

LSE Christmas Reflection

“He’s One of Ourselves!”

The poet Alice Meynell makes the point that the birth of Jesus simply made him *‘one of the children of the year’*. Since there was nothing outwardly distinctive about him, Herod has to butcher all babies around Bethlehem to ensure the elimination of Jesus.

In the same vein the Gospel writers go out of their way to give Jesus a genealogy like any other child. Nor do they air-brush the unsavoury characters out of the list: adulterers, murderers, prostitutes, idolaters and a number of no-bodies are included. As in every human lineage, dysfunctionality abounds. Later they note how his acquaintances cut him down to size because they saw him as one of themselves: *‘Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Don’t we know his family?’*

The point the Holy Spirit is making is that Jesus, the Son of God, is also truly *‘the Son of man’*. He belongs fully to our human race. He is no blow-in from another world, no alien, no tourist, no foreign missionary. He belongs to us and our family, and we belong to him and his family. Belonging, high connections, are important: I had an aged aunt who delighted in rummaging through the branches of our family tree: she would connect us with *‘important people’* like John Redmond the politician – on the distaff side! – and for a brief time in the sixties until JFK’s star waned we basked in the glory of our connection with the President of the United States. God outshines my aunt and magnificently responds to our need to be *‘somebodies’* by linking us into Jesus’s family, *‘in a bond that can never be broken’* as the Liturgy says. There is hope for us all!

We admire people who really put themselves into what they do, in work, games or performances. God chooses to do this in a total way, so divinity is hidden in creation from the beginning. Of course, putting yourself *into* something means you have also to put yourself *out*, so Jesus sets aside the trappings of divinity so that we can be at ease with him and see him as one of ourselves.

We can marvel at God for all this: it is done *‘for love, only for love’*. We can also marvel at creation which has carried the secret of divinity for billions of years. Like the daffodil in the bulb, the oak in the acorn, the eagle in the egg, the harvest in the seeds of corn, the secret is revealed in its proper time. Wordsworth wrote of Mary as *‘our tainted nature’s solitary boast’* but Jesus also belongs to nature and is its greatest boast. Nature, take a bow!

We are the outriders, the messengers carrying the secret which rustles in the pages of the Gospels. The human species truly is being divinised, though the evidence can seem haphazard as of yet. Now nature groans and we do also. But the resurrection of all things has already begun -- from within. With our help, nature can complete her work, so that in God’s good time, as St Paul says, *creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

Happy Christmas!

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