

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST 2

A. The Filiation of our Lord Jesus Christ (III, 35, 5):

Things pertaining to the nature are multiple in Christ; they are Divine and human. However, this multiplicity does not pertain to the Person, but filiation belongs especially to the Person. Since filiation is a personal property, there is but one in Christ.

Some consider only the nativity, as of filiation. Therefore, as there are two nativities, they put two filiations in Christ.

Others consider only the person or hypostasis, subject of filiation. As there is but one hypostasis or person, they put only one filiation in Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Divine Person, was not born by one and the same nativity, of the Father from eternity, and of His Mother in time. These two nativities differ specifically, one is temporal and the other is eternal. Since the subject of filiation is the Divine Person alone and not nature, and since in Christ there is no other hypostasis or person than the eternal, there can be no other filiation in Christ but that which is in the eternal hypostasis.

As from time nothing real can change in the eternal God, it affects only our way of thinking. Therefore the filiation by which Christ is referred to His Mother cannot be a real relation, but only a relation of human reason.

To a certain extent, opinions about unity or multiplicity of filiation are true. If we consider the adequate causes of filiation, we are to say that there are two filiations in respect of the twofold nativity.

However, if we consider the subject of filiation, which can only be the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, then no other than the eternal filiation in Christ is a real relation.

Thus in one way there is only one real filiation in Christ, which is in respect of the Eternal Father; yet there is another temporal relation in regard to His temporal mother.

B. A miraculous birth (III, 28, 2 & 35, 6):

To show that His body was real, Christ was born of a woman. But in order to manifest His Godhead, He was born of a virgin, for "*such a Birth befits a God*" (St. Ambrose, Christmas hymn).

- Holy Scripture:

Without any doubt whatever we must assert that the Mother of Christ was a virgin even in His Birth, for the Evangelist saint Matthew writes after Isaias (Is. 7:14): "*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel*" (Mt. 1:23). Also Ezekiel (44:2), announces: "*This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it; because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it.*" St. Augustine explains: "*What means this closed gate in the House of the Lord, except that Mary is to be ever inviolate? What does it mean that 'no man shall pass through it,' save that Joseph shall not know her? And what is this: 'The Lord alone enters in and goeth out by it,' except that the Holy Ghost shall impregnate her, and that the Lord of angels shall be born of her? And what means this 'it shall be shut for evermore,' but that Mary is a virgin before His Birth, a virgin in His Birth, and a virgin after His Birth?*" (De Annunt. Dom. III).

- The Word of God could not be born in a natural way:

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Word of God. For the word is not only conceived in the mind without corruption, but also proceeds from the mind without corruption. Wherefore in order to show that body to be the body of the very Word of God, it was fitting that it should be born of a virgin incorrupt.

- The purpose of Incarnation:

Since Our Lord Jesus Christ came to take away our corruption, it would be unfitting that in His Birth He should corrupt His Mother's virginity. Thus St. Augustine says that "*it was not right that He who came to heal corruption, should by His advent violate integrity*" (Sermon on the Nativity).

- The fourth Commandment:

He Who commanded us to honor our father and mother should not in His Birth lessen the honor due to His Mother.

- Divine Power:

“To the substance of a body in which was the Godhead closed doors were no obstacle. For truly He had power to enter in by doors not open, in Whose Birth His Mother’s virginity remained inviolate” (St. Augustine Sup. Joan. Tract. 121)

- Consequence:

Christ came forth from the closed womb of His Mother, without opening the passage from the womb. Thus there was no pain in that birth, as neither was there any corruption.

However, there was much joy therein for that God-Man *“was born into the world”*.

C. “Jesus was born at Bethlehem, in Juda” (Mt. 2:1):

St. Thomas Aquinas explains why Christ chose Bethlehem (III, 35, 6). We read in the prophecy of Michas (5:2): *“Bethlehem-Ephrata! Least do they reckon thee among all the clans of Juda? Nay, it is from thee I look to find a prince that shall rule over Israel. Whence comes he? From the first beginning, from ages untold?”*.

“He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rm 1:3). A special promise was made to King David concerning Christ, *“the man to whom it was appointed concerning the Christ of the God of Jacob”* (2 Sam. 23:1).

Therefore He willed to be born at Bethlehem, where David was born, in order that by the very birthplace the promise made to David might be shown to be fulfilled. St. Luke points this out by saying: *“Because He was of the house and of the family of David”* (Lk 2:4).

St. Gregory reminds us that *“Bethlehem is interpreted the house of bread. It is Christ Himself who said, I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven”* (Hom. VIII in Evang.).

D. The fullness of time was come (III, 35, 8):

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

The difference between Christ and other men is that men do not choose the time of their birth. However, the Lord and Maker of all time chose a time in which to be born, just as He chose His Mother Mary and His birthplace Bethlehem.

Since *“what is of God is well ordered”* and becomingly arranged, so Christ chose the fullness of time in which He prophesized to be born.

- The whole world was tributary to Emperor Augustus (Lk 2:1):

Our Lord Jesus Christ *“is our peace, who hath made both one,”* (Eph. 2:14). He is the principle of unity and the Prince of Peace. When the whole world lived under one ruler, peace abounded on the earth and this time was to be His time. *“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,”* prophesized Isaiah (2:4). St. Jerome, while commenting this versus, says that *“if we search the page of ancient history, we shall find that throughout the whole world there was discord until the twenty-eighth year of Augustus Caesar, but when our Lord was born, all war ceased.”*

The Incarnation of the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity happened while the world was governed by one ruler, to show that Christ *“came to gather the children of God together in one”* (Jn 11:52) and that there might be *“one fold and one shepherd”* (Jn 10:16).

- *“In the days of King Herod”* (Mt. 2:1):

Christ chose also the reign of a foreigner, that the prophecy of Jacob might be fulfilled: *“The scepter shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent.”* (Gn 49:10).

Moreover, as long as the Jewish *“people was governed by Jewish kings, however wicked, prophets were sent for their healing. But now that the Law of God is under the power of a wicked king, Christ is born; because a grave and hopeless disease demanded a more skillful physician”* (St. John Chrysostom, Hom. II in Matth).

- The Light of the world:

The time of God’s presence on earth is compared to the day, because He is the *“Light of the world”*. *“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, whilst it is day”* says the Savior (Jn 9:4). He wished to be born when the light of day begins to increase in length, *“to enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death”* (Lk 1:79). He also chose the rough winter season that He might begin from then to suffer in body for us.