixed nature, which is in...*

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...in Christ, is derived from the Father and the Holy Spirit, then it is evident that the nature of the Father and of the Holy Spirit also involves a mixture. But if the nature of the Son is made particular by His individual subsistence and it alone is mixed, then it is evident that the Son does not possess the nature of the Father."²⁷

These words are full of defilement, as though we were speaking of Christ's natures as being mixed by way of corruption, like water mixed with wine, in which both are mutually dissolved; or like different kinds of metals melted together by fire, for example, gold and silver, which are mutually corrupted. In that case, perhaps your words would have been appropriate.

But if what we mean is entirely different from this, namely, the union of the Word of God with His Body, like light with the air, or fire with gold, or the soul with the body, all of which remain unchanged and inseparable, then you dishonor us without reason by despising the truth.

Therefore, the great and illustrious orator, the Theologian, bears witness to this when he says: "*O new mixture! O marvelous intermingling!*"²⁸

Indeed, new is the union of the divinity with humanity, and marvelous is the intermingling of the Uncreated with the created! That blessed Theologian also writes something further: "*It is impossible to place His pure divinity within our nature of becoming and corruption.*" Therefore, He mingles those things that can be mingled with those things that cannot be mingled.

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Likewise, the Wonderworker, the man of God and His faithful servant, Saint Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia, writes: "*Such is the true confession: He humbled Himself and mingled His divinity with our humanity, and*

²⁷ Photius à Ašhot 1. 133-136 §B.III

²⁸ St. Gregory of Nazianzus - Oration 38.13, PG 36, 325

the immortal with the mortal."²⁹ And again he says: "*He destroyed the Evil One and condemned our sin through the God-mingled Body.*"³⁰ And again he says: "*He mingled and united the Body with the divinity.*"³¹

Have you seen, O honorable Chief, how this mixture, that is, the unconfused union of the natures in Christ, is attested by men who are akin to God? I had many more things to write to you on this subject, but we have judged that, for you, O Perfect One, what has already been written is sufficient, according to the wise saying that a prudent man is satisfied with one argument.³²

One may still ask: Why did the holy Fathers employ two expressions, sometimes speaking of "*mixture*" and at other times of "*union*"? It is because mixture excludes division, while union excludes abolition; for this reason they employed both formulations.

Just as distinction does not imply mixture, so mixture does not imply division; and just as duality abolishes unity, so union abolishes duality. For if He had not been mingled without confusion with His Body, how could it be said: "*He became incarnate*"? And if He had not been united with humanity, how could it be said: "*He became man*"? This can be said because the expressions "*to become incarnate*" and "*to become man*" are predicated of the incorporeal substance; for man cannot exist apart from his body.

10. Attribution of Human Properties Does Not Injure Divinity

We have also read something surprising in this letter, namely, that the Council of Chalcedon affirmed one person and two natures in Christ so that the Passion might not reach God the Word³³

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These unbelieving statements deserve ridicule, for the detestable Nestorius likewise suffered from the same error when he spoke against the great Cyril in these words: "*If you affirm a union according to nature, then the sufferings extend to the Word.*"³⁴ To this the blessed Cyril replied as follows: "*If the nature of man, or even one of its members, is injured in some way, whether the eye is blinded or another member is struck by iron or by the fangs of a beast, are the souls themselves thereby truly injured?*" And he answers: "*No, certainly not.*"³⁵

²⁹ St. Gregory the Illuminator, Agat'hangelos, - R. Thomson (2001), p. 285-286

³⁰ St. Gregory the Illuminator, Agat'hangelos, - R. Thomson (2001), p. 105

³¹ St. Gregory the Illuminator, Agat'hangelos, - R. Thomson (2001), p. 109

³² Proverbs 12:15, 21:11

³³ Photius à Ašhot 1.160-165 §B.V

³⁴ Nestorius - Response to Cyril, ACO I, I, I, p. 30

³⁵ unable to identify the text

Therefore, if God united Himself with that human nature by uniting His own nature to a body, while remaining and continuing in His own nature without undergoing either suffering or injury, did God the Word truly suffer in His divine nature, that is, the sufferings of the Cross and all the others?

The same Cyril also writes: "*When red-hot gold is struck by a hammer, it is the gold, the material element, that receives the blows of the hammer, and not the fire united with it. Yet neither is the gold distinguished from the fire, nor is it divided from it in its material substance. Whenever the gold appears, the fire also appears; and whenever the fire is manifested, the gold also is manifested. In every respect they exist as one, even though at the same time the gold and the fire remain joined to one another.*"³⁶

His divinity is united to His body in the same way, and indeed, even more perfectly than this. Let Your Wisdom also understand that an analogy resembles the truth only in part. For if the whole truth were contained in the analogy, then it would no longer be an analogy, but the very truth itself of which the analogy is only an illustration.

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11. The Unity of Person Entails the Unity of Nature

And now let us examine the other statements they make, which, according to our reading, are equally obscure, for they reveal an incoherent understanding of "*divided natures*" and "*united persons*."

If, as they claim, the union of the natures amounts to a confusion, then the union of the persons, which they define as "*one person*," must likewise amount to a confusion.³⁷

Yet the Apostle writes concerning the two forms: "*He who was in the form of God took the form of a servant.*"³⁸ Thus, he spoke once of one form and then again of another form.

Which, then, of these two persons do they wish to suppress in order to speak only of one person? If it is the person of the divinity, then they are infected with the error of Sabellius. If it is the person of the humanity, then what was it that people perceived when they saw the Lord in the appearance of a true man?

Therefore, either the person according to the unconfused union is one, as indeed it truly is, so that the united nature is likewise one, yet without

³⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *That the Christ is one*, A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church 46, trans. Philipp Edward Pusey, Oxford, James Parker 1881, p. 316.

³⁷ Photius à Ashot 1.128-130 §B.III

³⁸ Philippians 2:6-7

confusion; or else, if the natures are divided, the person itself will also appear divided.

For nowhere and at no time has any rational person known or confessed two complete individualities in one single person. Rather, all who possess sound understanding recognize that, from the confession of two natures, two operations, and two wills, there also follows two persons, according to the wicked doctrine of Nestorius: “*one who is by nature the Son begotten of the Father, and another who is the son born of the Mother.*”

According to them, it was only by grace that this latter received from the Word of God, for his body, union and an abundance of honor. Thus they understand Christ, as though He were, in Himself, His own...

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...his own Lord and his own servant³⁹, that is, Lord according to His divinity, and servant according to His humanity. How, then, and in what manner, can they worship the servant together with the Creator, while at the same time dissolving the definition of the faith in the Trinity into which they were baptized? Or how can they despise Him who redeemed them by His precious Blood?

12. The Definition of St. Gregory as a Guarantee of Orthodoxy

Since our discourse is addressed to Your most learned and most perfect Holiness, we suppose that what has been said here is sufficient. We wish only to bring to the attention of your gracious consideration that, through the orthodox Definition of the immaculate faith of our wonderworking father and first among the succession of teachers, our Illuminator, Saint Gregory, by which he instructed this land of Armenia, leading it out of the dark shadows of idolatry into the light of the knowledge of God through his mighty works, accompanied by signs and wonders, which he performed by accomplishing miracles of many kinds, and concerning which I believe Your Abundance is not ignorant⁴⁰, through this Definition, heresy has never been able to gain entrance anywhere into the land of the Armenians.

Rather, having been firmly established in the immaculate faith, they have remained and continued steadfast and unchangeable in that faith which this holy man built upon the Apostolic rock⁴¹, against which the gates of Hades have never been able...

³⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Second Letter to Nestorius*, §5, ACO I, I, 1, p. 27

⁴⁰ Photius to Ašot, lines 84–86 (§B.I) states “*We know that your country is preserved in sublime grace and is in every respect united with the holy Catholic Church*”

⁴¹ Ephesians 2:19-20

...prevail, according to the word of the Lord⁴², and which, down to the present day, has deviated neither to the right nor to the left.

For this reason, we have had no need either of teachings expressed in a novel language or of councils of every sort, convened here and there, whose unfortunate innovations concerning the ecclesiastical order and the definitions of the faith, once established by the power of the Holy Spirit, we know well. It is to that faith that we must now turn, in order briefly to set forth the true confession concerning Christ the Savior that we have received. May that confession remain forever at the greatest possible distance from the detestable sect of the Eutychians, by means of which you think to slander us!

13. The Unity of the Subject Justifies Theopaschite Language

We confess the Son of God, God the Word, consubstantial with the Father and sharing the same glory as the Holy Spirit, who, by the will of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, humbled Himself and dwelt in the womb of the ever-Virgin Mother of God, and who perfectly assumed our nature, consisting of soul, body, and mind. His body was not transformed into incorporeality, nor was God the Word transformed in His immutable nature.

Rather, God the Word was united with the body without confusion and in an indivisible manner, voluntarily bearing in His holy body, united to Himself, all the sufferings proper to humanity except sin⁴³. Therefore, the truthful Gospel accounts likewise affirm concerning Him that both the highest realities, which transcend suffering, and the lowliest realities belonged to Him, because He had appropriated to Himself, in His body, which is without confusion and indestructible, the body and everything proper to the body.

We confess the Son of God, Christ, who voluntarily suffered, died, and sovereignly rose again on the third day. "*Christ died*," says Saint Gregory, "*because of our sins, according to the Scriptures*;" and again he says that what belongs to Him alone is immortality, as He remains in the inaccessible light. It was one Christ who preached in the world, not two, one who died and another who remained immortal. This is precisely what the Apostle explains and confirms: "*There is one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things*,"⁴⁴ and "*at the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth*."⁴⁵

⁴² Matthew 16:18

⁴³ Hebrews 4:15

⁴⁴ Colossians 1:16

⁴⁵ Phillipians 2:9-11

And if Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever⁴⁶, then we must not distribute the exalted attributes according to "*the two natures*," divided, corresponding, and running in parallel, as according to your confession; rather, we must confess one single...

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...the one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ accomplished our salvation through His incomparable Blood. Therefore, we shall not become the servants of another, nor shall we say, "*Come out of Your body, God the Word, so that I may worship You!*"

Rather, we shall be true worshipers of God, for He united Himself to a soul, a body, and a rational mind, and became a true man, without transmutation or change. Nor do I say that being nailed to the cross is predicated of a mere man⁴⁷, considered separately, according to the division of Nestorius; nor do I say that opening Paradise is predicated of the pure Divinity. For it was not as though one had been suspended upon the tree while the tongue of another promised Paradise to the thief. Rather, it was the one and the same God the Word, incarnate and made man.

Likewise, when He says, "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*,"⁴⁸ it is evident that He was seen by the world in His body, and not in His divinity considered in itself.

It is therefore clear that the Father has no body, and that the Son is not seen in His pure divinity; rather, He manifested to the world His paternal nature united with His maternal nature. John also bears witness to this, saying: "*The One who is in the bosom of the Father has appeared to us*."⁴⁹

Likewise, Thomas, after touching His side wounded by the spear, confessed Him inseparably as: "*My Lord and my God*."⁵⁰

Thus we also follow the true Apostolic teaching by confessing Christ together with His body, which is without confusion and indivisible, as one Son, one Lord, one Savior, one Life-Giver, and one Deliverer through His incorruptible Body and Blood, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto all eternity, without end.

⁴⁶ Hebrews 13:8

⁴⁷ Luke 23:43

⁴⁸ John 14:9

⁴⁹ John 1:18

⁵⁰ John 20:28

14. Conclusion: Thanksgiving and Assurance of Fidelity

I have received with lasting gratitude and pleasure, O honorable Chief and holy Father, your letter exhorting us to remain unfailingly in the obedience of servants to your holy Empire, given by God...

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... According to the divine Scripture that has been handed down to us.

We have never departed from this purpose of obedience and service. On the contrary, we are continually concerned to uphold it, and we constantly await the moment when a command from Your Imperial Majesty is made known to us, so that we may carry it out unfailingly and without the slightest negligence, however urgent the task may be, with sincere intentions and strengthened by the most sublime graces.

I continually bear in my mind, now and forever, Your honorable Grace, together with the "*bond of friendship*," according to the words of Your worthy Majesty, as well as the bond of an honorable, pious, and pure life.

Therefore, I ask that, in your devoted, unceasing, and ever-acceptable prayers before God, you remember us, beseeching God, who never fails to come to our aid, to grant us also the mercy of His most abundant grace.

Then may the peace of God overshadow Your Holiness, preserving your worthy and honorable Primacy from every disturbance.

I have humbly bowed before the blessed fragment of the God-bearing and most victorious Sign (the Cross) that you sent to us⁵¹, and I give you thanks for it, as well as for your gracious greeting.

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⁵¹ Photius to Ašot, lines 203–205 (§C) states “*As a memorial of our blessing, We have sent to your noble Highness a fragment of the venerable and honorable God-bearing Cross*”

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