

***“For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”***

**“Behold, the Promised One now manifests Himself to us”:  
the Incarnation**

***Presentation by Dr. Andrew P.W. Bennett – 31 January 2010,  
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- Today our focus is on our proclamation in the second main section of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed [Council of Nicæa 325, 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Constantinople 381] of that greatest of mysteries: the Incarnation of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ; the enfleshment of God as Man; the uniting of the human and the divine; and the beginning act of our salvation.
- You have likely heard the phrase: “We are an Easter people”, that we are a people of the Resurrection. Well, we are also very much a Christmas people and a people of the Incarnation, the source of our redemption.
- What is the Incarnation? Where do we start and what exactly happened and when? Why do we believe this? How can we not but rejoice always and forever?
- So, let’s start here at the Crucifixion, at the foot of the Cross. Are you confused?
  - The Crucifixion, Descent in to Hades, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ point back to the Incarnation – J. Behr and the Cross as *axis mundi*, kairos time.

**[see Behr, John. *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006.]**

  - In addition, the Incarnation anticipates the Crucifixion, Descent into Hades, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ
- Where do we start and what exactly happened and when? [ASK THIS QUESTION]
- What is the Incarnation?
  - God becomes incarnate as a man to redeem us and all Creation
  - Heaven and earth are brought together
  - The fall of humanity is healed
  - God became man so that we might become God
  - Through the free will of the Theotokos, Christ becomes incarnate
  - God becomes incarnate in Christ, yet Christ is the pre-eternal Word of God, ever present in the godhead.

- The Incarnation, faith, and unbelief

[see **St. Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003.**]

- A doctrine of faith and focus of the greatest heresies
- I. First Council of Nicea, (325); repudiated Arianism, adopted the Nicene Creed.

**Arianism** was a 4th century heresy named after Arius (c.250-336), a priest in Alexandria, who taught that the Son of God was not God but rather a created being with a definite origin in time. In Arius's words, "there was [a time] when he was not." Arius denied the full deity of the preexistent Son of God who became incarnate. He held that the Son, while divine and like God, was created by God as the agent through whom he created the universe, and thus that there was a time when the Son was not. The First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325, led in its teachings by Athanasius, condemned Arianism

- II. First Council of Constantinople, (381); revised the Nicene Creed into the present form used in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.
- III. Council of Ephesus, (431); repudiated Nestorianism, proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God (Greek, Θεοτόκος).

**Nestorianism** is a Christological heresy which originated in the Church in the 5th century out of an attempt to rationally explain and understand the incarnation of the divine Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity as the man Jesus Christ. Nestorianism teaches that the human and divine essences of Christ are separate and that there are two persons, the man Jesus Christ and the divine Logos, which dwelt in the man. Thus, Nestorians reject such terminology as "God suffered" or "God was crucified", because they believe that the man Jesus Christ suffered. Likewise, they reject the term *Theotokos* (Giver of birth to God) for the Virgin Mary, using instead the term *Christotokos* (giver of birth to Christ) or *Anthropotokos* (giver of birth to a man).

- IV. Council of Chalcedon, (451); repudiated the Eutychian doctrine of Monophysitism, described and delineated the two natures of Christ, human and divine; adopted the Chalcedonian Creed.

**Monophysitism** is a Christological heresy that originated in the 5th century A.D. Its chief proponent was the monk Eutyches, who stated that in the person of Jesus Christ the human nature was absorbed into the divine nature like a cube of sugar dissolves in a cup of water. Therefore, Christ was left with only one nature, the Divine.

- V. Second Council of Constantinople, (553); reaffirmed decisions and doctrines explicated by previous Councils, condemned new Arian, Nestorian, and Monophysite writings.

- VI. Third Council of Constantinople, (680-681); repudiated Monothelism, affirmed that Christ had both human and Divine wills.

**Monothelism** (a Greek loanword meaning "one will") is a particular teaching about how the divine and human relate in the person of Jesus, known as a Christological doctrine. Specifically, Monothelism teaches that Jesus Christ had two natures but only one will. This is contrary to the orthodox interpretation of Christology, which teaches that Jesus Christ has two wills (human and divine) corresponding to his two natures. Monothelism is a development of the Monophysite position.

- VII. Second Council of Nicea, (787); restoration of the veneration of icons and end of the first iconoclasm.

Icons are necessary and essential because they protect the full and proper doctrine of the Incarnation. While God cannot be represented in His eternal nature ("...no man has seen God", John 1:18), He can be depicted simply because He "became human and took flesh." Of Him who took a material body, material images can be made. In so taking a material body, God proved that matter can be redeemed. He deified matter, making it spirit-bearing, and so if flesh can be a medium for the Spirit, so can wood or paint, although in a different fashion.

*I do not worship matter, but the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, who through matter effected my salvation... —St. John of Damascus*

- Not only in the 4<sup>th</sup> C., but in our society it is often easier to deny the Incarnation, either explicitly or implicitly. Since, acknowledging the Incarnation and what that means impels us to live a very different life to what the world calls us to.
- ***The Incarnation is the greatest gift in human history. How can we not but rejoice always and forever!***

***GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!***