

THE CRIB

Is time-travel possible? Time travel is one of science's big questions. Some say it could be. Based on Einstein's *Theory of Relativity*, proven by the 1971 Hafele-Keating Time Dilation Experiment, travel into the future might be doable if we could go fast enough, close to the speed of light. As Professor Brian Cox says, time travel to the future is intrinsic to the universe. However, going back in time is more problematic - unless we found a wormhole - but it's also fraught with conceptual contradictions. Yet if we could, who wouldn't want to travel back, to relive a moment in one's life or to be on the scene at one of history's big events? Indeed, who wouldn't want to have been in that little town of Bethlehem, on that night in 6 or was it 3BC, when the angel said to the shepherds *You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger* and when *a great throng of the heavenly host* appeared, singing *Glory to God in the highest - and on earth peace to people of good will?*

In a recent tweet, one of Britain's best-known atheists, Richard Dawkins, was at it again: *If you think that without God, life has no meaning and death is the end, then go away and learn some logic.* One reason I never find his arguments convincing is because I don't recognise the God he's attacking. His God is impersonal, a Force, an Old Man on a Throne. Yet this is not the God Christians believe in. This is not the loving Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is not the Person-God we know, serve and love, the One Who transforms our lives and woos us into His friendship. This is why our annual celebration of Christmas is crucial. It shews us what God is like, Who He really is. He is, as John says, *the Word through Whom all things were made* and yet here He is, in a crib, *a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.* *God has spoken at various times in the past and in various different ways,* but now He's a baby. Grown up, He'll transform the world by His life and teaching, death and rising, by His sending of the Spirit to generate the Church. But by taking flesh, by becoming one of us, by assuming a human history and a human culture, the invisible God has made Himself visible for all to see. He's not a remote God. He's not impersonal. He's not a far-off Force, but *the Word made flesh* in the arms of Mary and Joseph.

Let's travel back 2000 years into the omni-potent Roman Empire. This was a culture that glorified force, power, strength, virility, epitomised by games in the arena with violence and cruelty, where gladiators fought to the death, and

where slaves and criminals, the crowds cheering with pleasure, were savagely ripped apart by wild animals. Into this culture, silently slipped a God Who preached mercy, forgiveness, peace, love of the poor and weak, respect and justice. Little by little, this new religion made progress until, in the 4C, it reached a tipping-point with the conversion of Constantine. 100 years later in his Christmas sermon, the great Pope St. Leo was able to say that Jesus not only shews us Who God is but who *we* are, or what we should be. In this Child we see not only God the Son but the New Adam, a Perfect Human, the Model of everything you and I are called to be. Yes, we see the *Word through Whom all things were made* but we also see a human baby, full of potential. We see the future Prophet Who will teach us how to find happiness. We see the Victim Who, *for us and for our salvation*, calls us to follow Him. We see the Risen Saviour, Who gives us strength to live life to the full and to triumph over sin, suffering and even death itself.

My brothers and sisters, let's now fast forward back to today. Let's fast forward through the gothic High Middle Ages, through the religious turbulence of the Reformation, through the birth of our thrilling modern world, to now, the early 21C. You and I, we live in a culture with immense potential for good, yet one shedding its Christian patrimony, rapidly losing its way, throwing off its moral compass. *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*, yet now, it's as if we're throwing it away, indifferent to God's love. As Catholics, we can't stand by and let this happen. We've got to stop it. We've got to do our best to turn the tide. How? We must begin with ourselves. Each one of us must deepen our faith and love for Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, the only Way, the Truth, the Life. Thank God we live in space-time *after* the Incarnation: as St. Augustine said, *you and I would have perished if He had not come*. So in this Christ-Mass, as Jesus descends onto the altar to feed us with His Body and Blood, let's *Rediscover Jesus*. Let's welcome His love and friendship. Let's welcome Him into our hearts. *He came down from heaven so that we might go up to heaven*. In 2018, let's resolve to love Him more ardently and to proclaim Him to others, *glorifying the Lord by our lives*. Let's find time every day to pray more, to live more simply, to be more loving of others, especially the needy. For *today a Saviour has been born for us: He is Christ the Lord*.

*O come, let us adore Him!*