**Chapter Two: The Coming of Christ in the Fullness of Time**

**A. Introduction: mission of Jesus**

1. God’s plan for salvation is the fruit of his mercy. To put it into operation,

the Father sent the Son into the world to assume a concrete human nature.

He is truly God with us.

a. By sacrificing himself as the suffering servant, he is the redeemer of the

human race who will at the end of time establish the definitive kingdom

of God.

2. The structure of this chapter is the meaning of the word INCARNATION.

a. It will look at the life of Jesus on earth and examine the statement: Jesus

is true God and true man.

b. One and the same subject unites the divine and human in himself, in the

unity of a person.

c. it is a matter then of God, in the person of the Word, uniting to himself a

human nature so intimately that the joys and sufferings, with all the \

actions of this nature are suffering and joys of God.

**B. Jesus really did exist**

1. Faith in Christ is not a belief in a being living outside of time who we have

come to know through mystical experience. Our faith in Christ is faith in the

Person who at a particular point in history was incarnate from the Virgin

Mary and became man.

a. It is a faith in an individual, particular man.

2. The life of Jesus on earth is in fact proven by historical research,

particularly from analysis of the NT.

a. There are also non-Christian testimonies from Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny

the Elder and Flavius Josephus.

3. One also cannot prove that the NT gives a fictional account of Jesus rather

than a true historical account.

a. It is clear that the purpose of the NT is not only to pass on a testimony of

faith, but also true historical facts.

b. While the Gospels are not true biographies, they are certainly written as

testimonies of true eyewitnesses.

c. There are also testimonies in Acts and what St. Paul says about Jesus as a

model of virtue.

**C. Jesus: Perfect Man**

1. Virginal conception of Jesus

a. Matthew and Luke include an infancy narrative because his early life

constitutes Good news. They are salvific events.

b. The events of the infancy are the first that derive from the mission of the

Son by the Father. The conception is the beginning of the visible mission

of the Son.

c. The Gospels report that the conception of Jesus is indeed miraculous in

that Jesus has no biological human Father. It occurs through the

overshadowing of the Holy Spirit

d. The virginal conception of Jesus is primarily a privilege of Christ himself

as something very much in keeping with his filiation to the Father. By

taking flesh within her, the Word has become a true member of the

human race.

e. through her he experienced the natural origin of a human being. From

Mary’s historical humanity Jesus is incarnated into human history. Mary is

truly the Mother of God “Theotokos.”

f. By having no human father, it is clear that Christ is an exclusive gift from

God the Father to mankind and in the first instance to Mary.

2. Christ has a real body.

a. Not only did Jesus act like a man, he was a man. The Gospels speak of

the humanity of Jesus as an evident fact.

b. Some tried to deny the material body of Jesus. The group called the

“Docetists” believe that Jesus only apparently had a human body or it

was a heavenly body not engendered by Mary. Others believe Jesus

simply appeared as a fully grown man without any childhood.

c. Others saw Jesus bodiliness as a scandal. For them there was no way that

God cold demean himself by associating within anything so earthly,

carnal and temporal.

d. In the NT, there was evidence to support that Jesus indeed had bodily

needs and it is evident in his suffering and death.

e. Tertullian and Irenaeus made a clear point to show that to deny the

reality of Christ’s body is to deny the reality of the redemption.

3. Jesus Christ has a real soul

a. Arius and Apollinaris denied the reality of the soul of Jesus, but for

different reasons. Both men were from the Alexandrian, LOGOS-SARX

school of Christology.

b. Arius thought that the WORD fulfilled in Jesus the function of the soul.

For Arius, Jesus was “second-rate god,” a creature. Arius wanted to

prove that the Son in his divinity was less than the Father, so instead of

attributing his human characteristics to a human soul, he pushed it off on

the WORD, who is less than God.

c. The position of Apollinaris was that since in Christ there is only one Being

and since divinity cannot be incomplete, it would follow that the

humanity of Jesus would be incomplete. The LOGOS united himself to the

flesh and took the place of the soul. Also, without a human soul, there

would be no human freedom, making it impossible for Jesus to sin.

d. There are many texts in the NT that show Jesus possessed a true human

spirit, or a spiritual soul showing human feelings. “What is not assumed is

not saved.”

4. Jesus as a man our Race

a. Born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus is a member of the human race. Christian

faith confesses that the WORD became flesh. He is a descendant from

Abraham and Abraham who has been who has been fully inserted into our

history in such a way that he has taken upon himself, all of mankind.

b. The closeness between Jesus and every human being explains how our

redemption is brought about. The very reason why he became man was

to share our human nature so as to redeem us.

c. Jesus’ solidarity in history through the human race reveals the divine

justice in the redemption so that the atonement of sin would come from

the sinful race itself. It heightened the dignity of man because the Evil

one conquered by the one he had defeated at the dawn of history. The

omnipotence of God is revealed because from a weak soul the perfect

humanity of Jesus was raised to its dignity.

d. By assuming a human nature, the Son of God chose to take on all the

natural characteristics of human nature, including the capacity to suffer

and die. Christ was free from sin, but his nature as a descendant of Adam

was one without preternatural gifts in order to redeem us through his

passion and death.

e. Jesus Christ had to become what we are in order to make us who he is;

that he became incarnate in order that the deliverance should be

accomplished by a man: that Christ, as Redeemer, comprises and

summarizes all of humanity.

f. The new Adam is linked to all men. He takes upon himself the drama of

human history.

5. The human features of Jesus in the Gospels

a. It is fitting that the new Adam and the head of the renewed human race

be physically perfect.

b. There are also spiritual features that are very important. One must keep

in mind that the human face of Jesus is in fact the human face of God.

c. The personality of Jesus is one balanced with understanding and mercy

who never loses control. His passions and virtues are perfectly ordered. A

key characteristic of Jesus is one of self-forgetfulness; his only desire is

to bear witness to the Father.

d. It is clear that Jesus candidly expresses his sadness, joy, compassion,

closeness with the weak and his capacity for friendship and suffering.

6. The Mother of the Redeemer

a. The Virgin birth has great significance for both Christological and

Mariological points of view. It speaks not only of the qualities of the

mother, but the Son as well.

b. Mary’s motherhood has a profound effect on the manner of the

Incarnation, because he was conceived and born from a human mother.

Mary is the Mother of God in the fullest sense of the word.

c. At the Annunciation, she committed herself whole-heartedly as the

handmaid of the Lord to the person and word of her Son, under and with

him, serving the mystery of redemption.

d. Mary’s divine maternity is also a salvific event, a cooperation in

redemption. Mary is the New Eve, lined actively and indissolubly to the

New Adam.

e. Her complete Christo-centricity allows this motherhood to be

ecclesiological as a relation of maternity toward the entire mystical body

Christ, because her motherhood extends to the whole human race.

f. The divine maternity is also a work of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed

her, as well as to her fullness of grace. Mary’s maternal mediation on

behalf of men shows forth the mediation of Christ. Her mediation is

secondary and distinguished from the unique mediation of Christ, and

also distinct from the mediation of the other creatures.

**C. Jesus Christ: Son of God and God**

1. The belief of the Church in the divinity of Christ

a. Over history, the Church has had to reassert the divinity of Christ to all

who denied or misunderstood him.

b. Ebionites: Jesus Christ is a mere man, the holiest of man. They also had

struggles with the mysteries of the Trinity as well as the Cross.

c. Adoptionism: Jesus was the son of God in the sense of an adopted Son.

These were Monarchians who saw the word as nothing more than a power

of God, not a person.

d. Arianism: the word was the First and most perfect creature who acted as

the spiritual soul of Christ. The only procession in God is Creation.

Proverbs 8:22

e. Ephesus (431) teaches that there is only one person in Christ and the

Word is divine. Chalcedon (451) affirms the one Person and two natures

and the divine transcendence of Jesus.

f. Reformation Theologies: Laelius and Faustus of Socinus believed that

Jesus was one outstanding in grace and holiness, raised higher after

death- worthy of worship but less than true God.

g. The Enlightenment philosophers with their rationalism entirely reject

God. The Modernists attempted to divide the Jesus of history from the

Christ of faith.

2. Divinity of Jesus announced (foretold) in the OT

a. There are Messianic prophecies that hint at the divinity of the Messiah.

They are only veiled prophecies and not explicit revelations.

b. There are passages relating to the divine names of the Messiah:

Immanuel (Is. 7:14); Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace

(Is. 9:16); The Lord our righteousness (Jer 23:5-6)

c. The title “Son of God” is used to denote Angels, Kings and the Just.

“You are my son, today I have begotten you.” (Ps 2:7); “The lord said to

my Lord. Sit at my right hand.” (Ps. 110)

d. There are also those that speak about God as “Wisdom,” (Prov 8:22) who

is God in relationship to the world. Daniel also refers to “One like a Son

of Man who comes down from heaven.” (Dan 7:13-14)

3. The divinity of Jesus in the Synoptics

a. In the Synoptics, the Son of man has power to forgive ins. Jesus shows his

power to forgive sins through a miracle. The Son of man presents himself

as equal to God when the Sanhedrin questions his Messiahship: “The son

of men on the clouds.” (Mk 14:62) The Son of man will come as Judge.

b. The son of man has a unique dignity declaring to be greater than the

Temple, kings, David, the prophets, the Law and the Sabbath. As son of

man he is the election of an Absolute, unconditional election which is

due to God alone. All who accept the Son of man will be saved.

c. Jesus as the Son of God: There are expressions that refer to divine

sonship in the full and proper sense. The clearest is when Jesus refers to

“My Father” or “Abba.” He is not only the pre-existent Son, but one

whose concrete being is totally bound up in his relationship to the

Father. In everything he proceeds from the Father.

d. Matthew, “No one knows the Father except the Son and no one knows

the Son but the Father. The Baptism and the Transfiguration show the

unique relationship. There is also the confession of Peter at Caesarea

Philippi.

4. The divinity of Jesus in St. Paul

a. This is seen largely in the Kenotic Hymn of Philippians 2:5-11, which

shows Christ from his pre-existence to his glorification as man. He is

“KYRIOS.”

b. The letter to the Colossians also has a hymn: “Jesus is the image of the

invisible God. He is both the image of God and begotten by the Father.

The fullness of God bodily dwells in him.”

c. The Pauline doxologies (Romans 9:5) “Christ who is God over all.” In

titus 2:3, “We await the return of Christ.”

5. The divinity of Jesus in the Gospel of John

a. The prologue, “LOGOS, DaBaR.” There is the revelation of the Son and

the Father.

b. Jesus attributes Pre-existence to himself through the seven “I Am”

statements.

c. “The only Son of the Father.” (1:14) Jesus proves the truth of his

assertion by performing on his own authority works only God can do.

d. The full revelation happens on Easter in the Cenacle when he breathes on

them the Holy Spirit.

6. Patristic Testimony

a. In the Pre-Nicene Fathers, as the Christological teaching developed,

there is a unanimous profession of the divinity of Christ as they

understood it. The DIDACHE calls Jesus “the God of David.”

b. The Letters of pope clement see Jesus as the “scepter of God’s

majesty.” Ignatius is calling Jesus “God living in the Flesh.” Polycarp of

Smyrna call him “God the Son.”

c. The apologists further develop this: Justin sees Jesus as the “Word”

(LOGOS), the First born of God; he is God. Irenaeus calls him “our Lord,

God, Savior and King.” Tertullian calls Jesus “God who proceeds from

God.” Origen calls him the “God-Man.”

**D. Incarnation-work of the Trinity**

1. The Incarnation was the mission to the world given by God the Father to his

Son to become man and redeem us.

a. The action that resulted in the Incarnation is sometimes attributed to the

Father, “God sent forth his Son. (Gal 4:4).”

b. The action is also attributed to the Son, “The Son emptied himself,

taking on our human nature (Phil 2:7).”

c. The action is attributed to the Holy Spirit. “The holy Spirit will come

upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. (Lk 1:35)

2. This triple attribution makes it clear that the work of the Incarnation is one

single action, common to all three divine persons.

a. In every action, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit act through the

omnipotence common to them.

b. Because the act of the incarnation is a divine action ad extra (on

creation), Jesus humanity is assumed into the Trinity as the humanity of

the Son and not the Father and Holy Spirit.

**E. The Immutability of God and the Incarnation**

1. With the statement, “The WORD became Flesh,” it might seem that God

underwent a change given to be that he began to be what he was not

before.

a. But God is immutable because he is perfection in himself.

b. However, with the incarnation, the WORD did not acquire perfection.

The only newness is an assumed human nature and to be humanity,

divinity does not change.

c. When the Pre-Existent Word underwent the Incarnation, nothing has

changed within the WORD himself.

2. All relations between creatures and God are real in the creature, but for

God they are a relation in reason.

a. The human nature of Jesus has a real relationship of belonging with

respect to the WORD, whereas in the WORD there is a relationship of

reason towards his humanity. This means that a relation of reason has no

real existence in God and therefore does not change him.

b. The Incarnation does not undermine the unchangeableness of God and

does not add perfection to God, who is infinitely perfect. The Incarnation

is totally gratuitous and in the same way as creation, resulted in no

change in God.

c. The immutability of God does not mean static of lifeless; rather it is life

in its fullest form.

3. Immutability and Kenosis

a. Kenosis does not mean a change in God. The meaning of Kenosis has two

aspects.

b. God assumed non-divine nature, manifesting himself to the world in a

human nature, while both revealing and hiding his divinity.

c. The Son renounced in his human nature, the glory due to it as God’s

humanity. He chose to be a suffering servant. This has to do with the way

that the Incarnation came about, no with the Incarnation as such.

d. The humanity of God represents the highest possible perfection. Jesus is

in fact perfect man and his human nature is supernaturally joined to God

in the most intimate way.

F. **The Appropriateness of the Incarnation**

1. Love is the deepest reason behind every action of God. Goodness spreads

itself and every action of God is simply a communication of his goodness and

perfection. There are three stages of this communication:

a. Through creation, where God gives being to creatures so that creation is

a reflection of God’s goodness and perfection.

b. Through grace, where God communicates himself in a new way because

grace makes man, in Christ, a son of God and heir of heaven.

c. Through the Incarnation in which God communicates to the creature

substantially in that he joins the creature to himself in the unity of

person.

2. Thus the mystery of the Incarnation meets man’s needs, but also how it fits

in with the goodness and Fatherhood of God.

3. The Incarnation and the Divine Perfections

a. The Kenosis of the Son does not contradict the perfections inherent in

the divine nature of the WORD. It is the highest good for God to

communicate himself to the creature in a supreme way. The supreme

way is God uniting the creature to himself in the unity of the person.

b. The Incarnation is a manifestation of God’s infinite love for man, and of

his inexhaustible mercy and of great kindness. In human history, the

revelation of love and mercy has taken a form and a name: JESUS

CHRIST.

c. The Incarnation manifests God’s infinite power and infinite capacity to

communicate. It is because of his transcendence that he can

communicate himself to us. The assumption of a human nature did not

lesson the glory of the Godhead.

d. One reason for the appropriateness of the incarnation is that it shows the

infinite wisdom with which God, in his actions, accommodates himself to

the action of things.

e. In order to have a more familiar friendship between God and man, it is

appropriate for the latter that God should become man.

4. Appropriateness from the Perspective of the WORD

a. It is appropriate for the Second Person of the Trinity to become man. The

Incarnation is itself the visible mission of the Son. The Son’s mission is

the evidence of the love of the Father.

b. The Son, through whom all thing were made, should restore human

nature which had fallen due to sin; the Wisdom of God makes good what

was done by the foolishness of man.

c. As the WORD is the image of the Father, it is suitable that the Son restore

the image of man, marred by sin.

d. The WORD is the natural Son of the Father and consubstantial with him,

and so it is appropriate that through the natural Son, the human race

should obtain a participated likeness in divine filiation. Only the Son

could have adoptive brothers and sisters.

5. Appropriateness of the incarnation from Human Nature

a. Only from the very nature of the Hypostatic Union and its effects on the

human nature of Christ can one say whether it was fitting for this human

nature to be assumed by the WORD.

b. The effect of the Incarnation is that the WORD of God becomes man. This

man Jesus is God. Christ is perfect God and Perfect man.

c. The assumption of human nature does not harm the perfections of human

nature. God does not harm the human nature.

d. The Union of the two natures is purely gratuitous. Thus human nature

merely has a non-repugnance for human nature; it has obediential

potency to be assumed in the Hypostatic union. Neither nature changes

in the Hypostatic Union.

e. The Incarnation is appropriate in light pf man’s need for salvation. St.

Paul contrasts the two Adams. Thus there is symmetry of the divine

plan of salvation.

f. Three points from St. Thomas:

* It seems to be a matter of justice that he who sinned should make amends; so the one carrying out the satisfaction is of the same nature of the one corrupted by sin.
* It is appropriate that the conqueror of the devil should come from the same stock conquered by the devil.
* God takes from a corrupt and sinful nature that which was raised to such height and glory to show God’s power.

6. The Freedom of God and the Incarnation

a. God shows his goodness in creating man. He reveals even more clearly his

benevolence and mercy in the Incarnation and Redemption of man.

b. While the arguments presented show how the Incarnation is fitting, it in

no way describes any of these actions as necessary.

c. Those who claimed that the necessity of the Incarnation was

metaphysical were the optimists who believe that once God created the

world, it has to be perfect in every way. (cf.88)

d. The work of the Incarnation is not only the effect of God’s infinite

mercy, but also at the same time the effect of his infinite wisdom. Just

because God is infinite mercy does not mean that his choices are

arbitrary and it does not deny that love guides all of his actions.

e. Others tried to argue the need for the Incarnation as something internal

to God himself, who attains his own perfections by a process of

alienation and recovery. The Incarnation would give God a new

perfection and a further step in his fulfillment. (process theology)

f. Traditional theology: God has no need of an incarnation. Infinite goodness

implies absolute freedom in giving. It is an absolutely gratuitous gift from

every point of view.