

0329-0390 – Gregorius Nazianzenus – In sancta lumina

Oration XXXIX

Oration on the Holy Lights

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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.

I. AGAIN My Jesus, and again a mystery; not deceitful nor disorderly, nor belonging to Greek error or drunkenness (for so I call their solemnities, and so I think will every man of sound sense); but a mystery lofty and divine, and allied to the Glory above. For the Holy Day of the Lights, to which we have come, and which we are celebrating to-day, has for its origin the Baptism of my Christ, the True Light That lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,³⁹⁰⁹ and effecteth my purification, and assists that light which we received from the beginning from Him from above, but which we darkened and confused by sin.

II. Therefore listen to the Voice of God, which sounds so exceeding clearly to me, who am both disciple and master of these mysteries, as would to God it may sound to you; I Am The Light Of The World.³⁹¹⁰ Therefore approach ye to Him and be enlightened, and let not your faces be ashamed,³⁹¹¹ being signed with the true Light. It is a season of new birth,³⁹¹² let us be born again. It is a time of reformation, let us receive again the first Adam.³⁹¹³ Let us not remain what we are, but let us become what we once were. The Light Shineth In Darkness,³⁹¹⁴ in this life and in the flesh, and is chased by the darkness, but is not overtaken by it:—I mean the adverse power leaping up in its shamelessness against the visible Adam, but encountering God and being defeated;—in order that we, putting away the darkness, may draw near to the Light, and may then become perfect Light, the children of perfect Light. See the grace of this Day; see the power of this mystery. Are you not lifted up from the earth? Are you not clearly placed on high, being exalted by our voice and meditation? and you will be placed much higher when the Word shall have prospered the course of my words.

III. Is there any such among the shadowy purifications of the Law, aiding as it did with temporary sprinklings, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean;³⁹¹⁵ or do the gentiles celebrate any such thing in their mysteries, every ceremony and mystery of which to me is nonsense, and a dark invention of demons, and a figment of an unhappy mind, aided by time, and hidden by fable? For what they worship as true, they veil as mythical. But if these things are true, they ought not to be called myths, but to be proved not to be shameful;³⁹¹⁶ and if they are false, they ought not to be objects of wonder; nor ought people so inconsiderately to hold the most contrary opinions about the same thing, as if they were playing in the market-place with boys or really ill-disposed

³⁹⁰⁹ John i. 9.

³⁹¹⁰ John viii. 12.

³⁹¹¹ Ps. xxxiv. 5.

³⁹¹² John iii. 3.

³⁹¹³ I.e., the condition of man before the fall.

³⁹¹⁴ Ib. i. 5.

³⁹¹⁵ This is the same word which in S. John i. 5., is rendered by “comprehend.”

³⁹¹⁶ Heb. vii. 13.



men, not engaged in discussion with men of sense, and worshippers of the Word, though despisers of this artificial plausibility.

IV. We are not concerned in these mysteries with birth of Zeus and thefts of the Cretan Tyrant³⁹¹⁷ (though the Greeks may be displeased at such a title for him), nor with the name of Curetes, and the armed dances, which were to hide the wailings of a weeping god, that he might escape from his father's hate. For indeed it would be a strange thing that he who was swallowed as a stone should be made to weep as a child.³⁹¹⁸ Nor are we concerned with Phrygian mutilations and flutes and Corybantes,³⁹¹⁹ and all the ravings of men concerning Rhea, consecrating people to the mother of the gods, and being initiated into such ceremonies as befit the mother of such gods as these. Nor have we any carrying away of the Maiden,³⁹²⁰ nor wandering of Demeter, nor her intimacy with Celei and Triptolemi and Dragons; nor her doings and sufferings...for I am ashamed to bring into daylight that ceremony of the night, and to make a sacred mystery of obscenity. Eleusis knows these things, and so do those who are eyewitnesses of what is there guarded by silence, and well worthy of it. Nor is our commemoration one of Dionysus, and the thigh that travailed with an incomplete birth, as before a head had travailed with another;³⁹²¹ nor of the hermaphrodite god, nor a chorus of the drunken and enervated host; nor of the folly of the Thebans which honours him; nor the thunderbolt of Semele which they adore. Nor is it the harlot mysteries of Aphrodite, who, as they themselves admit, was basely born and basely honoured; nor have we here Phalli and Ithyphalli,³⁹²² shameful both in form and action; nor Taurian massacres of strangers,³⁹²³ nor blood

³⁹¹⁷ I.e. Zeus, who was said by some to be a deified man, once tyrant of Crete, where his tomb was shown.

³⁹¹⁸ The allusion is to the birth of Zeus. Kronos the Titan, father of the gods, was the husband of Rhea, who bore him children. But an oracle having declared that Kronos should be dethroned by his children, he swallowed them immediately after they were born. Rhea, however, on the birth of Zeus, aided by the Curetes, a wild band of Cretan Priests, concealed the child, and substituted a stone, which Kronos swallowed in his haste without perceiving the difference. The stone made him very sick, and he vomited forth the children whom he had previously swallowed; and by them and Zeus the prophecy was fulfilled. Kronos was deposed and imprisoned in Tartarus.

³⁹¹⁹ There was a temple of Rhea in Phrygia, in which at her festivals people mutilated themselves to do her honour. The flutes alluded to served to turn the thoughts of the sufferers from the pain of the operation. The Corybantes were the ministers of the goddess, who led the wild orgies of her worship. It is believed that there is an allusion to this practice of self-mutilation in Galat. v. 12. So at least S. Jerome, S. Ambrose, and all the Greek Fathers take the passage. S. Thomas Aquinas, understanding the word in the same sense, applies it mystically; and Estius, who here follows Erasmus, refers the "cutting off" merely to excommunication, a sense which he calls "Apostolico sensu dignior," though why "*dignior*" it is not easy to see. Yet he acknowledges that those who interpret it literally do so "*non immerito*."

³⁹²⁰ The mythus of the Rape of Persephone and its consequences.

³⁹²¹ Dionysus was said to have been born from the thigh of Zeus, as Athene to have sprung full-grown and armed at all points from his head.

³⁹²² These myths and practices are too shameful to be described.

³⁹²³ See the Iphigenia In Tauris of Euripides.

of Laconian youths shed upon the altars, as they scourged themselves with the whips;³⁹²⁴ and in this case alone use their courage badly, who honour a goddess, and her a virgin. For these same people both honour effeminacy, and worship boldness.

V. And where will you place the butchery of Pelops,³⁹²⁵ which feasted hungry gods, that bitter and inhuman hospitality? Where the horrible and dark spectres of Hecate, and the underground puerilities and sorceries of Trophonius, or the babblings of the Dodonæan Oak, or the trickeries of the Delphian tripod, or the prophetic draught of Castalia, which could prophesy anything, except their own being brought to silence?³⁹²⁶ Nor is it the sacrificial art of Magi, and their entrail forebodings, nor the Chaldæan astronomy and horoscopes, comparing our lives with the movements of the heavenly bodies, which cannot know even what they are themselves, or shall be. Nor are these Thracian orgies, from which the word Worship (θρησκεία) is said to be derived; nor rites and mysteries of Orpheus, whom the Greeks admired so much for his wisdom that they devised for him a lyre which draws all things by its music. Nor the tortures of Mithras³⁹²⁷ which it is just that those who can endure to be initiated into such things should suffer; nor the manglings of Osiris,³⁹²⁸ another calamity honoured by the Egyptians; nor the ill-fortunes of Isis³⁹²⁹ and the goats more venerable than the Mendesians, and the stall of Apis,³⁹³⁰ the calf that luxuriated in the folly of the Memphites, nor all those honours with which they outrage the Nile, while themselves proclaiming it in song to be the Giver of fruits and corn, and the measurer of happiness by its cubits.³⁹³¹

VI. I pass over the honours they pay to reptiles, and their worship of vile things, each of which has its peculiar cultus and festival, and all share in a common devilishness; so that, if they were absolutely bound to be ungodly, and to fall away from honouring God, and to be led astray to idols and works of art and things made with hands, men of sense could not imprecate anything worse

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³⁹²⁴ It was a custom of the Spartans that at their great festival of Artemis the youths who were just coming of age (Ephebi) should scourge themselves cruelly on her altar in honour of the goddess, and to prove their manhood.

³⁹²⁵ The gods came to dine with Tantalus, and he, to do them honour, boiled his son Pelops for their food. They, however, found it out, and restored him to life; not, however, before Demeter had unwittingly eaten his shoulder, in the place of which they substituted one of ivory.

³⁹²⁶ S. Jerome, commenting on Isaiah xli. 22, says: "Why could they never predict anything concerning Christ and His Apostles, or the ruin and destruction of their own temples? If then they could not foretell their own destruction, how can they foretell anything good or bad?"

³⁹²⁷ These Mysteries were of Persian origin, connected it is said with the worship of the Sun. The neophytes were made to undergo twelve different kinds of torture.

³⁹²⁸ The Egyptian Mysteries.

³⁹²⁹ Zeus fell in love with Isis, and carried her off in the form of a heifer. Here, discovering the fraud, sent a gadfly, which drove Isis mad.

³⁹³⁰ Apis, the sacred bull, worshipped at Memphis.

³⁹³¹ i.e., that the prosperity of the country was proportionate to the annual rise of the River.

upon themselves than that they might worship just such things, and honour them in just such a way; that, as Paul says, they might receive in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet,³⁹³² in the very objects of their worship; not so much honouring them as suffering dishonour by them; abominable because of their error, and yet more abominable from the vileness of the objects of their adoration and worship; so that they should be even more without understanding than the objects of their worship; being as excessively foolish as the latter are vile.

VII. Well, let these things be the amusement of the children of the Greeks and of the demons to whom their folly is due, who turn aside the honour of God to themselves, and divide men in various ways in pursuit of shameful thoughts and fancies, ever since they drove us away from the Tree of Life, by means of the Tree of Knowledge unseasonably³⁹³³ and improperly imparted to us, and then assailed us as now weaker than before; carrying clean away the mind, which is the ruling power in us, and opening a door to the passions. For, being of a nature envious and man-hating, or rather having become so by their own wickedness, they could neither endure that we who were below should attain to that which is above, having themselves fallen from above upon the earth; nor that such a change in their glory and their first natures should have taken place. This is the meaning of their persecution of the creature. For this God's Image was outraged; and as we did not like to keep the Commandments,³⁹³⁴ we were given over to the independence of our error. And as we erred we were disgraced by the objects of our worship. For there was not only this calamity, that we who were made for good works³⁹³⁵ to the glory and praise of our Maker, and to imitate God as far as might be, were turned into a den of all sorts of passions, which cruelly devour and consume the inner man; but there was this further evil, that man actually made gods the advocates of his passions, so that sin might be reckoned not only irresponsible, but even divine, taking refuge in the objects of his worship as his apology.

VIII. But since to us grace has been given to flee from superstitious error and to be joined to the truth and to serve the living and true God, and to rise above creation, passing by all that is subject to time and to first motion; let us look at and reason upon God and things divine in a manner corresponding to this Grace given us. But let us begin our discussion of them from the most fitting point. And the most fitting is, as Solomon laid down for us; us; The beginning of wisdom, he says,

³⁹³² Rom. i. 27.

³⁹³³ cf. Orat. in Theoph. c. 12. The explanation seems to be, that the "Knowledge of good and evil" was a necessary part of the development of man's intellect, but that a premature attempt to attain it *per saltum* instead of by a gradual progress would prove fatal. Had human nature gone through its originally intended educational stages, it might have reached to the knowledge of evil without having that knowledge alloyed and deteriorated by the experience of evil, but might have known it, as God does, without taint. (Blount, Ann. Bible on Gen. ii. 7.)

³⁹³⁴ Ibid. i. 28.

³⁹³⁵ Eph. ii. 10; Phil. i. 11.

is to get wisdom.³⁹³⁶ And what this is he tells us; the beginning of wisdom is fear.³⁹³⁷ For we must not begin with contemplation and leave off with fear (for an unbridled contemplation would perhaps push us over a precipice), but we must be grounded and purified and so to say made light by fear, and thus be raised to the height. For where fear is there is keeping of commandments; and where there is keeping of commandments there is purifying of the flesh, that cloud which covers the soul and suffers it not to see the Divine Ray. And where there is purifying there is Illumination; and Illumination is the satisfying of desire to those who long for the greatest things, or the Greatest Thing, or That Which surpasses all greatness.

IX. Wherefore we must purify ourselves first, and then approach this converse with the Pure; unless we would have the same experience as Israel,³⁹³⁸ who could not endure the glory of the face of Moses, and therefore asked for a veil,³⁹³⁹ or else would feel and say with Manoah “We are undone O wife, we have seen God,”³⁹⁴⁰ although it was God only in his fancy; or like Peter would send Jesus out of the boat,³⁹⁴¹ as being ourselves unworthy of such a visit; and when I say Peter, I am speaking of the man who walked upon the waves;³⁹⁴² or like Paul would be stricken in eyes,³⁹⁴³ as he was before he was cleansed from the guilt of his persecution, when he conversed with Him Whom he was persecuting—or rather with a short flash of That great Light; or like the Centurion³⁹⁴⁴ would seek for healing, but would not, through a praiseworthy fear, receive the Healer into his house. Let each one of us also speak so, as long as he is still uncleansed, and is a Centurion still, commanding many in wickedness, and serving in the army of Cæsar, the World-ruler of those who are being dragged down; “I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.” But when he shall have looked upon Jesus, though he be little of stature like Zaccheus³⁹⁴⁵ of old, and climb up on the top of the sycamore tree by mortifying his members which are upon the earth,³⁹⁴⁶ and having risen above the body of humiliation, then he shall receive the Word, and it shall be said to him, This day is salvation come to this house.³⁹⁴⁷ Then let him lay hold on the salvation, and bring forth


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³⁹³⁶ Prov. iv. 7.
³⁹³⁷ Ib. i. 7 sq.
³⁹³⁸ Exod. xxxiv. 30.
³⁹³⁹ 2 Cor. iii. 7.
³⁹⁴⁰ Judg. xiii. 23.
³⁹⁴¹ Luke v. 8.
³⁹⁴² Matt. xiv. 29.
³⁹⁴³ Acts ix. 3–8.
³⁹⁴⁴ Matt. viii. 8.
³⁹⁴⁵ Luke xix. 3.
³⁹⁴⁶ Col. iii. 5.
³⁹⁴⁷ Luke xix. 9.

fruit more perfectly, scattering and pouring forth rightly that which as a publican he wrongly gathered.

X. For the same Word is on the one hand terrible through its nature to those who are unworthy, and on the other through its loving kindness can be received by those who are thus prepared, who have driven out the unclean and worldly spirit from their souls, and have swept and adorned their own souls by self-examination, and have not left them idle or without employment, so as again to be occupied with greater armament by the seven spirits of wickedness...the same number as are reckoned of virtue (for that which is hardest to fight against calls for the sternest efforts)...but besides fleeing from evil, practise virtue, making Christ entirely, or at any rate to the greatest extent possible, to dwell within them, so that the power of evil cannot meet with any empty place to fill it again with himself, and make the last state of that man worse than the first, by the greater energy of his assault, and the greater strength and impregnability of the fortress. But when, having guarded our soul with every care, and having appointed goings up in our heart,³⁹⁴⁸ and broken up our fallow ground,³⁹⁴⁹ and sown unto righteousness,³⁹⁵⁰ as David and Solomon and Jeremiah bid us, let us enlighten ourselves with the light of knowledge, and then let us speak of the Wisdom of God that hath been hid in a mystery,³⁹⁵¹ and enlighten others. Meanwhile let us purify ourselves, and receive the elementary initiation of the Word, that we may do ourselves the utmost good, making ourselves godlike, and receiving the Word at His coming; and not only so, but holding Him fast and shewing Him to others.

XI. And now, having purified the theatre by what has been said, let us discourse a little about the Festival, and join in celebrating this Feast with festal and pious souls. And, since the chief point of the Festival is the remembrance of God, let us call God to mind. For I think that the sound of those who keep Festival *There*, where is the dwelling of all the Blissful, is nothing else than this, the hymns and praises of God, sung by all who are counted worthy of that City. Let none be astonished if what I have to say contains some things that I have said before; for not only will I utter the same words, but I shall speak of the same subjects, trembling both in tongue and mind and thought when I speak of God for you too, that you may share this laudable and blessed feeling. And when I speak of God you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in Individualities or Hypostases, if any prefer so to call them, or persons,³⁹⁵² for we will not quarrel

³⁹⁴⁸ Ps. lxxxiv. 5.

³⁹⁴⁹ Jer. iv. 3.

³⁹⁵⁰ Prov. xi. 18.

³⁹⁵¹ 2 Cor. ii. 6.

³⁹⁵² The sense of Person (here πρόσωπον), which is the usual post-Nicene equivalent of ὑπόστασις, was by no means generally attached to that word during the first Four Centuries, though here and there there are traces of such a use. Throughout the Arian controversy a great deal of trouble and misunderstanding was caused by the want of a precise definition of the meaning of ὑπόστασις. It seems to have been at first understood by the Eastern Church to mean Real Personal Existence—Reality being the fundamental idea. In this fundamental sense it was used in Theology as expressing the distinct individuality and relative

about names so long as the syllables amount to the same meaning; but One in respect of the Substance—that is, the Godhead. For they are divided without division, if I may so say; and they are united in division. For the Godhead is one in three, and the three are one, in whom the Godhead is, or to speak more accurately, Who are the Godhead. Excesses and defects we will omit, neither making the Unity a confusion, nor the division a separation. We would keep equally far from the confusion of Sabellius and from the division of Arius, which are evils diametrically opposed, yet equal in their wickedness. For what need is there heretically to fuse God together, or to cut Him up into inequality?

XII. For to us there is but One God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things; and One Holy Ghost, in Whom are all things;³⁹⁵³ yet these words, of, by, in, whom, do not denote a difference of nature (for if this were the case, the three prepositions, or the order of the three names would never be altered), but they characterize the personalities of a nature which is one and unconfused. And this is proved by the fact that They are again collected into one, if you will read—not carelessly—this other passage of the same Apostle, “Of Him and

bearing of the Three “Persons” of the Blessed Trinity to each other (τὸ ἴδιον πᾶρα τὸ κοινόν, Suidas). But Arius gave it a heretical twist, and said that there are Three Hypostases, in the sense of Natures or Substances; and this doctrine was anathematized by the Nicene Council, which, apparently regarding the term ὑπόστασις as exactly equivalent to οὐσία (as Arius tried to make it) condemned the proposition that the Son is ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας (Symb. Nic.). Similar is the use of the word in S. Athanasius. As against Sabellius, however, who taught that in the Godhead there are τρία πρόσωπα (using this word in the sense of Aspects only) but would not allow τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις (i.e., Self-existent Personalities), the post-Nicene Church regarded ὑπόστασις as designating the Person, and spoke freely of τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις. The Western Church increased the confusion by continuing to regard ὑπόστασις as equivalent to οὐσία, and translating it by Substantia or Subsistentia. It was not till the word Essentia came into use to express οὐσία that the Western Church grasped the difference, so long accepted in the East, so as to use the words accurately. Meantime, however, there would seem to have grown up a difference in the use of the two words supposed to represent ὑπόστασις, of the same kind as that between ὑπόστασις and οὐσία; Substantia being appropriated to the Essence of a thing, that which is the foundation of its being; while Subsistentia came rather to connote a limitation, i.e., Personality. Thus the West also became confused, and Substantia was held to be the true equivalent of ὑπόστασις. Hence the condemnation at Sardica (A.D. 347) by the Western Bishops of the doctrine of Three Hypostases as Arian. The confusion lasted long, but in 362 a Council was held at Alexandria, when this difference was seen to be a mere logomachy, and it was pronounced orthodox to confess either τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις in the sense of “Persons,” or μίαν ὑπόστασιν in that of “Substance.” Our author in his Oration to the Fathers of the Council of Constantinople fully acknowledges this. “What do you mean,” he says, “by ὑποστάσεις or πρόσωπα? You mean that the Three are distinct, not in Nature, but in Personality.” And in the Panegyric on S. Athanasius (Or. xxi. c. 35), he remarks on the orthodoxy of the phrase μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, that the first expression refers to the Nature of the Godhead, the second to the special properties of the Persons. With this, he says, the Italians agree, but the poverty of their language is such that it does not admit of the distinction between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, and therefore has to call in the word πρόσωπον, which if misunderstood is liable to be charged with Sabellianism.

³⁹⁵³ 2 Cor. viii. 6.

through Him and to Him are all things; to Him be glory forever, Amen.”³⁹⁵⁴ The Father is Father, and is Unoriginate, for He is of no one; the Son is Son, and is not unoriginate, for He is of the Father. But if you take the word Origin in a temporal sense, He too is Unoriginate, for He is the Maker of Time, and is not subject to Time. The Holy Ghost is truly Spirit, coming forth from the Father indeed, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by Generation but by Procession (since I must coin a word for the sake of clearness³⁹⁵⁵); for neither did the Father cease to be Unbegotten because of His begetting something, nor the Son to be begotten because He is of the Unbegotten (how could that be?), nor is the Spirit changed into Father or Son because He proceeds, or because He is God—though the ungodly do not believe it. For Personality is unchangeable; else how could Personality remain, if it were changeable, and could be removed from one to another? But they who make “Unbegotten” and “Begotten” natures of equivocal gods would perhaps make Adam and Seth differ in nature, since the former was not born of flesh (for he was created), but the latter was born of Adam and Eve. There is then One God in Three, and These Three are One, as we have said.

XIII. Since then these things are so, or rather since This is so; and His Adoration ought not to be rendered only by Beings above, but there ought to be also worshippers on earth, that all things may be filled with the glory of God (forasmuch as they are filled with God Himself); therefore man was created and honored with the hand³⁹⁵⁶ and Image of God. But to despise man, when by the

³⁹⁵⁴ Rom. xi. 36.

³⁹⁵⁵ The Coining is simply of the adverbial form; the Substantive is found in earlier writings. S. Gregory himself uses it *Orat. Theol. V.* He uses other words also, as *ἔκπεμψις, πρόοδος*, and the verbs *προέρχεσθαι, προϊέναι*.

As to the question of the Double Procession (*Filioque*) see *Introd. to Orat. Theol. V.* Dr. Swete (*Doctr. of H. S.* p. 118) says, “It is instructive to notice how at this period the two great Sees of Rome and Constantinople seem to have agreed in abstaining from a minuter definition of the Procession. Both in East and West the relations of the Spirit to the Son were being examined by individual theologians; but S. Gregory and S. Damasus appear to have alike refrained from entering upon a question which did not touch the essentials of the Faith.” He adds in a note “This is the more remarkable because Damasus was of Spanish origin.”

³⁹⁵⁶ “The rest of the Creation was made by the command of God, but Man was formed by the hand of God.” (*Wordsworth in Gen. ii. 7.*)

“There was a peculiar glory in the creation of Man, distinguishing him from the rest of the creatures. The creatures inferior to man were called into being by a simple act of the Divine Will; but in the case of man, bearing as he does the nature and the form which God was about to assume as His own, and which, once assumed, was never again to be laid aside, the process of creation was markedly different. Then for the first time the Most Holy Persons of the Blessed Trinity appear upon the scene. They are manifested as in mutual consultation and common action personally engaged... ‘Let Us make Man in Our Image after Our Likeness’... Then followed the exercise of creative power as a personal act, the putting forth the Hand of God to fashion the body of Man; ‘The Lord God formed Man of the dust of the earth.’ Afterwards came the yet higher work in the infusion of the immaterial invisible life enshrined in the body, perfecting the work of God; ‘He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and Man became a living soul.’” (*T. T. Carter, The Divine Dispensations, p. 44.*)

envy of the Devil and the bitter taste of sin he was pitiably severed from God his Maker—this was not in the Nature of God. What then was done, and what is the great Mystery that concerns us? An innovation is made upon nature, and God is made Man. “He that rideth upon the Heaven of Heavens in the East”³⁹⁵⁷ of His own glory and Majesty, is glorified in the West of our meanness and lowliness. And the Son of God deigns to become and to be called Son of Man; not changing what He was (for It is unchangeable); but assuming what He was not (for He is full of love to man), that the Incomprehensible³⁹⁵⁸ might be comprehended, conversing with us through the mediation of the Flesh as through a veil; since it was not possible for that nature which is subject to birth and decay to endure His unveiled Godhead. Therefore the Unmingled is mingled; and not only is God mingled with birth and Spirit³⁹⁵⁹ with flesh, and the Eternal with time, and the Uncircumscribed with measure; but also Generation with Virginity, and dishonour with Him who is higher than all honour; He who is impassible with Suffering,³⁹⁶⁰ and the Immortal with the corruptible. For since that Deceiver thought that he was unconquerable in his malice, after he had cheated us with the hope of becoming gods, he was himself cheated by God’s assumption of our nature; so that in attacking Adam as he thought, he should really meet with God, and thus the new Adam should save the old, and the condemnation of the flesh should be abolished, death being slain by flesh.

XIV. At His birth we duly kept Festival, both I, the leader of the Feast, and you, and all that is in the world and above the world. With the Star we ran, and with the Magi we worshipped, and with the Shepherds we were illuminated, and with the Angels we glorified Him, and with Simeon we took Him up in our arms, and with Anna the aged and chaste we made our responsive confession. And thanks be to Him who came to His own in the guise of a stranger, because He glorified the stranger.³⁹⁶¹ Now, we come to another action of Christ, and another mystery. I cannot restrain my pleasure; I am rapt into God. Almost like John I proclaim good tidings; for though I be not a Forerunner, yet am I from the desert.³⁹⁶² Christ is illumined, let us shine forth with Him. Christ is

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³⁹⁵⁷ Ps. lxxviii. 4.

³⁹⁵⁸ Ullman comments on this passage as follows: There is in it, as follows especially from what comes after, the double sense that the Infinite Godhead entered in Christ into the limitations of a finite human life; and in consequence of this, since otherwise as an infinite Being it was not fully cognisable by the finite human soul, became in this limitation cognisable in some degree to it, as it was not before this special manifestation in Christ.

³⁹⁵⁹ “In this and several places πνεῦμα and νοῦς evidently denote the Divine the Spiritual, taken in the highest and purest sense, in which it is lifted above the σάρξ, and generally above all that is material; in which sense S. John says, πνεῦμα ὁ θεός.” Ullmann.

³⁹⁶⁰ “In a double sense;—either that the Godhead is, in union with the Man Jesus, subjected to suffering (cf. Or. XXI. 24), or that the Divine Substance, which is unapproachable by any passion or suffering, combined itself with a Man, whose nature cannot be free from such emotions.” Ullmann.

³⁹⁶¹ i.e., human nature, which was severed from and made hostile to God by sin.

³⁹⁶² i.e., Sasima.

baptized, let us descend with Him that we may also ascend with Him. Jesus is baptized; but we must attentively consider not only this but also some other points. Who is He, and by whom is He baptized, and at what time? He is the All-pure; and He is baptized by John; and the time is the beginning of His miracles. What are we to learn and to be taught by this? To purify ourselves first; to be lowly minded; and to preach only in maturity both of spiritual and bodily stature. The first³⁹⁶³ has a word especially for those who rush to Baptism off hand, and without due preparation, or providing for the stability of the Baptismal Grace by the disposition of their minds to good. For since Grace contains remission of the past (for it is a *grace*), it is on that account more worthy of reverence, that we return not to the same vomit again. The second speaks to those who rebel against the Stewards of this Mystery, if they are their superiors in rank. The third is for those who are confident in their youth, and think that any time is the right one to teach or to preside. Jesus is purified, and dost thou despise purification?...and by John, and dost thou rise up against thy herald?...and at thirty years of age, and dost thou before thy beard has grown presume to teach the aged, or believe that thou teachest them, though thou be not reverend on account of thine age, or even perhaps for thy character? But here it may be said, Daniel, and this or that other, were judges in their youth, and examples are on your tongues; for every wrongdoer is prepared to defend himself. But I reply that that which is rare is not the law of the Church. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor one line a geometrician, nor one voyage a sailor.

XV. But John baptizes, Jesus comes to Him³⁹⁶⁴...perhaps to sanctify the Baptist himself, but certainly to bury the whole of the old Adam in the water; and before this and for the sake of this, to sanctify Jordan; for as He is Spirit and Flesh, so He consecrates us by Spirit and water.³⁹⁶⁵ John will not receive Him; Jesus contends. "I have need to be baptized of Thee"³⁹⁶⁶ says the Voice to the Word, the Friend to the Bridegroom;³⁹⁶⁷ he that is above all among them that are born of women,³⁹⁶⁸ to Him Who is the Firstborn of every creature;³⁹⁶⁹ he that leaped in the womb,³⁹⁷⁰ to Him Who was adored in the womb; he who was and is to be the Forerunner³⁹⁷¹ to Him Who was and is

³⁹⁶³ That the All-pure was baptized is to remind us of our need of preparation. That He was baptized by John is to teach us humility towards the Priesthood, even if the Priest be socially our inferior. That He was baptized at thirty years of age shews that the Teachers and Rulers of the Church ought not to be very young men. Scholiast.

³⁹⁶⁴ Matt. iii. 14.

³⁹⁶⁵ John v. 35.

³⁹⁶⁶ Matt. iii. 17.

³⁹⁶⁷ John iii. 39.

³⁹⁶⁸ Matt. xi. 11.

³⁹⁶⁹ Col. i. 5.

³⁹⁷⁰ Luke i. 41.

³⁹⁷¹ "He who was the forerunner on earth, and was to be the forerunner in Hades of Christ, Who manifested Himself on earth, and manifested Himself also in Hades." Elias Cretensis.

to be manifested. “I have need to be baptized of Thee;” add to this “and for Thee;” for he knew that he would be baptized by Martyrdom, or, like Peter, that he would be cleansed not only as to his feet.³⁹⁷² “And comest Thou to me?” This also was prophetic; for he knew that after Herod would come the madness of Pilate, and so that when he had gone before Christ would follow him. But what saith Jesus? “Suffer it to be so now,” for this is the time of His Incarnation; for He knew that yet a little while and He should baptize the Baptist. And what is the “Fan?” The Purification. And what is the “Fire?” The consuming of the chaff, and the heat of the Spirit. And what the “Axe?” The excision of the soul which is incurable even after the dung.³⁹⁷³ And what the Sword? The cutting of the Word, which separates the worse from the better,³⁹⁷⁴ and makes a division between the faithful and the unbeliever;³⁹⁷⁵ and stirs up the son and the daughter and the bride against the father and the mother and the mother in law,³⁹⁷⁶ the young and fresh against the old and shadowy. And what is the Latchet of the shoe, which thou John who baptizest Jesus mayest not loose?³⁹⁷⁷ thou who art of the desert, and hast no food, the new Elias,³⁹⁷⁸ the more than Prophet, inasmuch as thou sawest Him of Whom thou didst prophesy, thou Mediator of the Old and New Testaments. What is this? Perhaps the Message of the Advent, and the Incarnation, of which not the least point may be loosed, I say not by those³⁹⁷⁹ who are yet carnal and babes in Christ, but not even by those who are like John in spirit.

XVI. But further—Jesus goeth up out of the water...for with Himself He carries up the world...and sees the heaven opened which Adam had shut against himself and all his posterity,³⁹⁸⁰ as the gates of Paradise by the flaming sword. And the Spirit bears witness to His Godhead, for he descends upon One that is like Him, as does the Voice from Heaven (for He to Whom the witness is borne came from thence), and like a Dove, for He honours the Body (for this also was God, through its union with God) by being seen in a bodily form; and moreover, the Dove has from distant ages been wont to proclaim the end of the Deluge.³⁹⁸¹ But if you are to judge of Godhead by bulk and weight, and the Spirit seems to you a small thing because He came in the form of a Dove, O man of contemptible littleness of thought concerning the greatest of things, you must also to be consistent despise the Kingdom of Heaven, because it is compared to a grain of mustard

³⁹⁷² John xiii. 9.

³⁹⁷³ Luke xiii. 8.

³⁹⁷⁴ Heb. iv. 12.

³⁹⁷⁵ Matt. x. 35.

³⁹⁷⁶ Micah vii. 6.

³⁹⁷⁷ John i. 27.

³⁹⁷⁸ Luke vii. 26.

³⁹⁷⁹ One important MS. reads “Us Who.”

³⁹⁸⁰ Gen. iii. 24.

³⁹⁸¹ Ib. viii. 11.

seed;³⁹⁸² and you must exalt the adversary above the Majesty of Jesus, because he is called a great Mountain,³⁹⁸³ and Leviathan³⁹⁸⁴ and King of that which lives in the water, whereas Christ is called the Lamb,³⁹⁸⁵ and the Pearl,³⁹⁸⁶ and the Drop³⁹⁸⁷ and similar names.

XVII. Now, since our Festival is of Baptism, and we must endure a little hardness with Him Who for our sake took form, and was baptized, and was crucified; let us speak about the different kinds of Baptism, that we may come out thence purified. Moses baptized³⁹⁸⁸ but it was in water, and before that in the cloud and in the sea.³⁹⁸⁹ This was typical as Paul saith; the Sea of the water, and the Cloud of the Spirit; the Manna, of the Bread of Life; the Drink, of the Divine Drink. John also baptized; but this was not like the baptism of the Jews, for it was not only in water, but also “unto repentance.” Still it was not wholly spiritual, for he does not add “And in the Spirit.” Jesus also baptized, but in the Spirit. This is the perfect Baptism. And how is He not God, if I may digress a little, by whom you too are made God? I know also a Fourth Baptism—that by Martyrdom and blood, which also Christ himself underwent:—and this one is far more august than all the others, inasmuch as it cannot be defiled by after-stains. Yes, and I know of a Fifth also, which is that of tears, and is much more laborious, received by him who washes his bed every night and his couch with tears;³⁹⁹⁰ whose bruises stink through his wickedness;³⁹⁹¹ and who goeth mourning and of a sad countenance; who imitates the repentance of Manasseh³⁹⁹² and the humiliation of the Ninevites³⁹⁹³ upon which God had mercy; who utters the words of the Publican in the Temple, and is justified rather than the stiff-necked Pharisee;³⁹⁹⁴ who like the Canaanite woman bends down and asks for mercy and crumbs, the food of a dog that is very hungry.³⁹⁹⁵

XVIII. I, however, for I confess myself to be a man,—that is to say, an animal shifty and of a changeable nature,—both eagerly receive this Baptism, and worship Him Who has given it me,

³⁹⁸² Matt. xiii. 31.

³⁹⁸³ Zech. iv. 7.

³⁹⁸⁴ The word Leviathan does not occur in the LXX., though it is found twice in other Greek Versions of the Book of Job, viz.:—iii. 8 and xl. 20.

³⁹⁸⁵ Isa. liii. 7.

³⁹⁸⁶ Matt. xiii. 46.

³⁹⁸⁷ Ps. lxxii. 6.

³⁹⁸⁸ Lev. xi.

³⁹⁸⁹ 1 Cor. x. 2.

³⁹⁹⁰ Ps. vi. 6.

³⁹⁹¹ Ib. xxxviii. 5.

³⁹⁹² 2 Chron. xxxviii. 12.

³⁹⁹³ Jon. iii. 7–10.

³⁹⁹⁴ Luke xviii. 13.

³⁹⁹⁵ Matt. xv. 27.



and impart it to others; and by shewing mercy make provision for mercy. For I know that I too am compassed with infirmity,³⁹⁹⁶ and that with what measure I mete it shall be measured to me again.³⁹⁹⁷ But what sayest thou, O new Pharisee pure³⁹⁹⁸ in title but not in intention, who dischargest upon us the sentiments of Novatus,³⁹⁹⁹ though thou sharest the same infirmities? Wilt thou not give any place to weeping? Wilt thou shed no tear? Mayest thou not meet with a Judge like thyself? Art thou not ashamed by the mercy of Jesus, Who took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses,⁴⁰⁰⁰ Who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,⁴⁰⁰¹ Who will have mercy rather than sacrifice; who forgiveth sins till seventy times seven.⁴⁰⁰² How blessed would your exaltation be if it really were purity, not pride, making laws above the reach of men, and destroying improvement by despair. For both are alike evil, indulgence not regulated by prudence, and condemnation that will never forgive; the one because it relaxes all reins, the other because it strangles by its severity. Shew me your purity, and I will approve your boldness. But as it is, I fear that being full of sores you will render them incurable. Will you not admit even David's repentance, to whom his penitence preserved even the gift of prophecy? nor the great Peter himself, who fell into human weakness at the Passion of our Saviour? Yet Jesus received him, and by the threefold question and confession healed the threefold denial.⁴⁰⁰³ Or will you even refuse to admit that he was made perfect by blood (for your folly goes even as far as that)? Or the transgressor at Corinth? But Paul confirmed love towards him when he saw his amendment, and gives the reason, "that such an one be not swallowed

³⁹⁹⁶ Heb. v. 2.

³⁹⁹⁷ Matt. vii. 2.

³⁹⁹⁸ The Novatians were known as Cathari or Puritans.

³⁹⁹⁹ In A.D. 251 Novatus, a Presbyter of the Church of Carthage, who with others had formed a party against S. Cyprian, their Bishop, came to Rome, and excited Novatian to become leader in a similar schism against Cornelius, the recently elected Bishop of the Apostolic See. The plea urged on behalf of the schism was that Cornelius, who was of one accord with Cyprian, had lapsed in the time of the persecution under Decius, A.D. 250, and that he had relaxed the discipline of the Church by admitting to Communion on too easy terms those who had been guilty of a similar offence; and that therefore he ought not to be recognized as a true Bishop of the Church, but a faithful Pastor should be chosen in his place. Consequently Novatian was elected by some who held these views, and was consecrated by three Bishops. There seem to have been a good many of his followers in Constantinople at this time. There had been at one time a disposition among them to reunite themselves to the Catholic Church, for they were orthodox in faith; but it had been hindered by the malevolence of their party leaders; so that the schism continued, and the Novatians must be added to the opponents with whom S. Gregory had to deal.

⁴⁰⁰⁰ Matt. viii. 17.

⁴⁰⁰¹ Ib. ix. 13.

⁴⁰⁰² Ib. xviii. 22.

⁴⁰⁰³ John xxi. 15. sq.

up by overmuch sorrow,⁴⁰⁰⁴ being overwhelmed by the excess of the punishment.⁴⁰⁰⁵ And will you refuse to grant liberty of marriage to young widows on account of the liability of their age to fall? Paul ventured to do so; but of course you can teach him; for you have been caught up to the Fourth heaven, and to another Paradise, and have heard words more unspeakable, and comprehend a larger circle in your Gospel.

XIX. But these sins were not after Baptism, you will say. Where is your proof? Either prove it—or refrain from condemning; and if there be any doubt, let charity prevail. But Novatus, you say, would not receive those who lapsed in the persecution. What do you mean by this? If they were unrepentant he was right; I too would refuse to receive those who either would not stoop at all or not sufficiently, and who would refuse to make their amendment counterbalance their sin; and when I do receive them, I will assign them their proper place;⁴⁰⁰⁶ but if he refused those who wore themselves away with weeping, I will not imitate him. And why should Novatus's want of charity be a rule for me? He never punished covetousness, which is a second idolatry; but he condemned fornication as though he himself were not flesh and body. What say you? Are we convincing you by these words? Come and stand here on our side, that is, on the side of humanity. Let us magnify the Lord together. Let none of you, even though he has much confidence in himself, dare to say, Touch me not for I am pure, and who is so pure as I? Give us too a share in your brightness. But perhaps we are not convincing you? Then we will weep for you. Let these men then if they will, follow our way, which is Christ's way; but if they will not, let them go their own. Perhaps in it they will be baptized with Fire, in that last Baptism which is more painful and longer, which devours wood like grass,⁴⁰⁰⁷ and consumes the stubble of every evil.

XX. But let us venerate to-day the Baptism of Christ; and let us keep the feast well, not in pampering the belly, but rejoicing in spirit. And how shall we luxuriate? "Wash you, make you clean."⁴⁰⁰⁸ If ye be scarlet with sin and less bloody, be made white as snow; if ye be red, and men bathed in blood, yet be ye brought to the whiteness of wool. Anyhow be purified, and you shall be clean (for God rejoices in nothing so much as in the amendment and salvation of man, on whose behalf is every discourse and every Sacrament), that you may be like lights in the world, a quickening force to all other men; that you may stand as perfect lights beside That great Light, and may learn the mystery of the illumination of Heaven, enlightened by the Trinity more purely and clearly, of

⁴⁰⁰⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 7.

⁴⁰⁰⁵ "This too often ignored page gives a solemn contradiction to those who, falsifying history as well as theology, pretended two centuries ago to revive by their extravagant rigour the spirit of the primitive Church. The spirit of the Church never changes. Inflexible against error, it is full of gentleness and kindness for repentant sinners. The spirit of the Church is that of the Saints of all times; or rather it is that of the Divine Shepherd, Who made Himself known above all by His unspeakable tenderness and His inexhaustible mercy to lost sheep." (Benoit S. G. de N.)

⁴⁰⁰⁶ i.e., their proper class among the Penitents.

⁴⁰⁰⁷ 1 Cor. iii. 12–19.

⁴⁰⁰⁸ Isa. i. 17, 18.

Which even now you are receiving in a measure the One Ray from the One Godhead in Christ Jesus our Lord; to Whom be the glory and the might for ever and ever. Amen.



Oration XL.

The Oration on Holy Baptism.

Preached at Constantinople Jan. 6, 381, being the day following the delivery of that on the Holy Lights.

I. YESTERDAY we kept high Festival on the illustrious Day of the Holy Lights; for it was fitting that rejoicings should be kept for our Salvation, and that far more than for weddings and birthdays, and namedays, and house-warmings, and registrations of children, and anniversaries, and all the other festivities that men observe for their earthly friends. And now to-day let us discourse briefly concerning Baptism, and the benefits which accrue to us therefrom, even though our discourse yesterday spoke of it cursorily; partly because the time pressed us hard, and partly because the sermon had to avoid tediousness. For too great length in a sermon is as much an enemy to people's ears, as too much food is to their bodies....It will be worth your while to apply your minds to what we say, and to receive our discourse on so important a subject not perfunctorily, but with ready mind, since to know the power of this Sacrament is itself Enlightenment.⁴⁰⁰⁹

II. The Word recognizes three Births for us; namely, the natural birth, that of Baptism, and that of the Resurrection. Of these the first is by night, and is servile, and involves passion; but the second is by day, and is destructive of passion, cutting off all the veil⁴⁰¹⁰ that is derived from birth, and leading on to the higher life; and the third is more terrible and shorter, bringing together in a moment all mankind,⁴⁰¹¹ to stand before its Creator, and to give an account of its service and conversation here; whether it has followed the flesh, or whether it has mounted up with the spirit, and worshipped the grace of its new creation. My Lord Jesus Christ has showed that He honoured all these births in His own Person; the first, by that first and quickening Inbreathing;⁴⁰¹² the second

⁴⁰⁰⁹ Enlightenment (φωτισμός) is one of the most ancient names for Holy Baptism; the name, in fact, which S. Gregory uses throughout this Oration, and which his Latin translator almost invariably renders by Baptismus.

⁴⁰¹⁰ This Veil is Original Sin, by which the soul is darkened and as it were covered.

⁴⁰¹¹ All Mankind (πᾶν τὸ πλάσμα). πλάσμα would not be correctly rendered by Creation. It is a word belonging solely to Man, who was formed by the Hand of God, and who, alone among creatures, has to give an account of his past life to his Creator at the Last Day. (Edd. Bened.)

⁴⁰¹² Gen. ii. 7.