

## GOD ENTERS THE WORLD AS AN INFANT

(By Professor Kurt Marquart)

John opens his majestic prologue to his Gospel with the very first words of the Bible: *"In the beginning..."* (Gen 1:1). When God started to make everything, *"the Word"* (Christ) was already there, because *"the Word was God."* "Christ is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Christ is God's Self-Expression, Mind, Reason, and Pattern, through whom everything was created. Against the idea that Jesus only became God's Son in His Baptism or by the Resurrection, John makes it quite clear that Christ was God all along, without beginning and without end.

John, like St Paul in his letter to the Colossians (Col. 1:15-17) draws a clear line between Christ and the whole created universe, visible and invisible. Christ, as God and Creator, is on one side of the line, and all else is on the other side, His creation.

And then comes the most mind-boggling miracle and mystery of all: *"The Word became flesh."* In Christ, God became man - and still is. Some think that Christ put away His manhood when He ascended into heaven, so that He is now with us only as God, not as man. But after the Word has become flesh through His miraculous conception and birth of His blessed Virgin mother, it is impossible to tear Him apart, as if God were here and His flesh there. No, wherever He is as Man, there also He is as God, and vice versa. In his letter to the Colossians, which was written some years after the ascension of Christ, Paul speaks in the present tense and says: *"In Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily"* (Col 2:9).

Luther: "So it is final, says St Paul, the whole, total Godhead dwells bodily, that is personally, in Jesus Christ. Therefore the fellow who does not find or get God in Christ will never again and nowhere else have or find God outside of Christ, even if he goes, as it were, over heaven, under hell, or into space!"

Millions of dollars are spent every year to spy of 'eavesdrop' on the universe with sophisticated electronic gear. Scientists are straining every ounce of their ingenuity to find evidence of meaningful signals, indicating the presence of intelligent forms of life somewhere deep in space. All along the central riddle of the universe, and its self-solution, are largely ignored: God the Creator / Communicator freely opens and offers Himself to us in the Baby of Bethlehem! This is the secret of mystery long hidden, but now made plain through the preaching of Christ's apostles.

*"My Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that has been kept in silence for long ages, but has now been revealed and made known through the writings of the prophets, as the eternal God has commanded, that all the nations may be obedient by believing"* (Rm 16:25-27).

*"This is the mystery that has been hidden from ages and generations, but that has now been disclosed to His holy people. God has wished to make known to them the glorious riches of this mystery among the Gentiles. This mystery is Christ in you, the Hope of glory. We are proclaiming Him, warning every person and teaching every person, using all wisdom, in order that we may present every person perfect in Christ"* (Col 1:26-28).

*"The mystery of godliness is great: He has been made visible in human nature, He has been justified in the Spirit, He has appeared to angels, He has been preached among the Gentiles, He has been believed on in the world, He has been taken up in glory"* (1 Tm 3:16).

And Christ still has "communication centres" all over the world - wherever two or three gather in His name (Mt 18:20), especially as His communicants (1 Cor 10: 16).

*"He lived among us, and we have seen His glory"* (John 1:14). His flesh is a kind of shield, which protects us from the divine radiation that no man can see and still live (Ex 33:20). Even high heavenly beings must cover their faces before Him (Isa 6:1-2). Christ's human flesh is like a screen; it "filters out", for those who believe in Him, the death-dealing rays of God's justice and anger - yet lets through the life-giving light of His love and grace! For while the Law came through Moses, grace and truth, that is, God's free favour, came by Jesus Christ. Moses and the Old Covenant are shadow and picture; Jesus and His New Covenant are fullness, body, and reality.

(From *Concordia Theological Seminary Newsletter*, (Fort Wayne) Christmas 1979)