

by Greg Albrecht

The KING

who became a man

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood (John 1:14, The Message).

During his reign (1910-1936), King George V of the United Kingdom and the British Empire visited Leeds, a city in the north of England. When he was informed that a school was situated next to the railway line, King George agreed to have the train slow down so that he could appear on a platform and wave to the children as the royal entourage passed.

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The King who became a man

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When the king came outside the train, he wore no outward signs of royalty, but was dressed in a suit, like any other male subject of his kingdom. After the train glided by and the cheers of the children faded, one little girl remained next to the fence by the railroad tracks, sobbing. A teacher came over to console her, and asked the girl why she was crying. *"I wanted to see the king, but I only saw a man!"*

Because he did not come with pomp and ceremony—because he didn't wear the regalia befitting a king—when the Creator of the entire universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords, came into our world in the person of Jesus, many saw only a man who looked like and dressed like everyone else.

Do you remember the old fairy tale where a beautiful

world—"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14, *The Message*).

- Christmas proclaims the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, when God identified with us in the miracle we often refer to as the Incarnation. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christmas is not merely a footnote in a dusty old history book, but a living reality, because the risen Jesus Christ is alive! As he demonstrated God's love in his earthly life, he continues, in our lives right now, to demonstrate his love for us by getting involved in the nuts and bolts of our lives. Christmas is the announcement that the

The woman was all but invisible.

As the church-going, religious people attending the dinner tried to ignore her presence, Jesus asked Simon. "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44). What did Jesus see when he looked at people like this woman?

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). *During his earthly life Jesus saw and experienced the real struggles and heartaches faced by those to whom he ministered.* He came here, as God in the flesh, to know us and demonstrate his compassion and empathy for us.

***God assures us, in his Christmas card,
"How can I ever forget you?
In Christ, I became one of you!"***

princess kissed a frog and the frog was transformed into a handsome prince? When God came to be one of us, in the person of Jesus, the fairy tale reversed itself. God, demonstrating his love for all humanity, "kissed us" and promptly became a "frog" like us.

- **God involved himself in our lives** by becoming one of us—he enfleshed the love of God, and in his person revealed his willing vulnerability so that he was not immune from the life experienced by his creation.

- Christmas is the announcement of the time when **God inhabited our**

Captain of our salvation has arrived at the front lines, to be with us in our trenches and in our foxholes.

You may remember the story about a man named Simon who hosted Jesus at a dinner. During the dinner a woman of questionable character crashed the party to see Jesus. At best Simon viewed this woman as an uninvited guest, someone who was not entitled to be present in his home because of her lack of social status. Reading between the lines of this account (Luke 7:36-50), we presume that Simon also disdained her, thinking her to be a contemptible street person, the scum of the earth.

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A Christmas Card from God

What do we see when we consider Jesus? *Let's not allow the troubles of this world, which are overwhelming, to distract us from the love of Christ.* And there are many real distractions which can take our focus off Christ—wars, terrorist threats and atrocities, and perhaps closer to home, unemployment, illness, disease and the ongoing difficulties we experience with family and friends.

When we see the lights of Christmas, let's be reminded that Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). When and if you give a gift, remember that "God so loved the world that he GAVE his one and only son..." (John 3:16, my emphasis). *Look for expressions and evidence of God's love instead of controversy and strife, which can distract our focus from Jesus Christ.*

Ronald Reagan is one of my favorite U.S. presidents. Toward the end of one of his campaign speeches in 1979, a senior citizen cried out from the audience, "Mr. Reagan, everything you have said sounds fine. But what about us old folks? Have you forgotten us?" The man who was about to become the oldest president of the United States smiled down at her and said, "Forget you? Heavens, how could I forget you? I am one of you!"

"I AM One Of You" is the Christmas card God sends to each of us! When God, through an angel, informed Joseph that Mary would give birth to Jesus, he said: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:23). God assures us, in his Christmas card, *"How can I ever forget you? In Christ I became one of you!"*

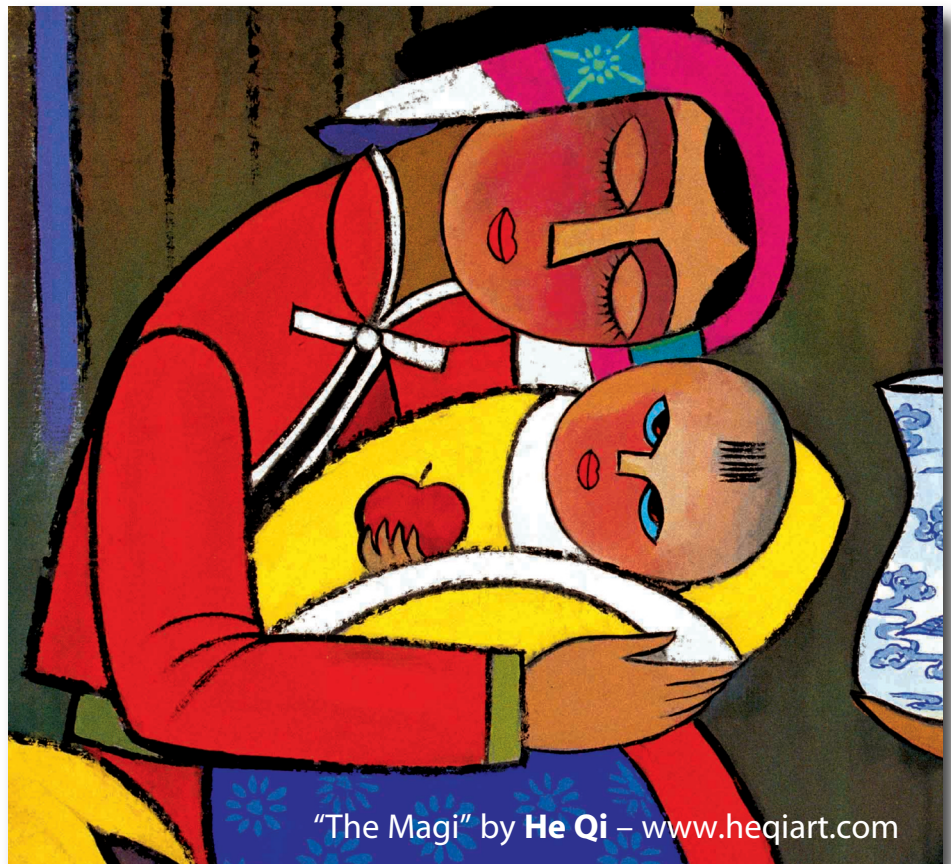
When my all-time favorite president, Abraham Lincoln, was campaigning for the presidency, he received a letter from an eight-year-old girl. The young girl

suggested that Lincoln should grow a beard to hide his rather homely face. Lincoln wasn't offended—he read the letter and sent a thank-you to the girl. He told her that if his campaign travels ever took him close to her home town that he would like to personally meet her.

The father of the young girl was one of the movers and shakers in the little town, and when his daughter received a personal response from Lincoln, he told

When the day came, practically the whole town was waiting at the train station. Everyone was dressed up, the band was ready—everyone except, it seemed, the young girl to whom Lincoln had written.

Before the train arrived in town, it had to stop for repairs. Because the train was so close to the town, we're told Lincoln decided to walk into town, and he took the little girl's address with him. He walked past the train station unnoticed, and walked through



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the other officials in town the great news. Abraham Lincoln might come to their little town!

According to the story, Abraham Lincoln remembered his promise to the girl and informed his staff that if his campaign train was scheduled to pass near her town, he wanted to stop. It turned out that his campaign schedule included traveling through that area, so the girl (and her father and the town officials) soon heard the good news that Abraham Lincoln was going to visit their town!

the deserted streets of the town until he found the girl's house. He knocked on the door, introduced himself to the maid (who was speechless) and asked to see the young girl. The young girl and a friend were having a tea party, pretending to drink tea out of little tea cups.

They invited Mr. Lincoln to join them and poured him a cup of pretend tea.

So, there sat Abraham Lincoln with those two eight-year-old girls, drinking pretend tea. After a while he asked the little girl if she liked

his new beard, and then excused himself to walk back to the train.

He's Never Too Busy

Remember that time when Jesus' disciples were trying to keep Jesus away from small children because they felt Jesus was just too busy for little children? Jesus told the disciples that unless they became like children they would never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-4).

Many labor under the false impression that God is so busy with emergencies and high-level, far-reaching meetings and appointments that he would never have the time for us.

But the story of Christmas is the story of God moving into the room, or the apartment or the house next door to you. He is your neighbor! He is one of us! "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14, *The Message*). □

Greg Albrecht is President of Plain Truth Ministries.

THE GREAT SCANDAL! THAT GOD BECAME MAN

BRAD JERSAK

Apes becoming man? C'mon, mate—that's not scary! You want to know what's really scary? **GOD becoming man!**

I admit, the bluster of this stereotypical Irishman has set me on my heels. And he isn't done yet!

"That's the scandal of Christianity!" he bellows, eyes as wild as his hair, waiting for my reaction.

"Smoke?" he asks, thrusting a carton my way.

"I beg your pardon?"

Oh, I see. My prof is offering me a cigarette.

"Uh, no thanks," I decline, as he lights up.

This is Dr. Conor Cunningham—philosopher, theologian, scholar. He's also my faculty host at the University of Nottingham, where I stayed as a "visiting scholar" in 2014.

It would take nine weeks for him to unpack his first sentences. It took me another two years to work them out as I composed my book, *A More Christlike God*. I will attempt to do so yet again in a few pages.

Cunningham's *Darwin's Pious Idea*¹ is easily the best researched text I've read to this day. It's why I made a trek to the UK, endured a single dorm cell without my wife and chained myself to a library for months. His thesis is that both the conservative creationists and their new atheist opponents are barking up the wrong tree, each tribe profoundly

mistaken in their quest for truth.

Ultimate truth is decidedly *not* found in bantering over whether or how apes evolved into human beings.



"Apes becoming man?" he guffaws. "You think that's a threat to Christian faith?"

He rolls his eyes, exasperated. In Conor's BBC documentary, *Did Darwin kill God?*² he introduces the topic this way:

"I'm a huge admirer of Charles Darwin. His theory of evolution is one of the greatest