

0329-0390 – Gregorius Nazianzenus – In theophania

Oration XXXVIII

On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ

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XXII. Only let us cut ourselves off from passion, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble us;³⁸⁴¹ only let us follow the image; only let us reverence our Archetype. Cut off the bodily passions; cut off also the spiritual. For by how much the soul is more precious than the body, by so much more precious is it to cleanse the soul than the body. And if cleansing of the body be a praiseworthy act, see, I pray you, how much greater and higher is that of the soul. Cut away the Arian impiety; cut away the false opinion of Sabellius; do not join more than is right, or wrongly sever; do not either confuse the Three Persons into One, or make Three diversities of Nature. The One is praiseworthy if rightly understood; and the Three when rightly divided, when the division is of Persons, not of Godhead.

XXIII. I enact this for Laymen too, and I enjoin it also upon all Priests, and upon those commissioned to rule. Come to the aid of the Word, all of you to whom God has given power to aid. It is a great thing to check murder, to punish adultery, to chastise theft; much more to establish piety by law, and to bestow sound doctrine. My word will not be able to do as much in fighting for the Holy Trinity as your Edict, if you will bridle the ill disposed, if you will help the persecuted, if you will check the slayers, and prevent people from being slain. I am speaking not merely of bodily but of spiritual slaughter. For all sin is the death of the soul. Here let my discourse end.

XXIV. But it remains that I speak a prayer for those who are assembled. Husbands alike and wives, rulers and ruled, old men, and young men, and maidens, every sort of age, bear ye every loss whether of money or of body, but one thing alone do not endure—to lose the Godhead. I adore the Father, I adore the Son, I adore the Holy Ghost; or rather We adore them; I, who am speaking, before all and after all and with all, in the same Christ our Lord, to whom be the glory and the might for ever. Amen.

Oration XXXVIII.

On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ.

THE Title of this Oration has given rise to a doubt whether it was preached on Dec. 25, 380, or on Jan. 6, 381. The word Theophania is well known as a name for the Epiphany; which, however, according to Schaff,³⁸⁴² was originally a celebration both of the Nativity and the Baptism of our Lord. The two words seem both to have been used in the simplest sense of the Manifestation of God, and certainly were applied to Christmas Day. Thus Suidas, “The Epiphany is the Incarnation of the Saviour;” and Epiphanius (Hær., 53), “The Day of the Epiphany is

³⁸⁴¹ Heb. xii. 15.

³⁸⁴² H. E., Nic. Per., p. 399.

the day on which Christ was born according to the flesh.” But S. Jerome applies the word to the Baptism of Christ; “The day of the Epiphany is still venerable; not, as some think, on account of His Birth in the flesh; for then He was hidden, not manifested; but it agrees with the time at which it was said, This is My beloved Son (In Ezech. I.). There is also a Sermon, attributed to S. Chrysostom, “On the Baptism of Christ,” in which it is expressly denied that the name Theophany applies to Christmas. The Oration itself, however, contains evidence to shew that the Festival of our Lord’s Birth was kept at the earlier date; for in c. 16 the Preacher says, “A little later you shall see Jesus submitting to be purified in the river Jordan for my purification.” And another piece of evidence occurs in the oration In Sancta Lumina, c. 14, “At His Birth we duly kept festival, both I the leader of the feast, and you. Now we are come to another action of Christ and another Mystery.”



The Oration is thus analysed by Abbe Benoît:

“After an exordium which is full of the enthusiasm and joy which such a subject naturally inspires the Orator recommends his hearers to celebrate the Festival by a pious gladness, and by hearing the Word of God; and not as the heathen celebrated their feasts, by profane amusements and all kinds of excess. He will try to satisfy their desires by speaking to them of God. God is infinite, ineffable, eternal, the Sovereign Good. He created the Angels in the beginning out of goodness. The fall of the Angels was followed by the creation of the material world. Man too fell, and God shewed His mercy even in the punishment. He used various means to raise him again; and at length He came Himself. Then the speaker forcibly argues against those who misuse the infinite condescension of the Word to contest His Godhead; he rapidly traces the principal features of His Life—at once human and Divine; and ends with a recommendation to his hearers to imitate in all things the Life of Christ, so that they may have a share in His Kingdom in Heaven.”

It is considered one of the best of Gregory’s discourses. “By the grandeur of the plan,” says Benoît, “the elevation of the ideas, and the rich fund of doctrine, this discourse is incontestably one of S. Gregory’s most remarkable efforts.”

I. CHRIST IS BORN, glorify ye Him. Christ from heaven, go ye out to meet Him. Christ on earth; be ye exalted. Sing unto the Lord all the whole earth;³⁸⁴³ and that I may join both in one word, Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for Him Who is of heaven and then of earth. Christ in the flesh, rejoice with trembling and with joy; with trembling because of your sins, with joy because of your hope. Christ of a Virgin; O ye Matrons live as Virgins, that ye may be Mothers of Christ. Who doth not worship Him That is from the beginning? Who doth not glorify Him That is the Last?

³⁸⁴³ Ps. xcvi. 1, 11.

II. Again the darkness is past; again Light is made; again Egypt is punished with darkness; again Israel is enlightened by a pillar.³⁸⁴⁴ The people that sat in the darkness of ignorance, let it see the Great Light of full knowledge.³⁸⁴⁵ Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.³⁸⁴⁶ The letter gives way, the Spirit comes to the front. The shadows flee away, the Truth comes in upon them. Melchisedec is concluded.³⁸⁴⁷ He that was without Mother becomes without Father (without Mother of His former state, without Father of His second). The laws of nature are upset; the world above must be filled. Christ commands it, let us not set ourselves against Him. O clap your hands together all ye people,³⁸⁴⁸ because unto us a Child is born, and a Son given unto us, Whose Government is upon His shoulder (for with the Cross it is raised up), and His Name is called The Angel of the Great Counsel of the Father.³⁸⁴⁹ Let John cry, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.³⁸⁵⁰ I too will cry the power of this Day. He Who is not carnal is Incarnate; the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, Jesus Christ the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.³⁸⁵¹ Let the Jews be offended, let the Greeks deride;³⁸⁵² let heretics talk till their tongues ache. Then shall they believe, when they see Him ascending up into heaven; and if not then, yet when they see Him coming out of heaven and sitting as Judge.

III. Of these on a future occasion; for the present the Festival is the Theophany or Birth-day, for it is called both, two titles being given to the one thing. For God was manifested to man by birth. On the one hand Being, and eternally Being, of the Eternal Being, above cause and word, for there was no word before The Word; and on the other hand for our sakes also Becoming, that He Who gives us our being might also give us our Well-being, or rather might restore us by His Incarnation, when we had by wickedness fallen from wellbeing. The name Theophany is given to it in reference to the Manifestation, and that of Birthday in respect of His Birth.

³⁸⁴⁴ Exod. xiv. 20.

³⁸⁴⁵ Isa. ix. 6.

³⁸⁴⁶ 1 Cor. v. 17.

³⁸⁴⁷ The meaning clearly is that the type presented by Melchisedec (Heb. vii. 3) is fulfilled in Christ. The explanation here given by S. Gregory is the ordinary one found in the Fathers. Thus, e.g., Theodoret says, "Christ our Lord is without Mother as God, for He was begotten of the Father alone; and without Father as Man, for He was born of a pure Virgin." Œcumenius has almost the exact words of Gregory. So also S. Augustine (Tract in Joann. 8), "Christ was singularly born of a Father without a Mother, of a Mother without a Father; without Mother as God, without Father as Man."

³⁸⁴⁸ Ps. xlvii. 1.

³⁸⁴⁹ Isa. ix. 6.

³⁸⁵⁰ Matt. iii. 3.

³⁸⁵¹ Heb. xiii. 8.

³⁸⁵² 1 Cor. i. 23.



IV. This is our present Festival; it is this which we are celebrating to-day, the Coming of God to Man, that we might go forth,³⁸⁵³ or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God—that putting off the old man, we might put on the New; and that as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ,³⁸⁵⁴ being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and rising with Him.³⁸⁵⁵ For I must undergo the beautiful conversion, and as the painful succeeded the more blissful, so must the more blissful come out of the painful. For where sin abounded Grace did much more abound,³⁸⁵⁶ and if a taste condemned us, how much more doth the Passion of Christ justify us? Therefore let us keep the Feast, not after the manner of a heathen festival, but after a godly sort; not after the way of the world, but in a fashion above the world; not as our own but as belonging to Him Who is ours, or rather as our Master's; not as of weakness, but as of healing; not as of creation, but of re-creation.

V. And how shall this be? Let us not adorn our porches, nor arrange dances, nor decorate the streets; let us not feast the eye, nor enchant the ear with music, nor enervate the nostrils with perfume, nor prostitute the taste, nor indulge the touch, those roads that are so prone to evil and entrances for sin; let us not be effeminate in clothing soft and flowing, whose beauty consists in its uselessness, nor with the glittering of gems or the sheen of gold³⁸⁵⁷ or the tricks of colour, belying the beauty of nature, and invented to do despite unto the image of God; Not in rioting and drunkenness, with which are mingled, I know well, chambering and wantonness, since the lessons which evil teachers give are evil; or rather the harvests of worthless seeds are worthless. Let us not set up high beds of leaves, making tabernacles for the belly of what belongs to debauchery. Let us not appraise the bouquet of wines, the kickshaws of cooks, the great expense of unguents. Let not sea and land bring us as a gift their precious dung, for it is thus that I have learnt to estimate luxury; and let us not strive to outdo each other in intemperance (for to my mind every superfluity is intemperance, and all which is beyond absolute need),—and this while others are hungry and in want, who are made of the same clay and in the same manner.

VI. Let us leave all these to the Greeks and to the pomps and festivals of the Greeks, who call by the name of gods beings who rejoice in the reek of sacrifices, and who consistently worship with their belly; evil inventors and worshippers of evil demons. But we, the Object of whose adoration is the Word, if we must in some way have luxury, let us seek it in word, and in the Divine Law, and in histories; especially such as are the origin of this Feast; that our luxury may be akin to and not far removed from Him Who hath called us together. Or do you desire (for to-day I am your entertainer) that I should set before you, my good Guests, the story of these things as abundantly

³⁸⁵³ Ephes. iv. 22, 24.

³⁸⁵⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

³⁸⁵⁵ Col. ii. 11.

³⁸⁵⁶ Rom. v. 20.

³⁸⁵⁷ Rom. xiii. 13.

and as nobly as I can, that ye may know how a foreigner can feed³⁸⁵⁸ the natives of the land, and a rustic the people of the town, and one who cares not for luxury those who delight in it, and one who is poor and homeless those who are eminent for wealth?

We will begin from this point; and let me ask of you who delight in such matters to cleanse your mind and your ears and your thoughts, since our discourse is to be of God and Divine; that when you depart, you may have had the enjoyment of delights that really fade not away. And this same discourse shall be at once both very full and very concise, that you may neither be displeased at its deficiencies, nor find it unpleasant through satiety.

VII. God always was,³⁸⁵⁹ and always is, and always will be. Or rather, God always Is. For Was and Will be are fragments of our time, and of changeable nature, but He is Eternal Being. And this is the Name that He gives to Himself when giving the Oracle to Moses in the Mount. For in Himself He sums up and contains all Being, having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future; like some great Sea of Being, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature, only adumbrated by the mind, and that very dimly and scantily...not by His Essentials, but by His Environment; one image being got from one source and another from another, and combined into some sort of presentation of the truth, which escapes us before we have caught it, and takes to flight before we have conceived it, blazing forth upon our Master-part, even when that is cleansed, as the lightning flash which will not stay its course, does upon our sight...in order as I conceive by that part of it which we can comprehend to draw us to itself (for that which is altogether incomprehensible is outside the bounds of hope, and not within the compass of endeavour), and by that part of It which we cannot comprehend to move our wonder, and as an object of wonder to become more an object of desire, and being desired to purify, and by purifying to make us like God;³⁸⁶⁰ so that when we have thus become like Himself, God may, to use a bold expression, hold converse with us as Gods, being united to us, and that perhaps to the same extent as He already knows those who are known to Him. The Divine Nature then is boundless and hard to understand; and all that we can comprehend of Him is His boundlessness; even though one may conceive that because He is of a simple nature He is therefore either wholly incomprehensible, or perfectly comprehensible. For let us further enquire what is implied by "is of a simple nature." For it is quite certain that this simplicity is not itself its nature, just as composition is not by itself the essence of compound beings.

VIII. And when Infinity is considered from two points of view, beginning and end (for that which is beyond these and not limited by them is Infinity), when the mind looks to the depth above, not having where to stand, and leans upon phenomena to form an idea of God, it calls the Infinite and Unapproachable which it finds there by the name of Unoriginate. And when it looks into the

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³⁸⁵⁸ Alluding to his own recent arrival at Constantinople, after a life spent in the distant country of Cappadocia, and in ministering in small and insignificant places like Nazianzus.

³⁸⁵⁹ The whole of this passage occurs again verbatim in the second Oration for Easter Day, cc. iii.–ix.

³⁸⁶⁰ John x. 15.

depths below, and at the future, it calls Him Undying and Imperishable. And when it draws a conclusion from the whole it calls Him Eternal (αἰώνιος). For Eternity (αἶων) is neither time nor part of time; for it cannot be measured. But what time, measured by the course of the sun, is to us, that Eternity is to the Everlasting, namely, a sort of time-like movement and interval co-extensive with their existence. This, however, is all I must now say about God; for the present is not a suitable time, as my present subject is not the doctrine of God, but that of the Incarnation. But when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For Godhead is neither diffused beyond these, so as to bring in a mob of gods; nor yet is it bounded by a smaller compass than these, so as to condemn us for a poverty-stricken conception of Deity; either Judaizing to save the Monarchia, or falling into heathenism by the multitude of our gods. For the evil on either side is the same, though found in contrary directions. This then is the Holy of Holies,³⁸⁶¹ which is hidden even from the Seraphim, and is glorified with a thrice repeated Holy,³⁸⁶² meeting in one ascription of the Title Lord and God, as one of our predecessors has most beautifully and loftily pointed out.

IX. But since this movement of self-contemplation alone could not satisfy Goodness, but Good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself to multiply the objects of Its beneficence, for this was essential to the highest Goodness, He first conceived the Heavenly and Angelic Powers. And this conception was a work fulfilled by His Word, and perfected by His Spirit. And so the secondary Splendours came into being, as the Ministers of the Primary Splendour; whether we are to conceive of them as intelligent Spirits, or as Fire of an immaterial and incorruptible kind, or as some other nature approaching this as near as may be. I should like to say that they were incapable of movement in the direction of evil, and susceptible only of the movement of good, as being about God, and illumined with the first rays from God—for earthly beings have but the second illumination; but I am obliged to stop short of saying that, and to conceive and speak of them only as difficult to move because of him,³⁸⁶³ who for his splendour was called Lucifer, but became and is called Darkness through his pride; and the apostate hosts who are subject to him, creators of evil³⁸⁶⁴ by their revolt against good and our inciters.

³⁸⁶¹ The Holy of Holies here means the Holy Trinity.

³⁸⁶² The reference is to the Ter Sanctus or Triumphal Hymn, which is found in every Liturgy. The previous writer referred to is thought by some to be S. Athanasius, but by others S. Dionysius the Areopagite, who has some words on this point in his treatise *De Cœlest. Hier.*, c. 7. But the most competent scholars deny the authenticity of the works attributed to S. Dionysius, and place them from one hundred to one hundred and fifty years later than S. Gregory's time.

³⁸⁶³ S. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa I.*, qu. 63, art. 7) gives reasons for thinking that Satan was originally the highest of all the angelic hosts. This, however, is an opinion in which many high authorities differ from him. At any rate, Satan as Lucifer must have held a very high place.

³⁸⁶⁴ Evil, says Nicetas here, has no positive existence, but is the negation of good. "The faculties of mind and body which are used in a sinful action are indeed things, and are the creatures of God; but the sin itself is not a thing, and consequently not a creature. God is indeed the Author of all that is, of every substance; but sin is not a substance, and is not. It is a declination from substance and from being, and not a part of it." (Mozley, *Treatise on the Augustinian doctrine of predestination.*)



X. Thus, then, and for these reasons, He gave being to the world of thought, as far as I can reason upon these matters, and estimate great things in my own poor language. Then when His first creation was in good order, He conceives a second world, material and visible; and this a system and compound of earth and sky, and all that is in the midst of them—an admirable creation indeed, when we look at the fair form of every part, but yet more worthy of admiration when we consider the harmony and the unison of the whole, and how each part fits in with every other, in fair order, and all with the whole, tending to the perfect completion of the world as a Unit. This was to shew that He could call into being, not only a Nature akin to Himself, but also one altogether alien to Himself. For akin to Deity are those natures which are intellectual, and only to be comprehended by mind; but all of which sense can take cognisance are utterly alien to It; and of these the furthest removed are all those which are entirely destitute of soul and of power of motion. But perhaps some one of those who are too festive and impetuous may say, What has all this to do with us? Spur your horse to the goal. Talk to us about the Festival, and the reasons for our being here to-day. Yes, this is what I am about to do, although I have begun at a somewhat previous point, being compelled to do so by love, and by the needs of my argument.

XI. Mind, then, and sense, thus distinguished from each other, had remained within their own boundaries, and bore in themselves the magnificence of the Creator-Word, silent praisers³⁸⁶⁵ and thrilling heralds of His mighty work. Not yet was there any mingling of both, nor any mixtures of these opposites, tokens of a greater Wisdom and Generosity in the creation of natures; nor as yet were the whole riches of Goodness made known. Now the Creator-Word, determining to exhibit this, and to produce a single living being out of both—the visible and the invisible creations, I mean—fashions Man; and taking a body from already existing matter, and placing in it a Breath taken from Himself³⁸⁶⁶ which the Word knew to be an intelligent soul and the Image of God, as a sort of second world. He placed him, great in littleness³⁸⁶⁷ on the earth; a new Angel, a mingled worshipper, fully initiated into the visible creation, but only partially into the intellectual; King of all upon earth, but subject to the King above; earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal; visible and yet intellectual; half-way between greatness and lowliness; in one person combining spirit and flesh; spirit, because of the favour bestowed on him; flesh, because of the height to which he had been raised; the one that he might continue to live and praise his Benefactor, the other that he might suffer, and by suffering be put in remembrance, and corrected if he became proud of his greatness. A living creature trained here, and then moved elsewhere; and, to complete the mystery, deified by its inclination to God. For to this, I think, tends that Light of Truth which we here possess but in measure, that we should both see and experience the Splendour of God, which is worthy of Him Who made us, and will remake us again after a loftier fashion.

³⁸⁶⁵ Ps. xix. 1, 3.

³⁸⁶⁶ Gen. ii. 7.

³⁸⁶⁷ Sc. a microcosm.

XII. This being He placed in Paradise, whatever the Paradise may have been, having honoured him with the gift of Free Will (in order that God might belong to him as the result of his choice, no less than to Him who had implanted the seeds of it), to till the immortal plants, by which is meant perhaps the Divine Conceptions, both the simpler and the more perfect; naked in his simplicity and inartificial life, and without any covering or screen; for it was fitting that he who was from the beginning should be such. Also He gave him a Law, as a material for his Free Will to act upon. This Law was a Commandment as to what plants he might partake of, and which one he might not touch. This latter was the Tree of Knowledge; not, however, because it was evil from the beginning when planted; nor was it forbidden because God grudged it to us...Let not the enemies of God wag their tongues in that direction, or imitate the Serpent...But it would have been good if partaken of at the proper time, for the tree was, according to my theory, Contemplation, upon which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter; but which is not good for those who are still somewhat simple and greedy in their habit; just as solid food is not good for those who are yet tender, and have need of milk.³⁸⁶⁸ But when through the Devil's malice and the woman's caprice, to which she succumbed as the more tender, and which she brought to bear upon the man, as she was the more apt to persuade, alas for my weakness! (for that of my first father was mine), he forgot the Commandment which had been given to him;³⁸⁶⁹ he yielded to the baleful fruit; and for his sin he was banished, at once from the Tree of Life, and from Paradise, and from God; and put on the coats of skins...that is, perhaps, the coarser flesh, both mortal and contradictory. This was the first thing that he learnt—his own shame;³⁸⁷⁰ and he hid himself from God. Yet here too he makes a gain, namely death, and the cutting off of sin, in order that evil may not be immortal. Thus his punishment is changed into a mercy; for it is in mercy, I am persuaded, that God inflicts punishment.

XIII. And having been first chastened by many means (because his sins were many, whose root of evil sprang up through divers causes and at sundry times), by word, by law, by prophets, by benefits, by threats, by plagues, by waters, by fires, by wars, by victories, by defeats, by signs in heaven and signs in the air and in the earth and in the sea, by unexpected changes of men, of cities, of nations (the object of which was the destruction of wickedness), at last he needed a stronger remedy, for his diseases were growing worse; mutual slaughters, adulteries, perjuries, unnatural crimes, and that first and last of all evils, idolatry and the transfer of worship from the Creator to the Creatures. As these required a greater aid, so also they obtained a greater. And that was that the Word of God Himself—Who is before all worlds, the Invisible, the Incomprehensible, the Bodiless, Beginning of Beginning,³⁸⁷¹ the Light of Light, the Source of Life and Immortality, the

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³⁸⁶⁸ Heb. v. 12.

³⁸⁶⁹ Gen. iii. 5.

³⁸⁷⁰ Rom. i. 22–31.

³⁸⁷¹ Cf. Light of Light begotten. Christ our Lord is called “The Beginning of the Creation of God, because by Him all things were made; and He is of the Beginning, inasmuch as God the Father is the Unoriginate Principle of all, and the Origin and Fount

Image of the Archetypal Beauty, the immovable Seal, the unchangeable Image, the Father's Definition³⁸⁷² and Word, came to His own Image, and took on Him flesh for the sake of our flesh, and mingled Himself with an intelligent soul for my soul's sake, purifying like by like; and in all points except sin was made man. Conceived by the Virgin,³⁸⁷³ who first in body and soul was purified by the Holy Ghost³⁸⁷⁴ (for it was needful both that Childbearing should be honoured, and that Virginitly should receive a higher honour), He came forth then as God with that which He had assumed, One Person in two Natures, Flesh and Spirit, of which the latter deified the former.³⁸⁷⁵ O new commingling; O strange conjunction; the Self-Existent comes into being, the Uncreate is created, That which cannot be contained is contained, by the intervention of an intellectual soul, mediating between the Deity and the corporeity of the flesh. And He Who gives riches becomes poor, for He assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the richness of His Godhead. He that is full empties Himself, for He empties Himself of His glory for a short while, that I may have a share in His Fulness. What is the riches of His Goodness? What is this mystery that is around me? I had a share in the image; I did not keep it; He partakes of my flesh that He may both save the image and make the flesh immortal. He communicates a second Communion far more marvellous than the first, inasmuch as then He imparted the better Nature, whereas now Himself partakes of the worse. This is more godlike than the former action, this is loftier in the eyes of all men of understanding.

XIV. To this what have those cavillers to say, those bitter reasoners about Godhead, those detractors of all that is praiseworthy, those darkeners of light, uncultured in respect of wisdom, for whom Christ died in vain, those unthankful creatures, the work of the Evil One? Do you turn this benefit into a reproach to God? Wilt thou deem Him little on this account, that He humbled Himself for thee; because the Good Shepherd,³⁸⁷⁶ He who lays down His life for His sheep, came to seek for that which had strayed upon the mountains and the hills, on which thou wast then sacrificing, and found the wanderer; and having found it,³⁸⁷⁷ took it upon His shoulders—on which He also took the Wood of the Cross; and having taken it, brought it back to the higher life; and having

of Godhead. The Scholiast here refers to Ps. cx. 3, which in the Vulgate and LXX. runs "With Thee is the Beginning in the day of Thy Power."

³⁸⁷² Cf. Theol.: IV. xx., where S. Gregory says "Perhaps this Relation might be compared to that between the Definition and the thing defined." Nicetas remarks that, just as the definition declares the nature of the defined, so the Personal Word shows forth the Nature of the Father. Suidas (in voce ὁπος) says that the phrase is used to show the Unity of Nature between the Father and the Son. It is not, however, of frequent occurrence.

³⁸⁷³ Luke i. 35.

³⁸⁷⁴ S. Gregory does not seem to have been aware of the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception."

³⁸⁷⁵ See note on *In Sancta Lumina*, c. xiv.

³⁸⁷⁶ John x. 11.

³⁸⁷⁷ Luke xv. 4, sq.

carried it back, numbered it amongst those who had never strayed. Because He lighted a candle—His own Flesh—and swept the house, cleansing the world from sin; and sought the piece of money, the Royal Image that was covered up by passions. And He calls together His Angel friends on the finding of the coin, and makes them sharers in His joy,³⁸⁷⁸ whom He had made to share also the secret of the Incarnation? Because on the candle of the Forerunner there follows the light that exceeds in brightness; and to the Voice the Word succeeds; and to the Bridegroom's friend the Bridegroom; to him that prepared for the Lord a peculiar people, cleansing them by water in preparation for the Spirit? Dost thou reproach God with all this? Dost thou on this account deem Him lessened, because He girds Himself with a towel and washes His disciples' feet, and shows that humiliation is the best road to exaltation? Because for the soul that was bent to the ground He humbles Himself, that He may raise up with Himself the soul that was tottering to a fall under a weight of sin? Why dost thou not also charge upon Him as a crime the fact that He eats with Publicans and at Publicans' tables,³⁸⁷⁹ and that He makes disciples of Publicans, that He too may gain somewhat...and what?...the salvation of sinners. If so, we must blame the physician for stooping over sufferings, and enduring evil odours that he may give health to the sick; or one who as the Law commands bent down into a ditch to save a beast that had fallen into it.³⁸⁸⁰

XV. He was sent, but as man, for He was of a twofold Nature; for He was wearied, and hungered, and was thirsty, and was in an agony, and shed tears, according to the nature of a corporeal being. And if the expression be also used of Him as God, the meaning is that the Father's good pleasure is to be considered a Mission, for to this He refers all that concerns Himself; both that He may honour the Eternal Principle, and because He will not be taken to be an antagonistic God. And whereas it is written both that He was betrayed, and also that He gave Himself up³⁸⁸¹ and that He was raised up by the Father, and taken up into heaven; and on the other hand, that He raised Himself and *went* up; the former statement of each pair refers to the good pleasure of the Father, the latter to His own Power. Are you then to be allowed to dwell upon all that humiliates Him, while passing over all that exalts Him, and to count on your side the fact that He suffered, but to leave out of the

³⁸⁷⁸ Ib. xv. 8, 10.

³⁸⁷⁹ Luke v. 29.

³⁸⁸⁰ S. Gregory is referring to the provision of the Law, which orders a man, if he see his friend's or his enemy's ox or ass fallen under a burden or going astray, to lend assistance; but the terms of his reference are rather to the reasoning of our Lord with the Pharisees about the Sabbath. Luke xiii. 15 and xiv. 5.

³⁸⁸¹ Cf. ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἐν ἧ παρεδίδото, μᾶλλον δε εἰ αὐτὸν παρεδίδου. Canon of Liturgy of S. Mark (Swainson p. 517). Ea nocte qua tradidit seipsum. Lit. Copt. S. Basil (Ib.). Cum stauisset se tradere. Coptic S. Basil (Hammond, p. 209) Rot. Vatic. and Cod. Ross. of S. Mark, has only τ. v. ἧ εἰ αὐτ, παρεδ. (Swainson, 50); so too S. Basil (Ib., 81) in Cod. B. M., 22749 and Barberini of S. Chrys. (Ib., 91); but the whole expression is in Chrys. (cent. xi., ib., 129) and Greek S. James (78. 272–3), but Syriac S. James has “in qua nocte tradendus erat.” (Canon Univ., Æthiop. Hammond, 258). *Pridie quam patereturis* the form in the Canon of the Roman, Ambrosian, and Sarum Missals; but the Mozarabic, which is largely of an Eastern character, has *in qua nocte tradebatur*. (Hammond, 333).

account the fact that it was of His own will? See what even now the Word has to suffer. By one set He is honoured as God, but is confused with the Father,³⁸⁸² by another He is dishonoured as mere flesh³⁸⁸³ and severed from the Godhead. With which of them will He be most angry, or rather, which shall He forgive, those who injuriously confound Him or those who divide Him? For the former ought to have distinguished, and the latter to have united Him; the one in number, the other in Godhead. Stumblest Thou at His flesh? So did the Jews. Or dost thou call Him a Samaritan, and...I will not say the rest. Dost thou disbelieve in His Godhead? This did not even the demons, O thou who art less believing than demons and more stupid than Jews. Those did perceive that the

³⁸⁸² The Sabellian heresy may be briefly described as the doctrine of One God exercising three offices, as opposed to the Catholic Faith of One God in three Persons. Sabellius himself was a Priest of the Libyan Pentapolis, who at Rome in the time of Pope Zephyrinus embraced the heresy of Notus, which maintained that God the Father suffered for us on the cross in the form of Christ. His followers, who openly declared themselves first about A.D. 357, thought that God, to Whom as the Source of all things the name of Father is given, is called the Son when He united Himself to the humanity of Jesus for the work of our redemption; and in like manner He is the Holy Spirit when manifested for the work of sanctification. Sabellius was condemned by a Council held at Rome, probably in 258; again at Nicæa, and again at Constantinople, where Sabellian Baptism was pronounced invalid.

³⁸⁸³ Arianism was the result of a strong opposition to Sabellianism, coupled with a misunderstanding of the argument against it. There was, no doubt, a danger of falling into the opposite error of Tritheism, to avoid which Arianism “divided the Substance” and virtually—and in the end explicitly—denied the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. Arius was a Priest of Alexandria, and it was there that he began to publish his opinions, in the early years of the Fourth Century (318); but Newman traces the origin of the heresy to Antioch and its Judaizing tendency. At a meeting of the clergy in Alexandria the Bishop, S. Alexander, gave an address on the coeternity, and coequality of the Father and the Son, and used the expression τὴν αὐτὴν οὐσίαν ἔχειν, that They had the same Substance. Arius protested against this as a Sabellian statement, and used the words κτίσμα (creature) and ποίημα (a thing made) of the Son, adding the sentence which became so famous, ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν,—there was a time when the Son did not exist. Having ineffectually tried private remonstrance, S. Alexander brought the matter in 321 before his Provincial Synod, in which were present about 100 Egyptian and Pentapollitan Bishops, who after giving the matter a patient hearing, excommunicated Arius and his principal adherents. But it was too late to undo the mischief. The heresy spread widely, and the whole Eastern Church was stirred by the controversy. At last a great Council of the whole Church met at Nicæa in 325, summoned by the Emperor; and there the heresy was unequivocally condemned, and the great Creed propounded with its watchword, the Homousion. The false teaching had however struck its roots deep and wide; and though now banned by the anathema of the Church, it was long in dying; and indeed at one time, it seemed as if—humanly speaking—it must swamp the whole Catholic Church. Under various forms the Semi-Arians who claimed to differ from the faith of Nicæa only by a single letter, the Aetians and Eunomians, who went to the furthest extreme of the Falsehood (Anomœans), and many others, the heresy spread far and wide: and when S. Gregory came to Constantinople there was not one Catholic Church or Priest to be found in the place, and only a few scattered folk who still held to the Faith of the Consubstantial. Gregory’s wonderful discourses however came to their aid, and partly under his presidency was held the Second Œcumenical Synod, which condemned the heresy of Macedonius, a still further development of Arianism, which denied also the Deity of the Holy Ghost. Arianism survived for another two centuries among the Goths and Vandals, the Burgundians and Lombards; but it never rose again as a power in the Church.

name of Son implies equality of rank; these did know that He who drove them out was God, for they were convinced of it by their own experience. But you will admit neither the equality nor the Godhead. It would have been better for you to have been either a Jew or a demoniac (if I may utter an absurdity), than in uncircumcision and in sound health to be so wicked and ungodly in your attitude of mind.

XVI. A little later on you will see Jesus submitting to be purified in the River Jordan for my Purification, or rather, sanctifying the waters by His Purification (for indeed He had no need of purification Who taketh away the sin of the world) and the heavens cleft asunder, and witness borne to him by the Spirit That is of one nature with Him;³⁸⁸⁴ you shall see Him tempted and conquering and served by Angels,³⁸⁸⁵ and healing every sickness³⁸⁸⁶ and every disease,³⁸⁸⁷ and giving life to the dead (O that He would give life to you who are dead because of your heresy), and driving out demons,³⁸⁸⁸ sometimes Himself, sometimes by his disciples; and feeding vast multitudes with a few loaves,³⁸⁸⁹ and walking dryshod upon seas,³⁸⁹⁰ and being betrayed and crucified, and crucifying with Himself my sin; offered as a Lamb, and offering as a Priest; as a Man buried in the grave, and as God rising again; and then ascending, and to come again in His own glory. Why what a multitude of high festivals there are in each of the mysteries of the Christ; all of which have one completion, namely, my perfection and return to the first condition of Adam.

XVII. Now then I pray you accept His Conception, and leap before Him; if not like John from the womb,³⁸⁹¹ yet like David, because of the resting of the Ark.³⁸⁹² Revere the enrolment on account of which thou wast written in heaven, and adore the Birth by which thou wast loosed from the chains of thy birth,³⁸⁹³ and honour little Bethlehem, which hath led thee back to Paradise; and worship the manger through which thou, being without sense, wast fed by the Word. Know as Isaiah bids thee, thine Owner, like the ox, and like the ass thy Master's crib;³⁸⁹⁴ if thou be one of those who are pure and lawful food, and who chew the cud of the word and are fit for sacrifice.

³⁸⁸⁴ Matt. iii. 13, 17.

³⁸⁸⁵ Ib. iv. 1–11.

³⁸⁸⁶ Ib. iv. 23.

³⁸⁸⁷ Nicetas distinguishes between Νόσος and Μαλακία, saying that the first is actual disease, and the second the premonitory failing of health which prognosticates a disease. And, so he says, in reference to the soul, Νόσος is actual sin, while Μαλακία is the relaxation of the will which leads and assents to actual sin.

³⁸⁸⁸ Ib. ix. 33.

³⁸⁸⁹ Ib. ix. 14.

³⁸⁹⁰ Ib. ix. 25.

³⁸⁹¹ Luke i. 41.

³⁸⁹² 2 Sam. vi. 14.

³⁸⁹³ Luke ii. 1–5.

³⁸⁹⁴ I.e., original sin (Ps. li. 5).

Or if thou art one of those who are as yet unclean and uneatable and unfit for sacrifice, and of the gentile portion, run with the Star, and bear thy Gifts with the Magi, gold and frankincense and myrrh,³⁸⁹⁵ as to a King, and to God, and to One Who is dead for thee. With Shepherds glorify Him;³⁸⁹⁶ with Angels join in chorus; with Archangels sing hymns. Let this Festival be common to the powers in heaven and to the powers upon earth.³⁸⁹⁷ For I am persuaded that the Heavenly Hosts join in our exultation and keep high Festival with us to-day³⁸⁹⁸...because they love men, and they love God just like those whom David introduces after the Passion ascending with Christ³⁸⁹⁹ and coming to meet Him, and bidding one another to lift up the gates.

XVIII. One thing connected with the Birth of Christ I would have you hate...the murder of the infants by Herod.³⁹⁰⁰ Or rather you must venerate this too, the Sacrifice of the same age as Christ, slain before the Offering of the New Victim. If He flees into Egypt,³⁹⁰¹ joyfully become a companion of His exile. It is a grand thing to share the exile of the persecuted Christ. If He tarry long in Egypt, call Him out of Egypt by a reverent worship of Him there. Travel without fault through every stage and faculty of the Life of Christ. Be purified; be circumcised; strip off the veil which has covered thee from thy birth. After this teach in the Temple, and drive out the sacrilegious traders.³⁹⁰² Submit to be stoned if need be, for well I wot thou shalt be hidden from those who cast the stones; thou shalt escape even through the midst of them, like God.³⁹⁰³ If thou be brought before Herod, answer not for the most part.³⁹⁰⁴ He will respect thy silence more than most people's long speeches. If thou be scourged,³⁹⁰⁵ ask for what they leave out. Taste gall for the taste's sake;³⁹⁰⁶ drink vinegar;³⁹⁰⁷ seek for spittings; accept blows, be crowned with thorns,³⁹⁰⁸ that is, with the hardness of the godly life; put on the purple robe, take the reed in hand, and receive mock worship from those who mock at the truth; lastly, be crucified with Him, and share His Death and Burial gladly, that thou mayest rise with Him, and be glorified with Him and reign with Him. Look at and be looked at by the

³⁸⁹⁵ Isa. i. 3.

³⁸⁹⁶ Matt. ii.

³⁸⁹⁷ Luke ii. 14, 15.

³⁸⁹⁸ The Liturgy.

³⁸⁹⁹ Ps. xxiv.

³⁹⁰⁰ Matt. ii. 16.

³⁹⁰¹ Ib. v. 13.

³⁹⁰² John ii. 15.

³⁹⁰³ Ib. viii. 59.

³⁹⁰⁴ Luke xxiii. 9.

³⁹⁰⁵ John xix. 1.

³⁹⁰⁶ Matt. xxvii. 34.

³⁹⁰⁷ John xix. 29.

³⁹⁰⁸ Matt. xxvi. 67, and xxvii. 28.

Great God, Who in Trinity is worshipped and glorified, and Whom we declare to be now set forth as clearly before you as the chains of our flesh allow, in Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

Oration XXXIX.

Oration on the Holy Lights.

THE Oration on the Holy Lights was preached on the Festival of the Epiphany 381, and was followed the next day by that on Baptism. In the Eastern Church this Festival is regarded as more particularly the commemoration of our Lord's Baptism, and is accordingly one of the great days for the solemn ministration of the Sacrament. It is generally called Theophania, and the Gospel in the Liturgy is S. Matthew iii. 13–17. The Sunday in the Octave is called μετὰ τὰ φῶτα (After The Lights), pointing to a time when the Feast was known as the "Holy Lights," as seems to have been the case in S. Gregory's day. This name is derived from Baptism, which was often in ancient days called Illumination, in reference to which name (derived from the spiritual grace of the Sacrament) lighted torches or candles were carried by the neophytes. It would appear that the solemnities of the Festival lasted two days, of which the second was devoted to the solemn conferring of the Sacrament. Accordingly we find two Orations belonging to the Festival. In the first, delivered on the Day itself he dwells more especially on the Feast and the Mystery of our Lord's Baptism therein commemorated; and proceeds to speak of the different kinds of Baptism, of which he enumerates Five, viz.:—

1. *The figurative Baptism of Israel by Moses in the cloud and in the Sea.*
2. *The preparatory Baptism of repentance ministered by S. John the Baptist.*
3. *The spiritual Baptism of water and the Holy Ghost given us by our Lord.*
4. *The glorious Baptism of Martyrdom.*
5. *The painful Baptism of Penance.*

In speaking of this last he takes occasion to refute the extreme rigorism of the followers of Novatus, who denied absolution to certain classes of sins committed after Baptism.

In the second Oration, delivered next day, he dwells on the Sacrament of Baptism and its spiritual effects; and takes occasion to reprove the then still prevalent practice of deferring Baptism till the near approach of death. He likewise dwells on the truth that the validity and spiritual effect of the Sacrament is wholly independent of the rank or worthiness of the Priest who may minister it; and he concludes with a sketch of the obligations which its reception involves, with a very valuable exposition of the Creed, and of the Ceremonies which accompanied the administration of the Sacrament.