

# *The Mystery of the Word*

*Christmas Day*

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When we were in Kumasi, our English friends Joe and Denni complained that it didn't seem like Christmas as it was hot. Louise and I looked at each other - hot is normal. This highlighted the contrast between the European and Australian Christmases. Of course, here we seem to like to pretend that we are still in Europe. We eat ridiculous food for the season, and even in church, sing "In the Bleak Mid-winter while it is 35° outside. We send each other cards with snow scenes, light advent wreaths to remind us of the ending of the dark days of winter, the list goes on.

Perhaps it has been appropriate for preceding generations to seek to hang on to past traditions as a reminder of their heritage. All my mother's grandparents came out from Germany and it was appropriate for her Christmas to reflect that, but what of her grandchildren what should their experience be?

It has had me reflecting on the struggle that we face as a nation in terms of National Identity and indeed in terms of a satisfactory spirituality that is ours and not borrowed from European roots.

To me, Australianising Christmas is part of this process. Not that we should throw away everything from elsewhere, but we should be open to the idea, that as a nation, there is a need to discover our own traditions for this season.

As Australians, there is a need for us to come to terms with Christmas in our own framework in our own way, to find our own traditions. At the Cressy School prize giving day, the choir sang a song "Deck the sheds with bits of wattle" - from Bucko and Champs. This was the first time that I had heard it, but it comes from a genre of music which include the good old Aussie Jingle Bells in which the images of the traditional Christmas have been Australianised. They generally tend to be fun songs drawing much of their effect, because of their contrast to the usual norm.

Although I am usually a staunch advocate for things Australian, I am not hugely impressed with these, because rather than seeking to define a genuine Australian Christmas, they tend to Australianise a European one. Principally, this is achieved by removing references to God and Jesus.

A Christless Christmas end up in emptiness, that so many feel at this time. Rather Christ must meet us at Christmas in our own time and place

This is the true meaning of the incarnation, the coming of God as a human being, described in our Gospel reading. As Christians, we celebrate this event each Christmas, but as Australians, we must find the incarnation in our own culture. Jesus came a human to identify with all humanity and it is only as we put him into our own land and language that we can identify

As God's people, we are called to show leadership in this process. **AMEN**