

Incarnation

The Incarnation has to be thought of as the decisive intervention in our midst by the Love of God And so the whole miraculous fact of Jesus, his birth and life, his teaching and healing, his death and resurrection, is to be regarded as the chosen locus within our space and time where the order of redemption intersects and sublimates the order of creation so as to heal, enrich and advance it to a consummation in God's eternal purpose of Love beyond anything that we can conceive.

Thomas F. Torrance, *Christian Frame of Mind* (1985), p. 32.

God loves you so utterly and completely that he has given himself for you in Jesus Christ his beloved Son, and has thereby pledged his very being as God for your salvation. In Jesus Christ God has actualised his unconditional love for you in your human nature in such a once for all way, that he cannot go back upon it without undoing the Incarnation and the Cross and thereby denying himself. Jesus Christ died for you precisely because you are sinful and utterly unworthy of him, and has thereby already made you his own before and apart from your ever believing in him. He has bound you to himself by his love in a way that he will never let you go, for even if you refuse him and damn yourself in hell his love will never cease. Therefore, repent and believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. From beginning to end what Jesus Christ has done for you he has done not only as God but as man. He has acted in your place in the whole range of your human life and activity, including your personal decisions, and your responses to God's love, and even your acts of faith. He has believed for you, fulfilled your human response to God, even made your personal decision for you, so that he acknowledges you before God as one who has already believed in God through him, and whose personal decision is already implicated in Christ's self-offering to the Father, in all of which he has been fully and completely accepted by the father, so that in Jesus Christ you are already accepted by him. Therefore, renounce yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, p. 94

Athanasius (ca. 298-373), *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996):

We will begin, then, with the creation of the world and with God its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning. There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation; for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the beginning (p. 26).

For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by virtue of the Word's indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all. You know how it is when some great king enters a large city and dwells in one of its houses; because of his dwelling in that single house, the whole city is honoured, and enemies and robbers cease to molest it. Even so is it with the King of all; He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled, and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be. For the human race would have perished utterly had not the Lord and Saviour of all, the Son of God, come among us to put an end to death (p. 35).

The Saviour is working mightily among men, every day He is invisibly persuading numbers of people all over the world, both within and beyond the Greek-speaking world, to accept His faith and be obedient to His teaching For where Christ is named, idolatry is destroyed and the fraud of evil spirits is exposed; indeed, no such spirit can endure that Name, but takes to flight on sound of it (p. 61).

When did people begin to abandon the worship of idols, unless it were since the very Word of God came among men? ... Or when did the deceitfulness and madness of daemons fall under

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contempt, save when the Word, the Power of God, the Master of all these as well, condescended on account of the weakness of mankind and appeared on earth? When did the practice and theory of magic begin to be spurned under foot, if not at the manifestation of the Divine Word to men? In a word, when did the wisdom of the Greeks become foolish, save when the true Wisdom of God revealed Himself on earth? In old times the whole world and every place in it was led astray by the worship of idols, and men thought the idols were the only gods that were. But now all over the world men are forsaking the fear of idols and taking refuge with Christ; and by worshipping Him as God they come through Him to know the Father also, Whom formerly they did not know (pp. 83-84).

Who, then, is this Christ and how great is He, Who by His Name and presence overshadows and confounds all things on every side, who alone is strong against all and has filled the whole world with His teaching? (p. 86)

Has any man's teaching, in any place or at any time, every prevailed everywhere as one and the same, from one end of the earth to the other, so that his worship has fairly flown through every land? (p. 88)

But the Word of God, by strangest paradox, teaching in meaner language, has put the choicest sophists in the shade, and by confounding their teachings and drawing all men to Himself He has filled His own assemblies (p. 88).

But, strange to relate, since they came over to the school of Christ, as men moved with real compunction they have laid aside their murderous cruelty and are war-minded no more. On the contrary, all is peace among them and nothing remains save desire for friendship But when they hear the teaching of Christ, forthwith they turn from fighting to farming, and instead of arming themselves with swords extend their hands in prayer (pp. 90-91).

Since the Saviour's advent in our midst, not only does idolatry no longer increase, but it is getting less and gradually ceasing to be. Similarly, not only does the wisdom of the Greeks no longer make any progress, but that which used to be is disappearing When the sun has come, darkness prevails no longer; any of it that may be left anywhere is driven away. So also, now that the Divine epiphany of the Word of God has taken place, the darkness of idols prevails no more, and all parts of the world in every direction are enlightened by His teaching (p. 94).

The Incarnation is one of the richest and complex realities ever proposed to the human mind, baffling, profound, deep in mystery, the wondrous salve that soothes and heals the depravities of the human condition, and the source of everlasting praise.

James Nickel

Jesus is the enfleshment of God's love answering God's justice so that God's grace may flood the world with the obedience of faith.

James Nickel

Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) was a man of letters, a devoted Roman Catholic, and collaborated with G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) on several writing projects. In response to the somewhat "dour" and "restrictive" Christianity that he observed in some quarters, he suggested a more robust view, "Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine, there's always laughter and good red wine."

In the Incarnation, God affirmed the goodness of creation, even in its fallen state. This affirmation reiterates His assessment of the original creation (Genesis 1). In the Incarnation, God joined Himself with Creation in a unique way through the God-man Jesus Christ. The Word was made flesh, i.e., the

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fallen flesh of man. The manifest presence of God cast a tabernacle in the midst of fallen creation. The result? All flesh shall see, residing in that tent of flesh, the glory of God! The mission of the babe born in Bethlehem was death on the Cross, a death that stabbed sin to death. The vindication that sin and death truly died on the Cross is the resurrection of Christ and the ensuing gift of the Holy Spirit. In Creation, in the Incarnation, and in the Resurrection all aspects of creation have been sanctified with the blessing of God. Creation will never, therefore, be the same. May this blessing flow, carried by His people as healing streams, as far as the curse is found.

James Nickel

In the Incarnation, Christ invaded this world from another world (eternity) to conquer this world by redeeming it through His death, resurrection, and ascension. In this salvation, Christ assures His people of a place in another world (eternity) and, because of that assurance, commissions them to conquer this world.

James Nickel

Viewing it from a distance of two thousand years, the First Advent of Christ demonstrates three truths: First, the Creator Himself came to earth in the form of an infant - Immanuel, God with us. Second, only such a Creator could ignite a Faith against which the gates of hell have battled, albeit in vain and without triumph, for nearly two millennia. And, third, the Creator who slipped from eternity into time in the form of a tiny infant, engenders this unshakable Faith only in those, empowered by that child, who are willing to become children for only by such childlike faith is entrance into the Kingdom of God assured.

James Nickel

As per custom of the times, Mary covered the body of the baby Jesus in salt (to kill any germs). She then wrapped him in thin strips of cloth; i.e., grave clothes (based upon the associated Greek cognate). Jesus, dressed like a mummy (born to die) was placed in a common feeding trough in the town of Bethlehem (meaning "house of bread"). The imagery of the scene is stunning.

James Nickel

Loud rings the warning voice around,
And earth's dark places hear the sound;
Away false dreams; vain shadows, fly;
Lo! Christ, the Dayspring, shines on high.

Latin Hymn (ca. 900)

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." God destined the babe in Bethlehem, like an unopened bud, to blossom into the Flower of His Passion to save His people from their sins.

James Nickel

Nothing so demonstrates God's positive attitude towards the human race as embracing my humanity. I repeat: my humanity, and not the flesh Adam had before the fall. What manifests God's mercy more clearly than that he would embrace such misery?

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

It never ceases to amaze me that the Babe born in Bethlehem created the vast outreaches of space, including the starry host that no man can number (Genesis 1:14-19; Psalm 147:4-5; Isaiah 40:26; John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-17).

James Nickel

Isaiah 9:6 "... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor." Far too many people think

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wonderful is an adjective of counselor. It is not. The name of the Messiah, His character, is wonderful. He is distinguished, singular, extraordinary, magnificent, admirable, too great to imagine. This is one of the names of the Lord Christ—Jesus, the Savior of the world—whose kingdom increase will have no end (Isaiah 9:7). This is the Christ we wondrously celebrate this Advent season.

James Nickel