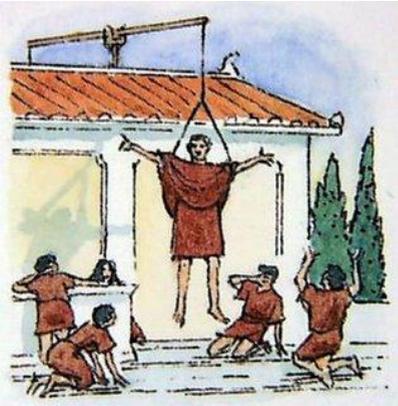


Unto Us A Child Is Born



In ancient Greek drama, when the plot has got very complicated, and the end of the play is coming fast, and it seems impossible that things can be sorted out, the playwright would often resort to the device of a *deus ex machina* – the god from the machine. The machine in question might be a crane so that the god would swoop in from the heavens, or a trapdoor so that he would shoot out of the earth. The entrance was intended to be impressive – normally more impressive than the rather low budget version in the picture. The god would then proceed to sort everything out

with a few waves of the equivalent of his magic wand. The tradition lives on today with the Fairy Godmother in many pantomimes.

Our God does things differently. When he comes into the world it is not as an impressive piece of theatre, but in the same way as the rest of us, by being born to a human mother.



Our God does not come as a figure of power and command, but as a baby, utterly vulnerable and dependent on others for his continued existence. Nor does our God sort everything out instantly by some unlikely piece of magic, but by living amongst us as one of us, living a life of service, and showing us the way, the truth and the life. The miracles our God does are miracles of compassion, giving sight to the blind, making the lame to walk, and feeding the hungry, not mere demonstrations of power and control.

Our God comes to the poor and disadvantaged. The first to hear the

good news of the birth of a saviour and the reconciliation of God and humanity are the shepherds, who leave their flocks and hurry to see their new born Lord. See them in the picture of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, painted in Florence around 1510, as they kneel and adore the helpless baby that is our God.