

Nativity of Christ, 2013



WE PROCLAIM the holy Virgin to be in strict truth the Mother of God. For inasmuch as He who was born of her was true God, she who bare the true God incarnate is the true mother of God. For we hold that God was born of her, not implying that the divinity of the Word received from her the beginning of its being, but meaning that God the Word Himself, Who was begotten of the Father timelessly before the ages, and was with the Father and the Spirit without beginning and through eternity, took up His abode in these last days for the sake of our salvation in the Virgin's womb, and was without change made flesh and born of her. For the holy Virgin did not bare mere man but true God: and not mere God but God incarnate, Who did not bring down His body from Heaven, nor simply passed through the Virgin as a channel, but received from her flesh of like essence to our own and subsisting in Himself. For if the body had come down from heaven and had not partaken of our nature, what would have been the use of His becoming man? For the purpose of God the Word becoming man was that the very same nature, which had sinned and fallen and become corrupted, should triumph over the deceiving tyrant [*i.e. the devil*] and so be freed from corruption, just as the divine apostle puts it, *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead*. If the first is true the second must also be true. . . .

For the Word Himself became flesh, having been in truth conceived of the Virgin, but coming forth as God with the assumed nature which, as soon as He was brought forth into being [*as man*], was deified by Him, so that these three things took place simultaneously: the assumption of our nature, the coming into being [*as man*], and the deification of the assumed nature by the Word. And thus it is that the holy Virgin is thought of and spoken of as the Mother of God, not only because of the nature of the Word, but also because of the deification of man's nature, the miracles of conception and of existence being wrought together, to wit, the conception the Word, and the existence of the flesh in the Word Himself. For the very Mother of God in some marvelous manner was the means of fashioning the Framer of all things and of bestowing manhood on the God and Creator of all, Who deified the nature that He assumed, while the union preserved those things that were united just as they were united, that is to say, not only the divine nature of Christ but also His human nature, not only that which is above us, but that which is of us.

St John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, from ch. xii,
NPNE, Second Series, Vol. IX, pp. 55–57

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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