

then how can a true doctrine of the Incarnation, involving a genuine union of divine and human natures in one Person, be preserved, in terms of the necessary before-and-after sequence in the Incarnation event? If the Son of God was not always Incarnate, but *became* Incarnate, then do we not have a pre-Incarnate state and then an Incarnate state? And how can this sequence in the personal experience of the Son of God be reconciled with God's alleged timelessness?

At this point, as you are beginning to realize the implications of these two somewhat interrelated concepts of the denial of becoming and the denial of time to God for the doctrine of the Incarnation, you may be tempted to do what I have found so many Christians willing to do -- simply put the entire doctrine of the Incarnation over in the realm of mystery, and to say, "The Incarnation is a *mystery* -- we cannot understand it -- we must simply believe it." Pious-sounding words! Somehow they sound vaguely similar to "Ignorance is bliss." But although pious-sounding, they may be bad words, since they seem too ready to affirm the meaninglessness of the scriptural truth, "The *Logos* became a human being."

Let us pause a moment and consider the idea of mystery. *Mystery* is a good scriptural concept! However, one should use it scripturally. "Mystery" in the Bible means either (1) something veiled, hidden, not revealed (either partially or fully); or (2) something revealed, but not fully understood. "Mystery" in Scripture never means total meaninglessness! By "mystery" Scripture means either that something has *not yet* been *revealed*, and therefore we can't know it: or that something *has* been *revealed*, and we don't *fully understand* it.

Many Christians, when they strike something that is the slightest bit difficult to understand, take immediate refuge in the category of "mystery." If anything in Scripture or Christian truth is not clear, simple, immediately apparent, they throw up their hands and say, "It's a mystery!" What I believe they are really saying is either that God did not intend us to understand the difficult things in Scripture until we reach heaven (when God will make it all clear to us), or that they do not feel like investing time and effort in prayerful study and reflection in attempts to understand those truths whose meanings are not immediately apparent.

In speaking with people in various churches who have run up against difficult truths in Scripture -- truths difficult to understand -- I have found