

FAITH ARTS

When Myth Became Fact: The incarnation as our inspiration

Presented by Deb Elkind

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(1) This link is to the study I recommend on this verse—start here and click forward for four readings:

<https://versebyversecommentary.com/1998/05/24/2-peter-116/>

(2) “Now as myth transcends thought, incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the dying god, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens—at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical person crucified (it is all in order) under Pontius Pilate. By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle.

“God is more than a god, not less; Christ is more than Balder, not less. We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology. We must not be nervous about ‘parallels’ and ‘pagan Christs’: they ought to be there—it would be a stumbling block if they weren’t. We must not, in false spirituality, withhold our imaginative welcome. If God chooses to be mythopoeic—and is not the sky itself a myth—shall we refuse to be mythopathic? For this is the marriage of heaven and earth: perfect myth and perfect fact: claiming not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight, addressed to the savage, the child, and the poet in each one of us no less than to the moralist, the scholar, and the philosopher.”

- from article “Myth Becomes Fact”; from *God in the Dock* by C.S. Lewis

(3) “Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God’s myth where the others are men’s myths: i.e., the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'.” (C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Greeves*)

(4) Mythopoeic art has mythological elements that influence the spiritual, moral, or creative lives of the characters/subjects/products of an artist’s imagination, *and also* reflects and supports the artist’s/author’s underlying themes, inspiring the viewer/reader to examine the importance of mythology in his or her own spiritual, moral, and creative development.

(5) QUESTIONS:

SO: How does our art, or the art we appreciate, reflect the Incarnation? How can the Incarnation become our inspiration?

(A) Do you accept the idea here that the Incarnation (God in flesh) can inspire art?

(B) How does the FACT of God becoming man and retaining His godhood inspire your art?

(C) Where does the Incarnation—that is, Jesus (God in Spirit) taking on flesh (becoming God-man)—intersect with our art? Does small-i incarnation (as an arts concept) mean an artist's themes are reflected in the art? Can our Christian beliefs