



## **A Homily For Christmastide**

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### **Prologue**

Christmastide are the days on both sides of Christmas Day, which is also called The Mass of the Christ, The Feast of Christmas, and The Feast of the Nativity. Christmastide consummates the Season of Advent and anticipates the Feast of the Transfiguration.

In the Latin Church, the tenor and accouterments of Christmastide as modernly known are treasures bequeathed to the Church by Franciscans<sup>1</sup> and by Martin Luther.<sup>2</sup>

Into this stream of devotion in English-speaking churches, commercial and legal interests and, later, Victorian sensibilities injected moralistic sentimentalism, inspired by the commercial calculations of merchants, and creations in fiction, from the pen of the English novelist Charles Dickens.

As commercial and legal interests became increasingly knowledgeable and skilled in propaganda/conditioning techniques, new mythologies, designed to enhance commercial outcomes and juridical perquisites, were inserted into the stream of sacred sweetness that is Christmastide.

Now ordinary citizens of the orbit of the Latin Church,<sup>3</sup> even members thereof, consider market conditioning by Victorian fiction and moralistic sentimentalism to comprise the content of Christmas.

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1 Creation and adoration of the Nativity Scene by St. Francis himself and adoration of the Christ Child by St. Anthony of Padua.

2 Creation and adoration of the Christmas Tree, Nativity Creche and Hymnody.

3 Renamed "Western Civilization" by protagonists of Judaism. For the same reason -- to deprecate and try to ignore Christianity, but also now Judaism -- protagonists of Mohammedanism have renamed "Western Civilization" "Abrahamic Civilization." Seems neither Jews nor Mohammedans can integrate with Christians the way Christians can with them. Pity. Shows who really is ecumenical, spiritual and religious.

Remarkably, however, even in the commercial propaganda the name Christmas has been retained despite strenuous efforts to replace it. And when a substitute for it was sought, the Christmas tone of happiness was maintained along with the recognition of a holy day (e.g., the greeting "Happy Holidays"). This is a signal triumph of a central Feast of the Christian Liturgical Year, to survive skillfully meretricious deformations in the direction of un-Christian and anti-religious scrupulosity and self-promotion.

Apparently Christmastide expresses too deeply to be denied essential yearning in the human spirit. The wish to go home, perhaps? Perhaps also the wish to see creation restored to its essential goodness.<sup>4</sup>

The academic propaganda regarding Christmastide (and by implication the Christian Liturgical Year) has been to a more final purpose. Rather than merely deforming Christmastide, academic propaganda aims to break it and throw it out into the cold of winter to die miserably and utterly. The hatred of modern academe for Christianity, especially from the liberal arts faculties, could not be nastier or more vigorous. It exudes the odor of insanity.

However, no one outside alienated academe, and especially the liberal arts faculties and their minions of authoritarian anarchists, is going for their agenda.

It will take a complete Mohammedan domination by deconstruction of academe for that to happen, something the liberal arts faculties and

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *esse qua esse bonum est*.

some others at this time welcome because it would accomplish, they believe, the goal they cannot, namely, humiliation and destruction of the Latin Church.<sup>5</sup>

Even that action, however, were it possible, and it is not, would be stopped short of completion. Neither academe nor merchants nor the ruling fools who own them can own the power of God.

And that, of course, is the message of Christmas.

## Historical Notes

Christmastide in the United States has an improving history. There are two strands of it, reflecting the dominant theologies brought to the regions settled by the early immigrants.

Initially there were two regions, northern and southern. The northern region was settled primarily by Calvinists with strong commercial and legal abilities and interests. In New England Unitarianism, a Calvinist heresy, early gained credence, especially at Harvard Divinity School, and promoted legal, psychological and public-relations skills. In New York there settled a strong Sephardic presence skilled in finance and medicine. The north was a bustling, perfervid region.

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<sup>5</sup> The problem with bringing Mohammedans in on the essentially Jewish agenda to extirpate Christianity is that Mohammedans aim to humiliate and destroy Judaism as well as Christianity and, be it noted, Hinduism as well. Mohammedans do grasp the order of battle of those they elect to make their enemies. They deserve credit for clarity on this point.

The southern region was settled primarily by Catholics (Anglicans and Romans) and secularists with strong cultural and agricultural abilities and interests.

Both regions, but especially the southern region and especially Episcopalians and Sephardic Jews, supported the development of Freemasonry, which had no special interest in Christmas because it traced its descent from Egypt rather than Kashmir (Judaism), Tibet and India (Christianity) or Christian Prophets of the Middle Eastern deserts (Islam).

Westward expansion established a third region of the country and this was accomplished primarily by Methodists, Lutherans and Freemasons, all of whom mix Calvinism, Catholicism and secularism to deploy proactively rigorous programs of individual responsibility and social development. Methodism, Lutheranism and Freemasonry were ideal theologies for the requirements of exploration and economics 'beyond the frontiers of comfort and security but with a stable and productive system behind those frontiers.

Christmas did not mean much among Calvinist, Unitarian, Jewish and Freemason settlers. All four of those traditions are vigilant about lapses into idolatry <sup>7</sup> and Christmas as observed in the catholic churches is rife with opportunity for idolatry and its consequences, all of them insane. Calvinists insisted every day is equally holy and should be dedicated to

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<sup>6</sup> Greek *ekonomos*, building out and up.

<sup>7</sup> The idolatry of their own fanaticism for vigilance against idolatry is not often in the self-checking *apparati* of iconoclasts.

God and the observance of moral living just as much as any other. Their point here is impossible to fault.

But when Jews and Calvinists saw commercial potentials in catholic Christmas celebrations, they summoned their skills for exploitation and the modern American Christmas, full of myth, sentimentalism and mooching, stood up.

Episcopalians, Lutherans and Roman Catholics brought Christmas to the Americas and have tried with uneven success to maintain its essential power and meaning in the life of the *polis*. It has not been easy, nor will be.

### **What Is It About Christmas?**

Christmas is about the central paradox of existence and life.<sup>8</sup>

Christmas is the season of remembrance of the intense tragedies of life and the in-breaking of divine Light in Grace upon the expanse of personal and historical struggle and desolation. It is not a happy Feast. It is a somber Feast featuring a paradoxically happy phenomenon. The power and meaning of that phenomenon is lost when awareness of the tragic conditions in which it occurs is.

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<sup>8</sup> A paradox (Greek *para* + *doxa*) is a phenomenon that is unexpected and goes against the common knowledge, expectation and opinion.

Christmas and Good Friday belong together. They have the same tone and go to the same meaning.<sup>9</sup> They are the most important moments of the Christian Liturgical Year.

The Church classically and not wrongly takes Easter as the central Feast and most important moment of the Christian Liturgical Year. I am not arguing with that estimate. I do regard it as incomplete and a little too obvious. Certainly it is not the focus of Christian monastic piety, which is the engine of the Church, or changing the metaphor, its live battery. The Birth and Crucifixion of the Christ is the focus of monastic piety, both Latin and Greek.

The Cross is the focus of the Church and Her central symbol expressing Her identity and mission. Easter, which is the experience of the Living Christ despite his death, the triumph of the meaning and power of being despite the machinations and attacks of non-being, is given in the symbol of the Crucifixion. Monastic piety focuses correctly in Christmas and Crucifixion. Sentimental exuberance focuses trivially in Easter.

The acceptance of death gives the triumph of life. Or, expressed from the point of view of Christmastide, the appearance of Divine Frailty in the jaws of human tyranny gives the triumph of character and the defeat of cowardice. This is God's way of conducting business. It is the central paradox of life and history. When ordinary experience is consulted with an open, skilled and penetrating mind, it is apparent that this paradox

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<sup>9</sup> It is my custom to hear Karl Richter conduct Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at Christmastide and Sir Thomas Beecham Handel's *Messiah* during Holy Week.

aligns the actual phenomenology of events and expresses the profoundest aspirations, the yearning of every creature and all creation.

Delusion easily takes over the happy phenomenon inside Christmas, a fact Calvinists rightly noted and so they avoided making a fuss about Christmas. The great and tragic drama of history which is the setting of the Christmas phenomenon is necessary *sitz im leben* of its reality. Without Caesar, Herod, Priests and Pharisees (modernly, Professors consumed by political protagonism), there is no Christmas, no need for it. But there are Caesars, Herods, Priests and Fanatical Professors, there always are. They are as near as one's next door neighbor and as far as one's utter unequal.

Christmas does not make sense in a beautiful or polite <sup>10</sup>world, in "a wonderful life." It does not make sense if man is the master of his fate and always has happy endings. It is meaningless if man can or should do anything he wants, fulfill any dream he cares to engender, resist and defeat any negativity he meets on his journeys, fulfill all commitments he makes and are imposed on him and impose whatever obligations he is able to affix. Christmas is without reason if man is free to do as he pleases, make what he wants, be what he sets his heart on becoming, expect what he intends to happen.

Christmastide is the Christian Liturgical Year's first condemnation of man's pretense of self-fulfillment, self-salvation and self-realization. It is a lethal arrow aimed at self *per se*. Christmas is a profoundly negative message

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10 Meaning polished, refined, a term from stone masonry. An educated person is one whose tastes and senses are refined to a polish.



relative to man's ego. It is a profoundly positive message relative to man's essential nature, the one which is all but dead, buried and silenced beneath the dreams, demands, pretenses, struggles, cares and woes of personal and corporate existence.

Calvinism is correct in asserting that the world and history are sinks of disease, desperation, demonry, despair and others ungodly processes from which and in which God meets man in the Light of Grace to call him home to reunion in Him, so he may endure and triumph over the pains and challenges of life and existence.<sup>11</sup>

## **Content Of The Christmas Story**

Christmastide reflects the Christmas Story, which is given directly in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and indirectly in the Gospels of Mark and John and the Letters of Paul.

True to its evangelical nature, the Christmas story highlights the Light of Grace in a personal birth at a moment of historical struggle which is now also, by God's prevenient Grace, a moment of historical fulfillment.

The story itself, however, is not nor is it intended to be history in the sense of *chronos*, clock time. It is history in the sense of *kairos*, a consummation of power and meaning driving by divine guidance throughout the

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<sup>11</sup> That is, have the whole health of salvation, which is also the blessedness of liberation. " ... our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone." *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*, Chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 3.

processes of history to an actual phenomenon, a *denouement*, a *telos*, in this case a human birth which is also a divine self-manifestation.<sup>12</sup>

There is the paradox. The mixing of the Unconditioned with the conditioned, of Infinity with finitude. This makes no sense whatsoever to ordinary thinking and expectation. It is not meant to. It is, as St. Paul remarked about its twin, the Crucifixion, scandalous, an outrage against convention, law and morality.

The paradox that is Christmas and Good Friday is the core message of Christian preaching and practice. It is the power of God on earth. That is why Christmas is considered a happy Feast, though a somber one in consideration of its context.

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<sup>12</sup> But not a divine birth in the sense of the birth of God or a God or an aspect of God or a Divine Being, such as a "Son of God," a common self-elevation of tyrants in Greco-Roman society and sometime bestowal on heroes, usually victors of military campaigns.

Christian theology of the horribly named "Incarnation" tends to be one of the religion's more misleading expressions. This is especially true the more doctrinal statements regarding the "Incarnation" are formulated as definition rather than as description, that is, as state rather than as phenomenon.

The idea of "Incarnation" as a personal being is idolatrous. God manifests Himself through personal beings but He is not them. They are He but He is not they. For this reason Jesus continuously points to "the Father [or, the One] who sent me."

Jesus' power is his perfection as a man, Paul's New Adam, maintaining union with God and having power to bring other men into their own union with Him. His perfection is not as God or a God or a "the Son of God."

The language of *Incarnation* and *Son of God* should not be in modern Christian vocabulary unless employed by very learned people because it occasions desperate confusion.

That context comprises an array of specific negativities:



domination by a foreign power and an illegitimate priesthood



political repression, corruption and fleecing taxation



ecclesial repression, exploitation and fleecing taxation



parental poverty



ostracism for bastardy



denial of ordinary hospitality



birth in the circumstances of a common animal



prey of assassins



a massacre of innocent children



secret comings and goings



flight with parents from personal persecution



denial and evacuation of birthright

With credentials like these, who would expect anything noteworthy to be there? No one of common sense, apparently. Yet these credentials are the context of the subject of the Feast of Christmas. Not an auspicious beginning or proclamation for a self-revelation of God, much less a fresh prodigy of soteriological cosmogenesis.

No wonder Mohammedans, whose worldly affections are indomitable, wrote the fiction that Christianity deformed the one true religion of God, the religion which preexisted Christianity and all other comic religions, namely, Mohammedanism.<sup>13</sup> Christianity has nothing to offer in the place of 72 private, perpetual virgins, male or female.<sup>14</sup>

Mohammedans get a better deal than Christians do. No one can argue with that. And it matters not what sort of life they lead so long as they pay the mosque tax and obey the "mosque police."<sup>15</sup> The brothels of Europe, Asia and the Americas, boys and girls, bear fulsome wet and high-born testimony to that reality.

In all the filth and cynicism of worldly attachment, the Light of Grace, a self-revelation of God, a New Being, a "rescue ship," appears as by *kairotic* fortune as an unwanted infant, an apparent bastard, a helpless nobody in a violently contested country administered by ambitious men

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13 They call it "Islam," but Islam it is not. It is Mohammedanism, pure, straightforward, simple idolatry of a man and a book he started but did not write.

14 "Women for bearing, men for pleasure." is how Mohammedans put it. Official strictures against queering are ignored by officialdom as well as almost everyone else. Mohammedanism in uncountable ways vies for the title of World Champion Hypocrisy.

15 Extortion gangs run by "scholars" and "clerics."

and jealous women. Nothing is going for it and everything is going against it.

This is Christmas. *Christmas cheer* is an *in-spite of* "intrusion" of Divine Will in the sordid conditions of history. Christmas is a symbol of God's directing creativity on behalf of his friends and playmates.

## **Summary**

The context of the Nativity Story as given by the Gospels and Prophets makes hope significant. Count that context's tangible negativities. They are numerous and vivid, in principle countless and blinding.

To include hunting and slaughter of children – indeed proto-genocide. Hardly giving them stockings and presents.

Estranged from that context hope is sentimentality, anti-spiritual, driving away from God.

The context is emphasized to highlight the improbable importance and important improbability of the Nativity. It should be still.

Hard on the context, soft on the hope.

Hope is a little, frail, helpless, tenuous, even uncertain experience of yearning in the context of life and history.

Rather like a physician facing the taxonomy of disease, a theologian the taxonomy of estrangement, a virus the primordial furnace.

Hope has not a hope in hell. Is not that the Gospel?

Christmas belongs with Good Friday in recognizing the negativities of life and history that make the Transfiguration and Easter meaningful.

## Epilogue

Christmas is a feast of defeat with a foundation of victory but not a development of it.

It contradicts and condemns Victorian sensibility and Dickensian sentimentality. It offends by running against *bourgeois* taste and manners. Christmas evacuates and condemns perversions of itself by both commercial and communist missions and values.

Christmas is God's language, not man's. This is the world's most beautiful, hopeful and helpful language, bearing the world's sweetest experience. All of that because Christmas is Divine language and experience. Christmas is a miracle, mysterious and ecstatic.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

A.M.D.G.