

Catechetical Lecture VIII

Cyril of Jerusalem

Early Church (pre-Nicene) · Nicene & Post-Nicene · Catechesis

STROMATA 44

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INTRODUCTION

Delivered to baptismal candidates in mid-fourth-century Jerusalem, the Catechetical Lectures walk new Christians line by line through the creed they will profess at the font. The eighth lecture takes up the single word *Almighty*, pressing it against Greek philosophy, Jewish objection, and Gnostic dualism in turn, Cyril is especially concerned to refute those who would divide dominion over soul and body between rival deities. As one of the earliest surviving systematic expositions of a baptismal creed, these lectures shaped the entire catechetical tradition that followed in both East and West. Expect plain, pastoral instruction aimed at the ear rather than the page, argumentative where it must be but always directed toward a congregation preparing for the waters.

Almighty.

Jeremiah 39:18, 19 (Septuagint).

__The Great, the strong God, Lord of great Counsel, and mighty in His works, the Great God, the Lord Almighty and of great name__.

By believing In One God we cut off all misbelief in many gods, using this as a shield against Greeks; and every opposing power of heretics; and by adding, In One God the Father, we contend against those of the circumcision, who deny the Only-begotten Son of God. For, as was said yesterday, even before explaining the truths concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, we made it manifest at once, by saying The Father, that He is the Father of a Son: that as we understand that God is, so we may understand that He has a Son. But to those titles we add that He is also Almighty; and this we affirm because of Greeks and Jews together, and all heretics.

For of the Greeks some have said that God is the soul of the world : and others that His power reaches only to heaven, and not to earth as well. Some also sharing their error and misusing the text which says, __And Your truth unto the clouds__ , have dared to circumscribe God's providence by the clouds and the heaven, and to alienate from God the things on earth; having forgotten the Psalm which says, __If I go up into heaven, You are there, if I go down into hell, You are present__. For if there is nothing higher than heaven, and if hell is deeper than the earth, He who rules the lower regions reaches the earth also.

But heretics again, as I have said before, know not One Almighty God. For He is Almighty who rules all things, who has power over all things. But they who say that one God is Lord of the soul, and some other of the body, make neither of them perfect, because either is wanting to the other. For how is he almighty, who has power over the soul, but not over the body? And how is he almighty who has dominion over bodies, but no power over spirits? But these men the Lord confutes, saying on the contrary, _Rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell_. Matthew 10:28 For unless the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has the power over both, how does He subject both to punishment? For how shall He be able to take the body which is another's and cast it into hell, _except He first bind the strong man, and spoil his goods_ ?

But the Divine Scripture and the doctrines of the truth know but One God, who rules all things by His power, but endures many things of His will. For He rules even over the idolaters, but endures them of His forbearance: He rules also over the heretics who set Him at nought, but bears with them because of His long-suffering: He rules even over the devil, but bears with him of His long-suffering, not from want of power; as if defeated. For _he is the beginning of the Lord's creation, made to be mocked_ , not by Himself, for that were unworthy of Him, but _by the Angels_ whom He has made. But He suffered him to live, for two purposes, that he might disgrace himself the more in his defeat, and that mankind might be crowned with victory. O all wise providence of God! Which takes the wicked purpose for a groundwork of salvation for the faithful. For as He took the unbrotherly purpose of Joseph's brethren for a groundwork of His own dispensation, and, by permitting them to sell their brother from hatred, took occasion to make him king whom He would; so he permitted the devil to wrestle, that the victors might be crowned; and that when victory was gained, he might be the more disgraced as being conquered by the weaker, and men be greatly honoured as having conquered him who was once an Archangel.

Nothing then is withdrawn from the power of God; for the Scripture says of Him, _for all things are Your servants_. All things alike are His servants, but from all these One, His only Son, and One, His Holy Spirit, are excepted; and all the things which are His servants serve the Lord through the One Son and in the Holy Spirit. God then rules all, and of His long-suffering endures even murderers and robbers and fornicators, having appointed a set time for recompensing every one, that if they who have had long warning are still impenitent in heart, they may receive the greater condemnation. They are kings of men, who reign upon earth, but not without the power from above: and this Nebuchadnezzar once learned by experience, when he said; _For His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His power from generation to generation_ Daniel 4:34 .

Riches, and gold, and silver are not, as some think, the devil's : for _the whole world of riches is for the faithful man, but for the faithless not even a penny_. Now nothing is more faithless than the devil; and God says plainly by the Prophet, _The gold is Mine, and the silver is Mine, and to whomsoever I will I give it_. Do thou but use it well, and there is no fault to be found with money: but whenever you have made a bad use of that which is good, then being unwilling to blame your own management, you impiously throw back the blame upon the Creator. A man may even be justified by money: _I was hungry, and you gave Me food_ Matthew 25:35-36: that certainly was from money. _I was naked, and you clothed Me_: that certainly was by money. And would you learn that money may become a door

of the kingdom of heaven? _Sell_, says He, _that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven_.

Now I have made these remarks because of those heretics who count possessions, and money, and men's bodies accursed. For I neither wish you to be a slave of money, nor to treat as enemies the things which God has given you for use. Never say then that riches are the devil's: for though he say, _All these will I give you, for they are delivered unto me_ , one may indeed even reject his assertion; for we need not believe the liar: and yet perhaps he spoke the truth, being compelled by the power of His presence: for he said not, _All these will I give you_, for they are mine, but, _for they are delivered unto me_. He grasped not the dominion of them, but confessed that he had been entrusted with them, and was for a time dispensing them. But at a proper time interpreters should inquire whether his statement is false or true.

God then is One, the Father, the Almighty, whom the brood of heretics have dared to blaspheme. Yea, they have dared to blaspheme the Lord of Sabaoth , _who sits above the Cherubim_ : they have dared to blaspheme the Lord Adonai : they have dared to blaspheme Him who is in the Prophets the Almighty God. But worship thou One God the Almighty, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Flee from the error of many gods, flee also from every heresy, and say like Job, _But I will call upon the Almighty Lord, which does great things and unsearchable, glorious things and marvellous without number_ , and, _For all these things there is honour from the Almighty_ : to Whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Source: Translated by Edwin Hamilton Gifford. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 7. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.

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