

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

The first Christmas marked the end of the age of expectation of the fulfilment of the promises of God to His people. Christmas stands between the two ages of the faith journey. It divided times (ages) into two great parts of word story, the B.C. (Before Christ) and the A.D. (Anno Domini-the year of the Lord). All time after the first Christmas is known as “the year of the Lord” stressing its effect. If it is the year of the Lord, then it is the year of salvation, redemption, peace and joy.

No one, even an atheist, could avoid acknowledging the fact of Christ’s birth because of its historic concreteness. The last thing an atheist would like to speak about is the existence of God; and yet he cannot be excused from using the Christian calendar in his world history. Whether he likes it or not, all history is written in terms of B.C. and A.D.

But what happened at Christmas? To begin with, at Christmas, the timeless and limitless God became part of our history getting Himself in our time and space while, as a principle, God as a pure Spirit couldn’t be subject to time and space. Since the cry of the little Child Who was born in the manger at Bethlehem, God started to communicate with us in our language on equal terms as ours. Since that first Christmas night, God became visible, touchable, audible to us. Long ago He had confirmed to His people that He is a God at hand not only of far away (cf. Jer 23:23). Now, at the appointed time, at Christmas, the incredible story of God becoming a man, the invisible becoming visible, was enfolded. That was the magic of Christmas, the Creator of the universe taking the created body of ours through the humble collaboration of a maiden from Nazareth.

But why? The answer is very simple. It is because of God’s unlimited love for us. Again, couldn’t He do that without becoming a man? Couldn’t He be with us spiritually or in any other form other than becoming a man? He could be with us without the Incarnation as He has always been present in Spirit amongst His people, but still that wouldn’t be enough to save humanity once for all. There must have been done something new and radical about it and the only way was to save humanity from the inside not from the outside or from the above.

As someone noted it quite rightly, if you want to help and save an ant heading towards its destruction, the best of all the ways for you would be, to become like the ant (or rather, becoming an ant) and lead it to safety. Otherwise all what you do could be devastating to the little poor ant. You would try to catch it with your fingers and that could mean a trampling to the little unhappy insect. What happened at Christmas was exactly the same; God became man! Not only that, but He could also say through the mouth of the Psalmist: “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people” (Ps 22:6). One could expect an animal to be born in a stable, not a human being, let alone God Himself.

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The Almighty God, in His infinite love created a perfect world with all the blessings bestowed on humanity. Unfortunately, sin crippled in and man found himself subject to death and destruction which was not included in the original plan of God for humanity. People couldn't save themselves as the result of their sin and fall. The only solution should have to be provided by God. God actually did provide the solution.

When, first, God created man and woman, it was not because of boredom since God Himself is a Community of Three Persons. Man and woman were not created by God as a past time or hobby; they were created because of the sheer love of God. There has ever been love flowing in the mystery of the Holy Trinity; the everlasting love between God the Father and God the Son has never been a created thing or a sentiment. It has always been a Person; the Third Person of the Holy Trinity- the Holy Spirit. Thus as a principle, God did not need any one or any creature to live alongside Him. But as the nature of Love is to give of what belongs to it without expecting any return, God being Love, gave existence and life to man and woman out of His pure love. He even wanted them to have His own image on them.

If we rewrite the story of our redemption in our own current ways of expressions, it could run like this. When, because of humanity's sin that image of God was destroyed, the Holy Trinity convened an emergency and decisive meeting between the Three Divine Persons to provide a once for all solution for the misery of humanity. In that meeting, it was decided that, to save humanity, one of them should go down to the world and become man. Jesus, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, raised His hand and offered to go down and become a man to save man; the Father, the First Person of the Holy Trinity, offered to be the Father to the Child Who would be born when the time comes; the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, offered to perform the miracle of bringing Jesus in the womb of His Mother. But there was no One among Them to be a Mother; thus a collaborator was badly needed if the plan of salvation was to become a success. So what should They do? They decided to ask for a volunteer among Adam's children to become Jesus' Mother. Gabriel, one of the archangels, renowned for his trustworthiness, was summoned quickly and he was sent to a town of Nazareth to a teenager girl whose name was Mary, to ask her willingness to take part in the plan God has prepared for the salvation of all humanity. She said 'yes' and immediately, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus, was formed in her virginal womb by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit; God the Father retained His Fatherhood and the whole mystery of the Holy Trinity became engaged in the life of that humble girl of Nazareth. Thanks to her 'yes', salvation became possible for us. As we all know it well, the rest became history.

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Christmas is a miraculous story of our salvation; but what does it actually mean to you? Is it simply having great time of fun with your family and friends? Is it merely a matter of becoming slimer and slimer so that you may slip down through the chimney of your kitchen to play Santa's role? Just a matter of exchanging presents with friends? Or an undesirable time of the year because of the headache it brings about with it in choosing the right present to the right person in your family? Or is it a moment in your life totally taken away with the preoccupation of how best you could roast your turkey? Obviously, Christmas is infinitely nobler and higher than these wonderful and memorable customary practices. It is a holy season in which we celebrate our redemption and reconciliation because of the mystery of EMMANUEL- God abiding with us.

WHAT HAVE WE GAINED FROM THE INCARNATION?

As the Holy Scriptures teach us, our gain from the Incarnation (from the Latin "*incarnatio*" which means "becoming flesh") of the Lord Jesus Christ can be summed up in the following important points. I urge the readers of this article to open your Bibles and read the passages given below for each of the points and meditate on their significance to you personally.

- 1- The devil and the fear of death have been defeated once for all by the birth of the Lord (cf. Heb 2:14-15).
- 2- Not only the devil, but also his work has been destroyed by the coming of Jesus (cf. 1Jn 3:8).
- 3- We have been made children and heirs of God through the Incarnation of the Son (cf. Gal 4:4-7).
- 4- God the Father could speak to us through His Son, Jesus because of the Incarnation (cf. Heb 1:1-2).

Abba Ephrem Andom