

## Alypius' « Apollinarianism » at Milan (Conf. VII, 25)

There is a confusion so widespread on the interpretation of Alypius' Christological position as Augustine relates it in the *Confessions*, that it seems worth laying to rest once and for all. Courcelle, for instance, depicts Augustine's « Photinianism » as ranged against both Alypius and the *Catholica*<sup>1</sup>, the hidden assumption being that the teaching of the latter was quite clear on the matter in question, Christ's « divinity ». Even Solignac refers to Alypius' « Apollinarianism »<sup>2</sup> when, oddly enough, quite the opposite is clearly true of the man's thinking.

What exactly does Augustine say of Alypius' view ? As opposed to the Saint's own view of Christ as a man of most excellent wisdom, but performing such actions as could require a human soul and mind, he tells us that :

Alypius, on the other hand, *thought that Catholics believed that God was clothed with flesh in such wise that in Christ there was no soul, in addition to his divinity and body. Nor did he think that a human mind was attributed to Him (scil., by Catholics). Because he was firmly convinced (exactly, be it noted, as Augustine was) that the deeds recorded of him could only be done by a creature possessed of life and reason, he moved more slowly towards the Christian faith (scil. as he conceived it to be taught by the Catholica). However, he learned later that this was the error of the Apollinarian heretics (and not, therefore, the teaching of the Catholica which he now found inveighing against Apollinarianism), and he was pleased with the Catholic faith and better disposed towards it (Conf. VII, 25)*<sup>3</sup>.

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1. *Saint Augustin 'Photinien' à Milan*, in *Ricerche di storia religiosa* 1 (1945) pp. 63-71 ; see p. 64.

2. *Les Confessions*, Bibliothèque Augustinienne series, Paris, 1962, volume 13, p. 698.

3. « Alypius autem deum carne indutum ita putabat credi a catholicis, ut praeter deum et carnem non esset in Christo, animam mentemque hominis non existimabat in eo praedicari. et quoniam bene persuasum tenebat ea, quae de illo memoriae mandata sunt, sine vitali et rationali creatura non fieri, ad ipsam christianam fidem pigrius movebatur, sed postea haereticorum Apollinaristarum hunc errorem esse cognoscens catholicae fidei conlaetatus et contemperatus est. » (Italics mine ; English translation from J.-K. Ryan, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, New York, 1960, pp. 177-8).

Quite the reverse of being an Apollinarianist, Alypius attributes this doctrine to the *Catholica* and finds it a solid reason for moving more slowly in her direction. He is as convinced as Augustine is that there must, in Christ, be an integral humanity, including the soul, mind, life, reason that Apollinarianism threatened to excise in the interests of a closer union between divinity and humanity. How was such a confusion possible in Alypius' conception of Catholic teaching? The same questions recur as have been raised concerning Augustine's so-called « Photinianism », and one answer seems to suggest itself in both cases. When, in the case of two such serious and intelligent men as Alypius and Augustine evidently were, it was possible so to misconstrue the Catholic teaching, it could just be that her teaching during that period, and at Milan particularly, was not so fully articulated as it would eventually have to be, and eventually would in time become, in order to clear up the confusion of minds that was still prevalent in 386 a.d. We are, after all, some sixty-five years from Chalcedon.

If I may be permitted one small corollary : Courcelle buttresses his case for Porphyrian influence as accounting for Augustine's « Photinianism » by going on to assure us that the subsequent interviews (assuming they were several) with Simplicianus (*Conf.* VIII, 3-5) turned on the mystery of the « Word made flesh » and thereby cleared up his errors on the question<sup>4</sup>. I suggest, on the contrary, that in the confused state of Milanese theology on the hypostatic union, it is very doubtful Simplicianus could have done any such thing ; Augustine, in any case, makes no mention of it, when it would have been important for him to do so. I suggest, further, that it took him some years to come to a better (though imperfect) settlement of the issue ; that, in fact, an examination of his post-Milanese Christology will show him working, not away from, but toward even sharper formulation of a relatively « Photinian » position which is already latent in the Dialogues of Cassiciacum, in full flower some five years later, and then condemned in the *Confessions'* text cited above. The evidence for these propositions I hope to display in a forthcoming study of the question.

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4. *Art. cit.* in note 1, above, pp. 70-71 ; cf. his *Recherches sur les Confessions*, Paris, 1950, pp. 168-174.