

Gregory Nazianzene's First Invective
Against Julian the Emperor, 74-75

74.

He was bent on one object alone, namely, how to gratify the demons who had often possessed him, as he well deserved. Before settling any other of the affairs of state he rushes upon the Christians, and these two objects engrossed his whole attention, namely the "Galilaeans" (as he insultingly used to call us), and the Persians, who obstinately continued the war, but our affair is much greater and more important, that he considered the war with the Persians a mere trifle and child's play. And this he did not indeed proclaim openly, yet he did not conceal it; and such was the excess of his infatuation that he never ceased avowing it to all parties; neither was this most excellent and sagacious of all sovereigns aware that by the former persecutions it was but a little thing that was troubled and upset, inasmuch as our system of religion had not yet spread over many people, and the Truth was established in only a few, and stood in need of illustration; but now that the Word of Salvation was spread abroad, and prevailed the most in our parts of the world, the attempt to change or upset the status of the Christians was no other than to toss about the Roman empire, and endanger the whole commonwealth, and to suffer at our own hands what not even our enemies would wish us worse; and this too from that new-fangled philosophy and government through which we were made so happy, and had returned once more to that Golden Age and way of life so free from all fighting and discord!

75.

The government administered with moderation, the lowering of the taxes, the judicious choice of magistrates, the punishment of peculators, and all the other marks of a transient and momentary prosperity and illusion were, forsooth, likely to produce great benefit to the public, and our ears must needs be dinned with their praises; but populations and cities torn by faction, families torn asunder, households set at variance, marriages dissolved, and all else that it was natural should follow that mischievous step, and which really did follow it to a great extent - were these things conducive either to that man's glory, or to the benefit of the public? and yet who is there either so warm a partisan of impiety (paganism), or so destitute of common sense, that he would assent to this? For, as in the case of the body, if one or two members are diseased, the rest may possibly endure it without harm, and the blessing of health be maintained in the entire person through which even the parts affected may again be set to rights; but when the greater part is at strife, and full of bitterness, there is no possibility for the whole to be well, and such a state of things is manifest danger; in the same manner in governments it happens that single infirmities are covered over by the well-being of the mass; but when the majority are in a rotten state, there is danger to the whole. And this I think anyone else, even of those who hate us most, would have perceived; his bad temper, however, had darkened his reason, and he goes on weaving the snares of persecution for small and great alike.

76.

That measure of his was very childish and silly; so far from being that of a prince, as not even to be worthy of a person moderately sound of understanding, and this was his fancying that our subversion would follow upon his changing of our name or that he shamed us though called by the most opprobrious of titles. He immediately makes a change in our appellation, naming us Galilaeans instead of Christians, and making it law we should be so styled; proving by the act that the being called after Christ is a very great thing to one's glory, and highly honourable, by the very fact that he plotted how to deprive us of the same; being perhaps afraid of that Name, as are the devils, and for that reason changing it to another name, something neither customary nor generally known.