

share of His own good nature. And now in the Nativity He takes on Himself our own sinful one. The Nativity is a more Godlike action. It is superior in the eyes of all people of understanding.

ORATION ON THE THEOPHANY AND NATIVITY OF CHRIST



ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN

ORATION ON THE THEOPHANY AND NATIVITY OF CHRIST

ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM! Christ is from heaven go to meet Him. Christ is on earth, be lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. And that I may join the two in one word: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, because of Him who is of heaven and is now on earth. Christ in the flesh, rejoice with trembling and with joy; with trembling because of your sins, and with joy because of your hope. Christ of a virgin: live as virgins, you mothers that you may be mothers of Christ. Who does not worship Him who is from the beginning? Who does not glorify Him who is also the end?

Again the darkness is past. Again Light is made. ...The people that sat in darkness, let them see the Great Light of full knowledge. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things are becoming new. The letter gives way, and the Spirit comes to the fore. The shadows flee away, for the Truth has come upon them. Melchizedek is now fulfilled. He that was without a mother (being begotten from the Father before all ages) now becomes without a father (being born of the Virgin). The laws of nature are upset. The world above must be filled. Christ commands it. Let us not set ourselves against Him.

Clap your hands together, all people. For unto us a Son is born, unto us a Child is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders.... Let John the Baptist cry aloud: Prepare ye the way of the Lord! And I too will cry aloud about the power of this Day. He who is without flesh has become incarnate. The Son of God becomes the Son of man. Jesus Christ: the same yesterday and today and forever! Let the children of Israel who seek signs be scandalized. Let the Greeks who seek wisdom speak of folly. Let all the heretics talk till their tongues ache. They shall believe when they see Him ascending up into the heavens. And if not then, when they see Him coming out of the heavens to sit in judgment.

But this is not for now. For the present let us speak of the festival which is called both the Nativity and the Theophany. For it is called both, two titles belong to the same thing. For God was manifested to man by birth. On the one hand He is *Being*, eternally Being of the Eternal Being (God from God), above every cause and word; for the Word of God is before every word. And on the other hand for our

sake He is also *Becoming*, so that He who gives us our being might restore us by His incarnation when we have by our wickedness fallen from well-being. The name Theophany is given to the feast in reference to the Manifestation (for in Greek *theophany* means "manifestation of God"); and that of Nativity is in respect to His Birth.

This then is our present festival. It is this that we are celebrating today: the Coming of God to man, that we might go forth, 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 have died in Adam so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and arising with Him....

Therefore, let us keep the feast, not after the manner of a pagan festival, but in a godly way. Not after the way of this world, but in the fashion of the world which is above. Not as something our own, but as that which belongs to Him who is ours, or rather, as our Master's. Not as of weakness, but as healing. Not as of creation, but of re-creation.

And how shall this be? Let us not decorate our porches, nor arrange dances, nor adorn the streets. Let us not feast with the eyes, nor enchant the ears with music, nor enervate the nostrils with perfume, nor prostitute the taste, nor indulge the touch. These are they ways that lead to evil and are the entrances of sin.... Let us leave all these things to the pagans... But let us who are worshippers of the Word of God, if we must in some way have luxury, let us seek it in God's Word and in the law and the scriptural stories, especially those which tell us of the present festival so that our pleasure may be like unto Him who has called us together today.

...for He who gives riches becomes poor, for He assumes the poverty of my flesh that I may assume the riches of His divinity. 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 fullness. What are the riches of His goodness! What is this mystery that is around me! I had a share in the Image but I did not keep it. He now partakes of my flesh that He might both save the image and make the flesh immortal. He communicates a Second Communion (in the incarnation) far more marvelous that the First (in creation). For in creation He gave us a