

Was Jesus really born in a stable?

compiled by the *Christian Crusadestaff*

Many years before Jesus was born, God promised to send a Savior to save the world.

The Christmas story, as it is usually told, involves the newborn baby Jesus being born in a stable filled with animals and visited by shepherds and kings.

But how much of the familiar story is biblical? It may surprise you.

The nativity story starts thousands of years before Christ's birth with the hundreds of prophecies of the coming Messiah. However, the event begins in earnest when an elderly priest named Zechariah was on duty, burning incense in the temple. An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar.

Zechariah was startled and gripped with fear, but the angel assured him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah! Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. Name him 'John.'"

"He will be a joy and delight to you and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord."

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"Adoration of the Shepherds" by Matthias Stom (c.1600-c1652)

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What will it take to turn America around?

by **Billy James Hargis II, publisher**

Is there any way to save America from its headlong plunge into disaster? Yes, but does our nation have the backbone to make the difficult decisions necessary?

Is the responsibility that of individual Americans – such as you and me? Or should we trust in Congress to act?"

"Let's

assume that each of our 535 congressmen cares about the destructive impact of deficits and debt on the future of our country," writes author Walter E. Williams. "Regardless of party, congressmen face enormous lobbying pressures and awards to spend more and little or no pressure and awards to spend less."

But regardless of backbone, there is the endless debate of which course to take.

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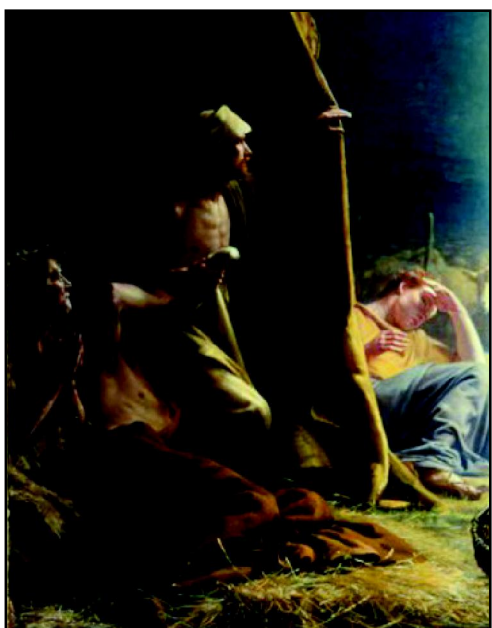
Why did God choose a bunch of shepherds?

compiled by the *Christian Crusadestaff*

Have you ever wondered why God had the angel tell a bunch of shepherds about Jesus' birth? Why shepherds? Why not carpenters? Or fishermen? Or bricklayers?

Some have speculated that God choose the shepherds because the shepherds around Bethlehem would have been tending to not just any sheep, but the Passover lambs that would be

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"Shepherd's Watch" by Carl Bloch (1834-1890)

Do we dare wish you a Merry Christmas?

compiled by the *Christian Crusadestaff*

Out on Interstate 75 near Mount Morris, Michigan, an enormous, red billboard proclaims: "I miss hearing you say 'Merry Christmas' – signed Jesus."



Merry Christmas.

It may sound like a simple salutation, but the traditional greeting has become a battle

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Yuletide a dangerous time for Christians worldwide

by **Keith Wilkerson, managing editor**

Last year's Christmas bomber was a Nigerian Muslim who stuffed his underwear full of plastic explosive and tried to detonate it on a flight bound for Detroit. This year it was a Somali Muslim who wanted to get an early start on Christmas terror by car bombing a Christmas tree-lighting ceremony in Oregon.

They shared a single mission: *To turn America's most joyous holiday into a time of fear and dread.*

They've already been successful in many countries

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Detail from "Adoration of the Shepherds" by Guido Reni (1575-1642)



A high-Sierras pika – thriving amid climate change

Climate alarmists seek new ‘crisis’

compiled by the *Christian Crusade Newspaper* staff

The UN has held another environmental summit in Nagoya, Japan, and the new focus is to save wild animals from extinction, rather than reducing global warming.

“It seems that Earth’s temperatures have failed to increase for 12 years, and the public is losing interest in man-made global warming,” writes author Dennis T. Avery. “So, back to the cuddly wild animals as the excuse for shutting down the modern world.”

However, the collapse of global warming has not prevented the *New York Times* during the midterm election campaign from slamming the 19 of 20 or so Republican

Senate candidates who did not “accept the scientific consensus that humans are largely responsible for global warming.”

The *Times* condemned them as equals with Jewish Holocaust deniers.

Nowhere in the editorial did the *Times* recall Climategate or the other related global warming-related scandals of November 2009 which, no doubt, helped make skeptics of all of those Republican Senate candidates.

Of course, there is the problem that temperatures have ceased rising and no animal extinctions have been blamed recently on climate change.

“The UN’s problem is that we aren’t currently losing species,” writes Avery. “The current wildlife extinction rate is the lowest in 500 years – according to the UN Environmental Program’s own *World Atlas of Biodiversity*.”

Avery is a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., and an environmental economist. He was formerly a senior analyst for the U.S. Department of State. He is co-author, with S. Fred Singer, of *Unstoppable Global Warming Every 1,500 Years*.

“The old wooden-ship explorers have already spread Norway rats, cats, and weed seeds all over the world,” writes Avery. “The extinctions on the little islands have mostly happened already.”

“The last flightless dodo bird was roasted in 1681. Ancient primitive hunters have already wiped out the woolly mammoths and the cave bears.”

It seems that global warming’s predicted “million lost species” haven’t been lost, or even endangered.

Numerous studies have shown that, far from the birds and butterflies going extinct, they are expanding their ranges and adopting new food habits during the modest warming of the past century.

“We’ve lost the golden toad of Costa Rica, which is sad,” notes Avery. “But the peer-reviewed studies don’t blame global warming. R.O. Lawton of the University of Alabama-Huntsville found that the clearing of the forests below the golden toad’s cloud-forest home had changed the hydrology of the cloud forest.”

Worried about the polar bears?

Recent studies show that the polar bear population has increased from around 5,000 to 25,000 since 1970.

“Basically, it’s the result of more responsible hunting,” notes Avery. “A new paper modeled the Arctic’s ice history over the past 10,000 years.”

The authors conclude that during the much-warmer centuries of the early Holocene Period (6,000-8,000 years ago) the Arctic probably was completely ice-free in some periods.

Somehow the polar bears survived the Holocene Period’s warming – without any help from the UN.

“What about the cute little pika, the smallest member of the rabbit family, which likes high-altitude rock-piles and harvests grass for winter fodder?” asks Avery. “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently told us – to howls of rage from environmental activists – that “the best available scientific information indicates that pikas will be able to survive despite higher temperatures. Pikas will have enough suitable high-elevation habitat to prevent them from becoming threatened or endangered.”

One of the pikas’ favorite territories is the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. Naturalist John Christy recently found “there has been no change in summer nighttime temperatures in the adjacent Sierra Nevada Mountains.

“Summer daytime temperatures in the six-county area have actually cooled slightly since 1910.”

But such facts did not bother the *Times* editorial board.

“The *New York Times*’ editorial writers have apparently spent the last 11 months in a Rip Van Winkle-like state of unconsciousness when it comes to climate change,” writes Steve Milloy in *Human Events* magazine.

Planned Parenthood sells abortion gift cards

compiled by the *Christian Crusade Newspaper* staff

Abortion gift certificates are being sold by Alaska’s Planned Parenthood – in an apparent mockery of Christmas.

“The certificates are being sold in Anchorage as part of Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest’s effort to raise funds for their organization,” reports Stephanie Samuel of the *Christian Post* newspaper.

Alaska Family Council President Jim Minnery said Planned Parenthood’s efforts are meant to mock those whose faith dictates that abortion is morally wrong.

“They have a true disrespect and disdain for those who have a true faith,” he told the *Press*. Minnery said he believes their holiday efforts are a not-so subtle “poke in the eye” of pro-life advocates.

The Alaskan fundraiser is the latest effort in Planned Parenthood Federation of America’s Christmas fundraising endeavors.

In the past, PPFA sold “Choice on Earth” Christmas cards.

The cards featured a variety of designs, including two doves (one white, one gold) holding olive branches.

Other cards stated “Seasons Greetings” and “Happy

Planning for the New Year” while featuring white silhouettes of a parent and child on a pink background.

“Planned Parenthood has enjoyed poking Christians with sticks at Christmas, mocking the birth of Jesus with their unique holiday greeting cards,” said Jill Sedlak, executive director of America’s Life League.

Planned Parenthood President Gloria Feldt had dismissed such criticisms in the past, saying their greeting cards were popular among America’s pro-choice majority for almost a decade and that they send “an inclusive seasonal message for people of all faiths.”

However, the controversy lies in the origin of the phrase “Choice on Earth.”

It is a spinoff of the biblical proclamation of “Peace on Earth” when angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

Pro-life groups are outraged over the use of the word “choice” to link abortion to a day which celebrates the birth of Jesus.

In 2007, PPFA seemed to have dropped the promotion of its holiday cards.

PPFA President Cecile Richards sent a 2007 holi-

day e-mail stating, “As I reflect upon the past year and consider the next, I can’t help but feel a sense of good will. Good will towards the women, men and families that we serve. Good will toward you, my Planned Parenthood family.”

There was no mention of the card.

However, the certificates have continued with other holiday gifts, including summer releases of “I Had an Abortion” t-shirts and holiday PPFA-themed gift certificates. An advertisement for a vasectomy certificate states, “Give the gift that stops giving... a gift certificate for a holiday vasectomy at Planned Parenthood.”

Minnery said it is offensive that Planned Parenthood would use the Christmas season to propagate the message of abortion and says it is misguided if it believes that the right to choose an abortion is as sacred as the Christmas story.

PPGNW operates five clinics in Alaska as well as clinics in Idaho and Washington. It is currently challenging a new Alaskan state law mandating parent notification and approval of abortions for youths 17 and younger.



Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad



Sgt. Bradley Manning



WikiLeaks' Julian Assange



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

What's the media hiding about WikiLeaks?

by Keith Wilkerson, managing editor

There's a lot that the mainstream media hasn't bothered to mention about WikiLeaks' embarrassing release of hundreds of thousands of secret U.S. documents.

One detail is that U.S. Private First Class Bradley Manning is an activist homosexual who wrote emails declaring that he wanted to hurt America because President Obama has not abolished the U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Disclosing that fact wouldn't be politically correct, particularly with Congress debating that allowing homosexuals to serve in the military doesn't pose serious security risks.

But there are a number of other questions. One is why the U.S. hasn't knocked out any computer system being used by WikiLeaks — we have the capability. Another is why WikiLeaks hasn't been declared a terrorist organization. A third would be why its bank accounts and those of anyone working with WikiLeaks haven't been seized or frozen.

And then there's the question of why WikiLeaks chief Julian Assange is still alive.

But there are other puzzles

"If electing a black president with the middle name Hussein was supposed to assuage anti-Americanism around the world, Julian Assange didn't get the message," writes columnist Rich Lowry.

"The first batch of WikiLeaks documents undermined the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, violent conflicts started by the Bush administration."

But the latest batch undermines international diplomacy, the soft art of bargaining and persuasion as practiced by the highly anticipated, engagement-loving Obama administration.

So, Assange seems to want to attack our ability to make war ... as well as our ability to end or prevent wars.

"Assange is an equal-opportunity America hater," explains Lowry. "It doesn't matter if our president is black or white, left or right, with the middle name Hussein or Walker, so long as he's leader of the country Assange perversely calls a threat to democracy, even as he provides aid and comfort to our violent, undemocratic enemies overseas."

But that's far from the only puzzle

"Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has positioned himself as a left-wing whistleblower," notes columnist Lee Smith, "whose life mission is to call the United States to task for the evil it has wreaked throughout the world. But after poring through the diplomatic cables revealed via the site, one might easily wonder if Assange isn't instead a clandestine agent of Dick Cheney and Bibi Netanyahu — and whether his muckraking website isn't part of a plot to provoke an attack on Iran."

Furthermore, there's the puzzling realization that America hasn't been damaged by the release of the secret diplomatic cables.

"Part way through our afternoon's reading in the latest document dump from WikiLeaks," mused a *New York Sun* editorial page writer, "the thought occurred to us that maybe Julian Assange is an American agent."

"We don't have anything to suggest such a thing, other than the thought that when one digs through all the chaff here there's not much that makes America look bad."

"There are, however, number of things that seem destined, when they start percolating into the diplomatic dialogue, to work to our advantage."

"The classic justification for a leak is to expose malfeasance," notes Lowry. "In all his tens of thousands of released documents, Assange has exposed none, despite his typically delusional boast that the first dump revealed 'thousands' of possible war crimes."

"Assange's goal is wanton destruction, pure and

simple. He wants to expose to retribution those who cooperate with us on the ground in war zones. He wants to undercut domestic support for our wars.

"He wants to embarrass our foreign allies and exact a price for their trust in us. He wants to complicate sensitive operations like securing nuclear material in Pakistan and attacking terrorists with missiles in Yemen."

"In his left-wing nihil-

ism, though, Assange shares something of the spirit of the Red Brigades or the Baader-Meinhof Gang, the leftist European terrorist organizations of the 1970s."

His propaganda is exposure

"Assange is too blinded by zeal to realize that the content of his documents runs counter to his twisted worldview."

Tom Joscelyn of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies notes that Assange's leaked Afghan war materials referred to numerous instances of decapitations perpetrated by the Taliban. The documents told the story of a civilized army struggling to prevail against barbarism while honoring its own norms.

"Our leaked diplomatic cables again do more to vindicate a hawk's view of the world than Assange's juvenile leftism," notes Lowry. "The Gulf Arab states are as eager as Israel, perhaps more so, for the United States to strike Iran's nuclear program. North Korea is transferring missile technology to Iran, in a concrete expression of the Axis of Evil. Syria is arming Hezbollah. And on it goes."

"What the Wikileaks documents reveal is not a conspiracy of any kind," agrees Smith, "but a scary and growing gap between the private assessments of American diplomats and allies in the Middle East and public statements made by U.S. government officials."

"The publication of these leaked cables is eerily reminiscent of the Pentagon Papers, which exposed a decade-long attempt by U.S. officials to distort and conceal unpalatable truths about the Vietnam War, and manipulate public opinion."

"The difference is that while the Pentagon Papers substantially vindicated the American left, the Wikileaks cable dump vindicates the right."

"Here," writes Smith, "are eight of the most obvious examples from the initial trove of documents that has appeared online:

"1. While the Israelis are deeply concerned about Iran's march toward a nuclear program, it is in fact the Arabs who are begging the United States to 'take out' Iranian installations through military force, with one United Arab Emirates official even proposing a ground invasion. Calling Iran 'evil,' King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia repeatedly urged the United States to 'cut off the head of the snake' by attacking Iranian nuclear installations.

"2. It is not just Israeli leaders who believe Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is reminiscent of Hitler; U.S. officials think so too, as do Arab leaders, who use the Hitler analogy to warn against the dangers of appeasing Iran.

"3. North Korea, an isolated country that enjoys substantial diplomatic and economic backing from China, is supplying Iran with advanced ballistic missile

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Billy James Hargis II, publisher

Betty Jane Hargis, associate publisher **Keith Wilkerson, managing editor**
Billy James Hargis III, contributing editor **Betty Miles, editorial assistant**
David Cavaness, corresponding editor

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EMAIL: Editorial Department — ChristCrew@aol.com



UAE's Bin Zayed



Turkey's Erdogan



Italy's Berlusconi



Egypt's Mubarak

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systems that would allow an Iranian nuclear warhead to hit Tel Aviv – or Moscow – with a substantial degree of accuracy. Taken in concert with the North Korean-built nuclear reactor in Syria, it would appear that North Korea – acting with the knowledge and perhaps direct encouragement of China – is playing a significant and deliberate role in the proliferation of nuclear equipment and ballistic delivery systems in the Middle East.

“4. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is not a model Middle Eastern leader who has found the right mixture of religious enthusiasm and democracy, as U.S. government officials often like to suggest in public, but ‘an exceptionally dangerous’ Islamist. U.S. diplomats have concluded that Erdogan’s anti-Israel rhetoric is not premised on domestic Turkish electioneering or larger geo-strategic concerns but rather on a personal, visceral hatred of Israel.

“5. Tehran has used the cover of the ostensibly independent Iranian Red Crescent – a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, whose pledge of neutrality allows it access to war zones – to smuggle weapons and members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards’ Qods Force into Lebanon during the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war, and into Iraq, to fight against U.S. soldiers.

“6. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and his intelligence chief Omar Suleiman are more worried about Hamas than about Israel and are staunchly opposed to the expansion of Iranian influence in the region.

“7. The Amir of Qatar is a dubious ally, who plays Washington and Tehran off each other. ‘The Amir closed the meeting by offering that based on 30 years of experience with the Iranians, they will give you 100 words. Trust only one of the 100.’

“8. America’s Arab allies do not believe that the Barack Obama Administration can separate Syria from Iran through any foreseeable combination of carrots and sticks. According to one cable, the United Arab Emirate’s Sheik Mohamed Bin Zayed ‘showed no confidence that Syria could be separated from the Iranian camp’ and quoted him directly as saying ‘If you want my opinion . . . I think not.’ He advised that Syria would continue hedging on key regional issues for the foreseeable future.

“If these cables make many on the right look in touch with reality,” writes Smith, “it is hardly a surprise that their domestic U.S. rivals are trying to spin the Wikileaks cables to their own advantage.

“For instance, leftwing academic specialists on the Middle East who have argued that the peace process is the key issue in the region and that the Gulf Arab states do not want the United States or Israel to bomb Iran are nonetheless celebrating the Wikileaks documents, even as their argument is now disproved.

“The *New York Times* is trying to make the case that in the wake of George W. Bush’s mismanagement the

Obama Administration has managed to build a strong sanctions regime against Iran that includes Russia and China.

“Unfortunately, the cables prove only that Russian envoys are working to frustrate the U.S. effort by selling the Iranian position to the Arabs.

“What comes through most strongly from the Wikileaks documents, however,” writes Smith, “is that U.S. Middle East policy is premised on a web of self-justifying fictions that are flatly contradicted by the assessments of American diplomats and allies in the region.

“Starting with Bush’s second term and continuing through the Obama Administration, Washington has ignored the strong and repeated pleas of its regional allies – from Jerusalem to Riyadh – to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

“Perhaps the most disturbing revelation in the documents is the extent to which both the Bush and Obama Administrations have concealed Iran’s war against the United States and its allies in Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, and the Arab Gulf states, even as those same allies have been candid in their diplomatic exchanges with us.

“U.S. servicemen and – women,” writes Smith, “are being dispatched to combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan where they are fighting Iranian soldiers and assets in a regional war with the Islamic Republic that our officials dare not discuss, lest they have to do something about it.”

Will Hillary have to resign?

“The leaked cables make it impossible for Hillary Clinton to continue as secretary of state,” writes Jack Shafer in *Slate* magazine. “A U.S. diplomat must possess patience, poise, and tact. He or she must also be attentive to cultural differences, a good observer, and proficient in several languages.”

Indeed, when called upon, a diplomat must use skills as a negotiator in their country’s national interest.

“No matter what sort of noises Clinton makes about how the disclosures are ‘an attack on America’ and ‘the international community,’” writes Shafer, “she’s become the issue. She’ll never be an effective negotiator with diplomats who refuse to forgive her exuberances, and even foreign diplomats who do forgive her will still regard her as the symbol of an overreaching United States.

“Diplomacy is about face, and the only way for other nations to save face will be to give them Clinton’s scalp.

“There is no way that the new Wikileaks leaks don’t leave Hillary Clinton holding the smoking gun. The weakened and humiliated Secretary of State will have to pay.”

The *New York Sun*’s editors are puzzled by a number of the disclosures.

“For starters, feature the disclosure that the Arabs want an attack on Iran’s nuclear program. Heretofore this point has been getting only vague focus. Via Wikileaks, however, this is put into sharp relief.”

Due to the incredible number of documents released by Wikileaks, the journalistic community is having trouble reading all of them, much less reporting the details.

The *Jerusalem Post* focused on a secret diplomatic cable from the American embassy at Riyadh which described a meeting in 2008 between the Saudi king, Abdullah, and the American ambassador, Ryan Crocker, and General Petraeus.

According to the *Post*, the cable quotes a former Saudi envoy in the U.S., Abdel al-Jubeir, as recalling “the King’s frequent exhortations to the US to attack Iran and so put an end to its nuclear weapons program.”

Cut off the head of the snake

The king, according to Wikileaks, pleaded with America to “Cut off the head of the snake.”

“Ordinarily it would be awkward for America to get this kind of diplomatic cable traffic out in public,” observed the *New York Sun*. “Now we have Assange to the rescue.

“Or take the disclosures about the United Nations. The UN, after all, is a body that has taken American money for years – and in incredible abundance – but has become a runaway institution.”

So, how could the U.S. communicate to the UN just how low they are regarded by even the leftist Obama administration?

“Why not have old Julian Assange leak a trove of documents?” asked the *Sun*.

The *New York Times* focused its attention on a cable signed by Secretary Clinton listing ‘information-gathering priorities to American staff members at the United Nations headquarters in New York, including ‘biographic and biometric information on ranking North Korean diplomats.’

The *Times* noted that international treaties prohibit spying at the United Nations.

“So how could the United Nations be put on notice save for Assange?” asked the *Sun*.

“Then there is the matter of Italy under Prime Minister Berlusconi,” observed the *Sun*. “How could the Americans get a message through to billionaire premier in respect to just how inappropriate his behavior has been?

“How about having someone like Julian Assange leak a lot of cable traffic about the prime minister’s penchant for such sex parties as would make a President Clinton or a JFK blush? Or sending, via such cables, a message that we are onto his questionable deals with the Russians?”



Barack Obama speaks to a joint session of Congress

What will it take to turn America around?

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“The greatest danger to our wealth, our liberties, our values, and our safety today come from the deconstruction of truth,” writes columnist Bruce Walker. In other words, too many conflicting views are demanding to be recognized as “truth” and the American people are baffled as to which course to take.

And at the root of that problem is America’s denial that God is this nation’s only hope.

“I just watched an important video,” writes political strategist Frank Salvato. “It was a United News newsreel from December 2, 1945, and captured the official Japanese surrender proceedings aboard the *USS Missouri*.”

Those were the ceremonies in Tokyo harbor that brought World War II to an end. As Japan’s unconditional surrender was accepted, General Douglas MacArthur proclaimed:

“Let us pray that peace be now restored to the world and that God will preserve it, always.”

No American leader dares to invoke the name of the Almighty these days. President Obama enjoys announcing that America is no longer a Christian nation.

“The nation’s founders would be horrified by today’s congressional spending that consumes 25 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. Contrast that to the years 1787 to the 1920s when federal government spending never exceeded 4 percent of our GDP except in wartime.

“Today, the federal, state and local government consumes 43 percent of what Americans produce each year. The Washington, D.C.-based Tax Foundation computes that the average taxpayer is forced to work from Jan. 1 to mid-April to pay federal, state and local taxes.”

But tax revenue is not the problem, writes Williams

“The federal government has collected just about 20 percent of the nation’s GDP almost every year since 1960. Federal spending has exceeded revenue for most of that period and has taken an unprecedented leap since 2008 to produce today’s massive deficit. Since federal spending is the problem, that’s where our focus should be. Cutting spending is politically challenging. Every spending constituency sees its handout as vital, whether it’s Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid recipients or farmers, poor people, educators or the military. It’s easy for congressmen to say yes to these spending constituencies because whether it’s Democrats or Republicans in control, they face no hard and fast bottom line.”

It’s as if there is an endless supply of money and Congress generously just keeps giving it away. However, the funds are not limitless.

“In these dark days for our country,” writes Salvato, “days in which politicians continue expanding the debt on the backs of our children, in which the strength of America overseas has been diminished through the appearance of weakness, and in

which Progressives try to fundamentally transform the United States of America, there is hope, real hope, not the fake, manufactured, media-hyped hope that the American voter was sold in 2008.”

The hope is that Americans are waking up, he writes.

“The re-awakening has allowed the American people to reestablish their connection to the fact and the importance of the fact that our government was created by the people, for the people and subject to the consent of the governed.

“This, in turn has allowed us to clearly see that most multi-term politicians in Washington and in the many state houses have elevated themselves into a class of elected elitists, in their eyes, much more qualified to decide what will and will not be good for the people.

“The American people have re-awakened from a 50-year slumber of apathy and ignorance to find that most multi-term politicians are actually political opportunists more concerned with the politics of getting re-elected than in performing good government for their constituents.

“In an honest quest to get back to good, our country is going to have to take some tough medicine and endure some cultural clashes,” says Salvato. “Think of it as political chemotherapy. As part of this political chemotherapy a few things, among many others, must be accomplished.”

He says the road back will be difficult. He says that we must take back our schools, limit the influence of labor unions, re-examine the federal government’s use of the commerce clause, limit the government’s spending and proclaim a moratorium on entitlements,

“Our schools have turned from places where children are taught critical thinking skills—skills that allow them to intelligently engage in life, into ideological indoctrination mills, churning out political operatives who can better put a condom on a cucumber or spew false information about non-existent man-made global warming than solve complex mathematical equations or write an

accurately structured sentence. The attention span of the average child pales in comparison to a child of just fifty years ago. And while the technical knowledge of our children today may be far more advanced than that of their parents, they have no meaningful education in US History or the philosophies that moved our Founders and Framers to risk life and limb to create our great nation.”

The blame is two-fold, says Salvato

“First, we, the citizens, have to take a great share of the responsibility for this predicament.

We have become far too busy with our own individual lives to be engaged in our children’s education. It’s more important to get to that coffee shop, to watch that television show, to engage in that sporting activity than it is to attend a school board meeting or be active in the PTA.

“Fortunately, this can be rectified and it must be rectified. We must run for local school boards and get on the curriculum committees so that we can have a definitive say in what our children learn in the classroom. By taking back the curriculums in schools we can at least give our children a fighting chance.

“Second, we must apply pressure to elected officials to enact legislation that would limit the influence of teachers unions where curriculum is concerned. Teachers unions have morphed from organizations meant to negotiate contracts for its membership to organizations shopping an ideology for the classroom.

“Decisions on curriculum must be held at the local levels, if just as a safety precaution against ideological indoctrination.

We must limit the influence of labor unions

“There was a legitimate need for labor unions after the turn of the 20th Century,” writes Salvato. “Some unscrupulous employers took great advantage of the work force providing less than safe working conditions, demanding long hours and issuing degrading compensation. But that was then ... this is now.

“Over the years, laws have been instituted that address each and every issue that labor unions were created to champion, thus removing any real reason for labor unions to exist at all. In fact, it can be successfully argued that in the last 50 years labor unions have done more to hurt the worker and business in the United States than they have helped.

“Aggressive labor union demands have turned Detroit into a ghost town. They have forced many corporations to outsource manufacturing jobs, turning our country into a service oriented and consumer economy from a production-based economy.

“Alarming,” writes Salvato, “our country’s manufacturing base is an emaciated shadow of what it once was and because of that there are no jobs for the

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unemployed. Yet labor unions want more in wages for their members, more perks and more influence. Labor unions must be limited in mission to negotiating reasonable contracts for their members, if not completely abolished.

We must re-examine the Commerce Clause

“For years the federal government has abused the Commerce Clause in order to expand its reach of authority over the States,” The Commerce Clause, Article 1 Section 8, Clause 3 of the US Constitution, reads, ‘The Congress shall have Power to ... regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes...’”

However, that has been abused, says Salvato.

“Since the American industrial revolution,” writes Salvato, “Congress has pushed the limits of the Commerce Clause to the point of usurping the Tenth Amendment. It states, ‘The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.’”

“The stranglehold Congress has granted itself with the help of several Supreme Court decisions has served to create a master for the 50 States, which, in the original intent of the founders and framers, were all to be sovereign states.”

We must limit the government’s ability to spend

“Both the Legislative and the Executive Branches have proven they cannot be trusted with spending within their allotted means. Put succinctly, Congress is populated with spendthrifts; people who spend money recklessly, extravagantly and who use taxpayer monies to affect their re-election. Congress has learned to raid the treasury for their own purposes and they are spending us into insolvency.

“Congress as well as the Executive Branch must be forced to abide by a prioritized and limited budget, starting with the responsibilities actually outlined in the Constitution: funding the courts and providing for national security, to name but two.

“Only when there is money remaining in that limited budget, after the constitutionally mandated responsibilities have been fully funded, should they be allowed to spend and then only when absolutely needed.

“Further, congressional power to borrow should be directly linked to the exact amount it has accrued in reserve capital that has been established in a separate and exclusive holding account, never ever to be accessed but for time of war.”

And we must halt entitlements

“In a paper titled *The Challenge of Giant Entitlements*, written in April of 2008, Congressman Randy Forbes (R-Virginia) states, ‘Entitlement spending, or government spending that takes place automatically every year without any action from Congress, is currently 62 percent of our overall federal spending.’”

“The numbers speak for themselves. Our nation, with the debt that it has amassed, cannot afford even one more entitlement program— not healthcare or anything else.

“To continue to call for entitlement programs or to continue to work toward establishing entitlement programs is not only irresponsible, it is a direct threat to the continuation of our country.

Roger Pilon, director of Cato’s Center for Constitutional Studies, agrees. He aptly sums up the problem: “Over the 20th century, the federal government has assumed a vast and unprecedented set of powers. Most of what the federal government does today – to put the point as plainly and candidly as possible – is illegitimate because it is done without explicit constitutional authority.

We face an uphill battle, writes author Dr. Michael S. Coffman.

Conservatives will be blamed for everything

“Over the next two years the elite will use the progressive media to systematically blame the Republicans for the inevitable Congressional deadlock and increasing economic hardships that the American people will be facing.

“Most candidates in the midterm election won on an anti-Obamacare, anti-spending platform. Time will tell whether a growing number of conservative Democrats continue to side with constitutional principles,” writes Coffman.

“Repeal of Obamacare and cutting spending are good starts, but they are far from the solution. The reelection of radical progressives like Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid and Barney Frank clearly show the American people still don’t understand we are literally at war with an ideology that will lead us into socialism at best or communism/fascism at worst.

“Nor do they realize that the progressives are mere tools of the global elite who are attempting to create a world government with them in control. The agenda must be exposed. As long as the cancer of progressivism still permeates local, state and federal governments, the threat to America remains very high.”

Is the ultimate goal to bankrupt America? To bring the world’s sole superpower to its knees? Perhaps, worries author and columnist Alan Caruba.

“Nothing coming out of the leadership in the White House or Congress makes a grain of sense. It is calculated to making the public so hopeless.”

Caruba finds himself reviewing *Rules for Radicals*, a book by Communist leader Saul Alinsky

and worrying that Obama’s “entire approach to politics is based on his book.”

After all Obama once said of the book, “It was that education that was seared into my brain. It was the best education I ever had, better than anything I got at Harvard.”

“Alinsky taught that Americans must be overwhelmed with a never-ending barrage of crisis, emergencies, and unworkable ‘solutions’ that exacerbate problems,” writes Caruba. “This is why Rahm Emanuel, the President’s Chief of Staff, famously said that a crisis should never be wasted.”

“Alinsky also preached the importance of intimidation and of ridicule to achieve one’s goals. The public,” writes Caruba, “can be forgiven for not knowing that Alinsky’s book is dedicated to ‘the very first radical,’ none other than ‘Lucifer.’ Now perhaps you can understand.

The hopelessness many Americans feel has been created intentionally, says Caruba. Indeed, a quick reading of some of Obama’s heroes is cause for concern:

“By a continuous process of inflation, governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens,” wrote John Maynard Keynes in his 1920 classic *Economic Consequences of the Peace*. “While the process impoverishes many, it actually enriches some. The process engages all of the hidden forces of economic law on the side of destruction, and does it in a manner that not one man in a million can diagnose.”

“I have always harbored an exaggerated view of my self-importance. To put it bluntly, I fancied myself as some kind of god or an economic reformer like Keynes,” wrote Obama backer George Soros in his 1987 book *The Alchemy of Finance*.

So, what is going to save America?

Turning back to the God of our fathers, writes author and New York City preacher David Wilkerson.

“I believe God’s merciful love is revealed in response to a cry from the heart – not just any cry, but a humble cry for deliverance. The Bible has much to say about this cry from the heart. ‘In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears’ (Psalm 18:6).

“Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry’ (Psalm 106:43-44).

“You can be sure that a cry to God will always be answered by a healing word from heaven!” writes Wilkerson. “No one is too wicked or too hopeless if he reaches out to God in humility.

“The story of the wicked King Manasseh proves it!

“The Bible says he was one of the most wicked kings of Israel. ‘And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. . . For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he raised up altars for Baal. . . and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards; he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord’ (2 Kings 21:2-6).

“So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen. . . And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they would not hearken’ (2 Chronicles 33:9-10).”

So, is there hope for America?

Of course, writes Wilkerson.

“Is there hope for someone who gets so far from God, so possessed by evil and darkness? Yes, if he will humble himself, and confess and believe Christ’s victory at the cross. Manasseh ended up a prisoner in a foreign nation, bound with chains. What a vivid picture of the wages of sin. But in his affliction, he cried out and God heard him, forgave him, and restored him.

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God’ (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).

“And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars. . . and cast them out of the city’ (v. 15).”

The hope for America is for this land to return to the God of our fathers. And that can come only on an individual basis, notes Wilkerson.

“The word of hope, forgiveness, mercy, love and restoration is for you! Heed his Word, repent, and then be made whole and walk with the Lord!

“There is no sin that can’t be forgiven – no one is too far down to be healed and restored.”

Nor is any nation.



"Gabriel and Zechariah" by unknown medieval woodcut artist

Was Jesus really born in a stable?

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Then the angel told Zechariah: "He is never to take wine or other fermented drink. From birth, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will bring many people to the Lord and turn the hearts of the fathers to their children."

Furthermore, Zechariah was told, he would preach repentance, which would result in a return of "the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous and make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Can you imagine being the father of John the Baptist – and being given such an incredible prophecy by a heavenly angel before your son is even born?

However, the elderly Zechariah was not convinced.

"How can this be?" he scoffed. "I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

His unbelief would cost him.

"I am Gabriel," responded the angel. "I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. But, since you doubt me, here is a sign that may help you to believe.

"From this moment on, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day your son is born."

Indeed, when the stunned Zechariah walked out of the temple, he had been struck dumb – he could not speak. People in the temple realized he had seen a vision, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

And sure enough, his wife became pregnant.

"The Lord has done this for me," Elizabeth declared joyfully.

A few days later, Gabriel visited Elizabeth's cousin Mary, a chaste, godly girl engaged to a carpenter named Joseph.

"Hail, Mary!" announced Gabriel. "You are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

She jumped with fright, but the angel assured her, "Don't be afraid, you have found favor with God. You will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus."

But that wasn't all:

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High," continued Gabriel. "The Lord will give Him the throne of David, and His kingdom will never end."

"How can this be?" Mary asked, "I am a virgin!"

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," answered Gabriel, "and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. The one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Then, Gabriel added: "Your cousin Elizabeth is going to have a child in her old age, for nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said."

Her faith is amazing. Surely she knew the ridicule she would receive.

She must have feared that Joseph would dump her. But there was no hesitation, no fear, no doubt.

She went to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

"Mary!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "When I heard

your voice, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."

About that same time, Joseph learned Mary was pregnant. As you can imagine, he was upset. A righteous man, he loved her and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, but obviously she had been unfaithful, so he decided to end their engagement.

But an angel of the Lord appeared to him

"Joseph," it said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

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"Gabriel and Mary" by unknown medieval woodcut artist



"Mary and Elizabeth" by unknown medieval woodcut artist



"The Adoration of the Shepherds" by unknown medieval woodcut artist

Was Jesus really born in a stable?

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And the angel pointed out that all of this was taking place in fulfillment of what the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, God with us."

So Joseph took Mary as his wife. What an exemplary man! Someone else might have just walked away, but Joseph made up his mind to do everything he could to protect her from disgrace.

Then word arrived that Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus had issued a decree that a census should be taken of all the nations under Roman control. Everyone was ordered to return to their birthplace to register.

So Joseph and Mary left Nazareth in northern Israel near the Sea of Galilee and traveled to tiny little Bethlehem.

Did they walk?

There was no public transportation – no stage coaches. Did Mary ride a donkey as we've seen on so many Christmas cards?

No donkey is mentioned. Considering that she was nine months pregnant, it's certainly possible – but the Bible is completely silent. She could have ridden in a wagon. Joseph could have pushed her in a handcart. The Bible simply does not say.

In Bethlehem, the Savior of the world was born.

Let's look at Luke 2:6-16. As you read it, see if you can find the scripture that says that the innkeeper let them stay in the stable.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,

which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."

Did you notice there's not a single word about Jesus being born in a stable? However, the text does say three different times that He was laid in a manger.

Verse 7: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

Verse 12: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And verse 16: "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."

Did they really get turned away from the inn?

No innkeeper is mentioned

There is nothing about him feeling bad and showing them the barn – suggesting they camp out there.

In fact, there's considerable doubt as to whether they really went to an inn. The Greek word *kataluma* is translated in this passage as "inn," but the only other time *kataluma* appears in the Bible, it is translated as "upper room," the place where the Last Supper took place.

So it is entirely possible that all of the Christmas plays with apologetic innkeepers saying "No room" may have been pure fantasy. There is no mention of any hotel clerk in the Bible.

We do know for certain that Joseph came from Bethlehem. So, members of his extended family may have still lived there. Family bonds were very important in that society, so it is entirely possible that Joseph and Mary planned to stay in the *kataluma* or "guest room" of a relative.

But there's no good English translation for the word *kataluma*. Literally it means "to loosen down." In slang, you might say it was a place for visitors to "hang loose." The translators of the King James Version of the Bible debated what the term meant and decided on "inn."

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"The Angel Proclaims His Birth" by unknown medieval

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However, the scholars putting together the International Standard Version said she “laid him in a feeding trough, because there was no place for them in the guest quarters.”

In fact, the meaning of *kataluma* depends entirely upon the context in which the word is used, according to experts in ancient Greek.

Thus, there are many possibilities

Jewish culture demanded that each household should keep an area or room in the house for visitors. In a smaller house, such a *kataluma* might simply be a space in the corner for a traveler to lie down. In a larger house it might be several rooms.

But a *kataluma* could also be a public campgrounds, such as near an oasis or watering place. Such a permanent campsite would likely have had a manger for feeding the travelers’ animals, whereas a guestroom wouldn’t.

Another possibility is that when Mary and Joseph arrived, the family guest rooms of his various relatives were already packed with cousins, aunts and uncles who also had traveled to Bethlehem because of the census.

So, is it possible that Mary and Joseph decided it would be better for everyone if they moved to a more private area for the arrival of their child? Maybe they chose an area adjacent to the house usually used by travelers animals? There they would have found a manger.

One problem with this is that Joseph’s relatives surely would not have been so inconsiderate to an expectant mother on the verge of giving birth. It is also difficult to imagine that in the middle of her labor pains, Joseph’s relatives would have packed her off to the stables so they could party in the guest room.

Imagine your own family reunions

If the new bride of one of your younger, distant cousins showed up in labor, she would be the center of attention! What group of women would not have kicked the men out – and gathered around to help the poor little thing have her baby?

So, could it be that Mary and Joseph did not want to cause a fuss? Realizing that there was no place for them in the guest rooms, they quietly went to the stables on their own? Maybe they were uncomfortable in the large room or rooms where all their relatives had spread out for the night.

So, when her water broke and contractions began, Mary and Joseph slipped off to a quieter, more private place – without telling anybody?

Or here’s a thought: is it possible that the relatives weren’t all that friendly since it was well known the baby had been conceived before Mary and Joseph were married? The Bible says nothing about her being shunned although that idea has surfaced in books and films about the Nativity.

In the earliest icons of Christ’s birth, the painters show the holy family surrounded by cattle, sheep and donkeys. But the Bible is silent there as well. “The cattle were lowing” and “the little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay” are poetic thoughts from a lovely Christmas carol, not the Gospels.

Around the second century, the notion was popular that the birth had taken place in a cave. An apocryphal gospel never included in the New Testament, the *Protevangelium of James*, states that Christ’s birthplace was a cave just outside Bethlehem.

That highly dubious account says the birth took place so suddenly that Mary and Joseph did not have time to get to a waiting relative’s house. Unable to travel the last few hundred yards, Mary was taken to a cave, which was the nearest shelter Joseph could find.

One enormous problem is that the *Protevangelium of James* is a low-regarded counterfeit account of the early years of our Lord. The writer pretended to be the Apostle James and showed significant ignorance of history, tradition and theology in virtually every sentence he wrote. So, this non-biblical account can’t be used to prove anything.

However, Bible’s account of the shepherds does offer a clue.

We do know that there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them

The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with



“The Visit of the Magi” by unknown medieval woodcut artist



“The Angel Warns St. Joseph in a Dream” by unknown medieval woodcut artist



Zechariah Names John” by unknown medieval woodcut artist

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A 1890s-era Christmas card

Was Jesus really born in a stable?

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the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

The shepherds rushed off to see this for themselves.

But how did they know exactly where to go?

As far as we know, the angel did not provide them with an address! The only description they were given was that they would find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

It seems unlikely that the shepherds worked their way through the streets of Bethlehem, knocking on each door in the middle of the night, asking to see the owner’s mangers! Neither is it likely that the shepherds systematically went rummaging through people’s barns looking for newborns.

But is it possible the reference to a manger implied something more to them than “any old manger.” Perhaps they took it to mean one of their own public mangers? The caves around Bethlehem were used by the locals as winter shelters for their animals. So, when the shepherds found one of the caves lit by a lamp, did they find a mother, father with a newborn child lying in a manger? The Bible does not go into detail.

Was it a wooden manger? Did the great Renaissance artists and the icon-makers of the Middle Ages get that wrong, too?

Archeologists have found in the Bethlehem area several stone mangers in the lower floors of homes. It was the practice of the time to house the family’s animals underneath the house in the unfinished first floor. Today, many farmers throughout Europe still do the same thing. The practice was quite common in Poland and France. There, today, an older house may have a first story that was once used to house

animals, but which has been converted for human use. Could Mary and Joseph have stayed in some great-uncle’s guest room – where there was no baby bed, but a very convenient stone manger left over from before the house was remodeled?

Another tradition is that the Shepherds would have looked for the manger in Bethlehem’s Migdal Eder or “watchtower of the flock.” Such towers existed around Bethlehem and were used by the shepherds as a lookout and a place of refuge for their flocks in case of attack.

Indeed, the prophecy of Micah 4:8 says: “As for you, O watchtower of the flock, O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem.”

Bethlehem’s Migdal Eder was actually the watchtower used to guard the temple flocks – sheep raised for ceremonial sacrifice in Jerusalem’s Temple. Such flocks were kept on the hills around Bethlehem.

How appropriate that the sacrificial Lamb who took away the sins of the world would be born where sacrificial sheep were born and raised!

However, the Bible does not say

For 2,000 years, mankind has just assumed His birthplace was a stable and that the cattle were mooing, the sheep were bleating and the donkeys were braying. The Bible is silent on the subject.

We do know that when the shepherds had seen the baby, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child – that this was the long-awaited Messiah. All who heard it were amazed. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Luke writes that the shepherds returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen.

Eight days later, Jewish law required that the newborn boy be circumcised just as had every Israelite male since the time of Abraham. The Bible indicates that during

this ceremony, He was formally named Jesus, the name the angel had given.

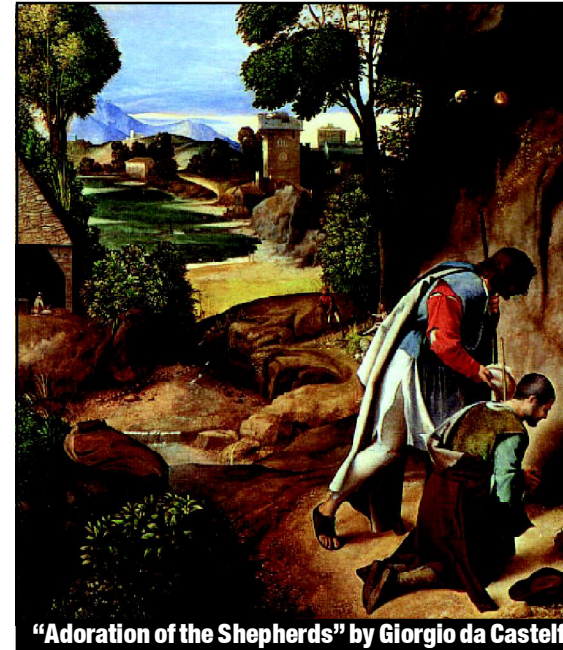
Some time later, again following Jewish traditions, Joseph and Mary took their newborn to Jerusalem to present him at the Temple.

They offered a pair of doves. As this was going on, an elderly man named Simeon, who was righteous and devout, received a word from the Lord.

The Bible says that he had been “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” and that it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Christ.

Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When Mary and Joseph brought in Jesus, Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying that now he could die in peace, “For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Among themselves, Mary and Joseph



“Adoration of the Shepherds” by Giorgio da Castelfranco



A page from a hand-c-

marveled at what the old man said about their baby. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul, too."

There was also an elderly prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of

the tribe of Asher who "never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying."

Coming up to Mary and Joseph, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Then they returned to Bethlehem.

Some time later—and we really don't know how much later—several scholars from the East arrived in Jerusalem and presented themselves to the Roman-appointed ruler of Judea, the corrupt King Herod.

The unexpected visitors asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When Herod heard this, he was disturbed. The news raced throughout Jerusalem. A new king had been born? The long-awaited Messiah? Herod did



franco Veneto (1478-1510)



"The Annunciation" by Orazio Gentileschi (1623)



copied medieval Bible

not like the idea of an usurper and called together the chiefpriests and teachers of the law and asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, quoting to him from Micah and Isaiah.

Then Herod summoned the visiting scholars and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I may go and worship him."

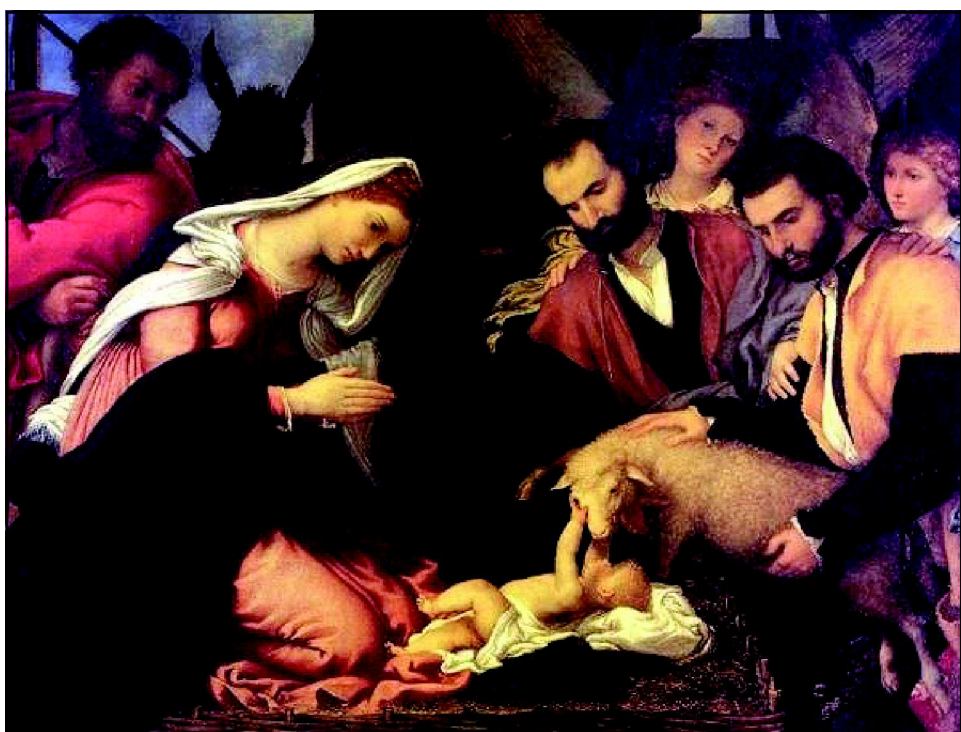
So, they left with the star leading them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed. Upon entering the house where the family was staying, they saw the child with Mary, and bowed down and worshiped Him.

Then they presented him with expensive gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Then God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned home by another route.

The text does not give the visitors' names—although tradition says they were Melchior, Baltazar and Gaspar. Nor does the Bible indicate they were kings. It doesn't say where they were from.

Why do we think



"La Nativita" by Lorenzo Lotto (1480-1556)

Was Jesus really born in a stable?

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there three scholars? That's based on the three gifts. However, there could have been two or ten or any other number. The Bible simply does not say

Also, it is assumed that they were not present the night of His birth since the Bible says they came to "the house" where He was staying – not a stable. So, time must have passed and Joseph must have found a house for his new family, right?

What if there never was any stable?

What if He was still in the guest room with its leftover stone manger that had been turned into a crib?

Tradition has it that the scholars did not arrive until six weeks after His birth – and some believe they may have arrived even a year and a half afterward. That's based on the terrible thing that happened next – when evil King Herod ordered every male child under the age of two in the Bethlehem area killed.

Something must have made Herod think the birth could have occurred as long as two years before. Was that based on what the scholars told him concerning the first appearance of the star?

We really don't know. We do know that when the visiting scholars had gone, an angel of the Lord warned Joseph to get up from his sleep and to take the child and His mother and escape to Egypt. "Stay there," the Lord told him, "until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

So Joseph got up from his bed, took the child and His mother during the night and left for Egypt, where they stayed. How did a poor carpenter afford such a trip? Did the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh underwrite the trip?



"The Flight to Egypt" by unknown medieval woodcut artist

When Herod realized the eastern scholars weren't coming back to report what they had found, he was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem and its vicinity.

That fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy hundreds of years earlier:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

More than a year may have passed, then this monster of a king died.

An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, telling him it was safe to return. But since Prince Archelaus now reigned in Judea on the throne of his father, Herod, Joseph took his family back to Nazareth.

Thus the prophecy was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene."

So, that's the Christmas story according to the Bible. Hopefully it was not disturbing to you that in the pages of the New Testament, we could find no donkey for Mary to ride, no inn, no innkeeper, no stable, no animals, no wooden manger, no three kings.

Here is a wonderful assurance: *nothing can thwart the plans of God*. Step by step Jesus moved closer and closer to the final destiny for which He was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a virgin – to die for the sins of all who believe in Him.

Why did God choose shepherds?

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sacrificed in a few months. Others have guessed that one of the reasons God chose the shepherds is because of their quiet lifestyle, which means receptive hearts were ready to receive the message.

Furthermore, the shepherds were excited to go and tell others about it!

Can you imagine if God had the angel make the announcement today? What if the angel had to bring his good news of great joy to one of us? Other than being freaked out by the scary angel, are we in a place where we would hear him? The chief priests helped the wise men find Jesus, yet felt no compulsion to go with them.

Regardless of whom we might have chosen, it was the shepherds who were the very first ones to hear the angelic announcement of Christ's birth.

Shepherds are not usually wealthy or well-educated. Many times they are hired help – the sheep aren't even their own. So, why would God purposely chose such common people, folks from a lower caste, uneducated farm workers who seem the least likely to have the means to spread the news far and wide?

We humans tend to think mass marketing. God thinks in terms of one-on-one word of mouth, friends sharing with friends.

Jesus Himself was a shepherd. In John 10:11, He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." In verse 14, He said, "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and My sheep know me."

Over and over the Bible tells Christian pastors to feed the sheep. Three times in John 21:15-17, Jesus instructs Simon Peter, "Feed My sheep, take care of My sheep, feed My Sheep."

But the bottom line is that the first news of the birth of Jesus Christ was not revealed to kings or rulers. It was not revealed to the religious elite. When God came to earth, He let the world know by announcing the birth of His Son to lowly shepherds.

Why? Perhaps He wanted the poor and outcast of society to know that they were important too. It may have been that God wanted the lowliest of humanity to realize that His love included them, especially in a world where they were normally excluded. Moreover, it seems He wanted all of us to understand the qualities of love, mercy, and compassion were to be extended to everyone regardless of their social standing.

Among Jews at the time of Christ's birth, shepherds were held in very low esteem. In Jewish lawbooks, the Talmud, it is written that shepherds were not allowed in the courts to be witnesses. In fact the Talmud instructs that no help be given to heathens or to shepherds. Shepherds were despised because they were unable to attend temple services and to keep the rituals and ceremonial laws as their flocks kept them from practicing their religion.

Dr. Marion Anderson relates this story: "I was riding in a tour bus from Jerusalem to Jericho, sitting in the

front seat, since I was leading a group, and about half asleep, having made the same trip many, many times. Suddenly, the bus lurched to a stop, waking me up. There in the middle of the street was a shepherd. Now, with a 48-passenger bus running straight at me, I wouldn't be out there, but there he was. And the sheep started to cross the road. Not all at once, but in twos and threes and ones. But the shepherd never shooed them, or hurried them, he just stood his ground until the last sheep was safely off the road. Then he followed them, and threaded his way through the flock until he was back up front again, leading the way."

God had His reasons why He revealed Himself to shepherds.

It would seem that His primary purpose was to convey the message that the Gospel is open to anyone who is willing to believe. When Jesus commanded us to go into the entire world and preach the gospel, He never specified to whom we should go. In fact, when He told the Disciples to go to Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, He eliminated any possibility of discrimination on our part.

Practically speaking, however, we know that the poor are more easily satisfied with the simple message that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Unencumbered by wealth and overcome by poverty, the poor and needy seem to be more willing to look to Jesus Christ to supply all of their needs.



An Iraqi market vendor displays Christmas trees

Christmas dangerous for faithful worldwide

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worldwide. Christmas is a time of turmoil and testing for Christians in countries where persecution is a daily reality.

Last year in Iraq, a deadly Christmas Eve ambush of a Christian bus driver and the bombing of a 1,200-year-old church drove Iraq's few remaining Christians quietly underground in their celebration of the birth of Christ.

Persecution in Iran has forced Christians there to shutter their homes and hide any signs of their celebration.

In India, Christians have taken their Christmas celebrations behind closed doors, particularly in the Hindu stronghold of Orissa.

"This violence against believers in Orissa breaks my heart," said K.P. Yohannan, founder and president of Gospel for Asia. "Believers know they will face opposition, but this outburst of persecution at Christmas time is especially disturbing."

This year, midnight Mass will be observed in daylight in Baghdad due to the threat of violence against Catholics. Security around all Christian churches is heavy.

Unidentified gunmen recently ambushed a Christian man in Mosul, shooting him after pulling him from the bus he was driving, police said. That shooting came on the heels of a deadlier attack, when a bomb hidden in sacks of flour exploded outside a historic church in Mosul, killing two people and wounding five.

"Instead of performing Christmas Mass in this church, we will be busy removing rubble and debris," said Hazim Ragheed, a priest at the Mar Toma Church.

"We used to put the Christmas tree with its bright lights close to the window in the entrance of our home," said Saad Matti, a 51-year-old surgeon and Basra city councilman. "But this year, we put it away from the window."

Iraqi exodus

Some 1.25 million Christians, 80 percent of them Catholic, used to live in Iraq. An exodus began after the 1991 Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein clamped down on non-Muslims. The violence and the exodus intensified after 2003, when Christians became targets of sectarian violence

Iraq's top Catholic prelate, Chaldean Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly, said he used to hold Mass at midnight on Christmas Eve but in have switched services to daylight hours, when the streets are safer.

"We will do our religious rituals as usual and on its dates, and our Muslim brothers will feel happy that each one has his own dear religion," Delly told the Associated Press.

Last year as Christmas approached, Hindu militants in India set fire to the Jesus Lights Manna Church in the village of Metpally, Andhra Pradesh. The building's main door, altar and window panels were destroyed and Bibles and other Christian literature were burned.

A day later, Pastor N. Moses and several other believers were attacked by Hindu militants while returning home from a prayer meeting in Kistapuram village, Andhra Pradesh. Pastor Moses suffered severe internal injuries and young Christian girls were also beaten. The militants also shouted slogans against Christianity and accused the believers of forcibly converting people, according to the All India Christian Council.

Accused of evangelism

A week later 26-year-old Pastor Manjunath and his wife Saraswati were viciously attacked by a mob of Hindu militants who broke into their home in the town of KR Nagar, Karnataka. The militants accused the couple of converting people and severely beat them.

Saraswati sustained serious injuries but was denied medical attention due to pressure from local militants. When Pastor Manjunath went to the, local police station to file a report against the attackers, the officials arrested him and seized his house.

Christians across India's Orissa state were terrorized throughout the 2009 Christmas season by hate groups opposed to the Gospel. Anti-Christian extremists attacked Gospel for Asia native missionary Matish Junni on December 23. They also destroyed a newly-built church building on Christmas Eve.

Opposition began for Matish when his church decided to construct a building. As construction began, anti-Christian fanatics in the area threatened the missionary and the believers. Then, a mob of extremists surrounded Matish while he traveled to conduct worship services.

The mob beat Matish and shaved his head. Then they mockingly paraded him around the village, shouting slurs against him and other Christians. They also forced Matish to go to their religious temples. When the mob finally released him, they warned him not to continue the construction.

No police protection

Anti-Christian radicals also destroyed a church building in another area of Orissa on Christmas Eve. Although local police were there, the mobs were so out of control that the church received no protection. The extremists completely blocked the roads to the village, not allowing Christians to flee.

The recent attacks began when believers prepared to celebrate Christmas. The extremist organizers saw an opportunity to bring more sadness and grief to the Christians by attacking them on their most joyous holiday. Tensions rose when one of the anti-Christian leaders was allegedly attacked.

One person was killed on Christmas day during an extremist "bandh," a form of protest in India in which activists force the entire community to strike from their daily tasks. Although formally outlawed, many extremist groups still conduct bandhs in an effort to persuade others to join their cause.

"I hope that the government in Orissa will do everything in its power to protect the believers and bring peace to the state," Yohannan said. "Please join with our leaders in Orissa as they pray for Matish and other missionaries during this time, that they will be examples of Christ's

love to those who are persecuting them. Also pray that the anti-Christian extremists will come to know the Prince of Peace."

America has only had the slightest taste of Christmas terror.

However, that seems about to change

"It just isn't Christmas without a Muslim bombing," writes blogger Daniel Greenfield.

"The working theory among the think-tanks, academic campuses, newsrooms and diplomatic offices is that terrorists are just like us. Except depressed and insecure



Pakistani Christians celebrate Christmas



A missionary child celebrates Christmas with Bangladeshi friends

Christmas dangerous for faithful worldwide

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about it. Filled with self-loathing and in desperate need of anger management classes. If only some kind soul could plop them down on an analyst's couch and stuff them chock full of Prozac or Paxil, hug them without letting go, while reading passages from Jonathan Livingston Seagull – then they'd be just as right as rain."

"Civilization is not something the Muslim invented, but something that was forced on him in defiance of his law, his culture and his traditions. And if he does everything in his power to bring it down in ashes, to burn, loot and rape his way across the continent, and every continent that was foolish enough to allow him entry in the hopes that he would be a good citizen and a worthwhile member of society, then its governments have more of the blame than he does.

"Over in Oregon, Mohamed Osman Mohamud has made his own contribution to American culture," writes Greenfield, referring to the Somali Muslim's attempt to set off a car bomb at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

"And the media assures us that this was one of those once in a million events. Nothing to see here, folks. We'll find out soon enough that he had personal problems. Maybe his rap career didn't work out. The girl he liked wouldn't go out with him and agree to be his third wife.

"And the camel's milk wasn't flowing like honey anymore. Not that it really matters. Everyone has stressors. And if we are to keep Muslims stress free, for fear that they'll start flipping through a Koran and shooting up the joint, then even the most ardent devotee of the Lady overlooking Liberty Island must ask himself if the price of Muslim immigration is really worth it.

We've begun to learn what it is like to live with terror

"But we have not learned all of it by far. Terror haunted Christmas tree lighting celebrations are the beginning, but not the end of it. This is not a bridge we can cross with some multicultural cuisine and a PBS special. It requires that we understand what we have done. We have imported people from a culture and religion that has never accepted the most basic premise of our way of life. *Coexistence*. And so we cannot coexist with them. And they cannot coexist with us. After a few years or

decades of baffled attempts to adjust to a foreign way of life, they will either wall themselves off or make war on us. Or both at the same time. They cannot be our neighbors, only our enemies.

"The sooner we realize that, the fewer bombing stories at Christmas we'll have to read about.

"The news media has already activated its brilliant powers of long distance psychoanalysis on the Oregon Christmas Tree Bomber, and diagnosed him as suffering from his parent's divorce and vicious Oregonian college bullies. Sure Mohamed O. Mohamud might say he's a Muslim terrorist who wants to kill Americans – but the good people at NBC know better. He's not a terrorist. He's just misunderstood. Deep down inside him, there's gushing oil wells of untapped good.

"Mohamed O. Mohamud joins Fort Hood terrorist Major Nidal Hassan (who came down not with Muslim Murder Madness, but a virulent airborne form of PTSD) and Times Square bomber Faisal Shazad (suffering from uncontrollable Foreclosure Fever) on the analyst's couch. Another misunderstood victim of poorly articulated rage that led him to snap and try to kill a whole bunch of people, who coincidentally happened not to be Muslim."

And who knows what motivated last year's Christmas underwear bomber, says Greenfield.

Is there no such thing as a criminal?

"For a depressing stretch of the 20th century, sociologists insisted there was no such thing as a criminal, only a set of responses to social inequities. Robbers, rapists and murderers were just lashing out because of social discrimination in an unfair class system. They weren't depraved, they were deprived. The solution was not to put a beat cop on every street. What was the use. You couldn't fight 'crime' anyway. No more than you can fight 'terrorism'. All you could do was expand welfare programs, pour money into the inner cities and turn a blind eye to crime. Then the improvements in social conditions would end crime naturally.

"Terrorists are never terrorists. And never Muslim. Even when they're both. They might dress up like Osama bin Laden, quote from the Koran and curse the Great Satan – but the blowdried anchors in their dollhouse news sets will still blame the whole thing on teenage bullying or PTSD in the water.

"And who are you really going to believe, the terrorists who happily explain their motives, or a newscaster with two advanced degrees in reading things off a teleprompter?

"And so it turns out that the terrorists are human beings just like us who never got enough love. Who are too insecure not to be terrorists. Our job is to make them feel more comfortable and give them a confidence boost. Pat them on the back and tell them how wonderful Islam is and how superior Muslim culture is to our rotten degraded lifestyle.

"What terrorists need most is appeasement. Give them enough of it, and they'll no longer want to behead us or blow us up – or so the politically correct theory goes. And there you have our international affairs in a nutshell.

"The depressing pattern in all this lunacy is that we've decided that the only way to deal with terrorists is to give them things.

"Give them some land and money, and they'll be your pet terrorists. Then you can take them out for walks, and hug them and kiss them, and give them long baths. But not only do the terrorists need material things, they also need constant reassurance.

"You can't just negotiate with the terrorists. You've also got to negotiate with the enablers. And the enablers need land and money too. If you want to talk to

Hamas, you've got to give Syria the Golan Heights. And then Hezbollah and Iran will want things too.

"Locally and globally, we're deep in the appeasement business. So deep that we've put aside even the appearance of dignity. We're no longer ashamed of flattering and pandering to the murderers of our own people. We're proud of it. Our political and cultural leaders treat such behavior as a mark of sophistication."

Are terrorists are the victims?

Of course, says Greenfield sarcastically: "They're all walking wounded. Victims of divorce, vicious Oregonian bullying, home foreclosures and airborne PTSD. Discriminated against in airports. Hounded by FBI agents for doing such simple



Three members of a congregation in India

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things as trying to maim and murder thousands at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

“Persecuted just for being who they are. It’s enough to make even the coldest Amnesty International member with a heart of taffy, weep.

“So we’ve got to make them feel better by constantly praising Islam, letting them build an obscene Victory Mosque near Ground Zero, and jailing anyone who criticizes Islam. Then maybe they’ll stop being so insecure and they won’t feel that they need to kill us in order to feel good about themselves.

“When we’ve appeased them so much, given them so much that we have nothing left to give, then we will finally have atoned for our selfishness, our miserable globalism, our wicked imperialism, consumerism and nationalism, and all our filthy isms. And it’s so easy.”

‘All we have to do is hug a terrorist’

“All we have to do is hug a terrorist,” he writes. “And not mind the bulky dynamite strapped to his chest.”

Meanwhile, in 2005, leaders in Portland, Oregon, angry at the Bush administration’s conduct of the war on terror, voted not to allow city law enforcement officers to participate in a key anti-terror initiative, the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force.

But it was that task force which helped prevent what could have been a horrific terrorist attack at the Portland tree-lighting ceremony.

Now city officials say they might re-think their participation in the task force.

Reading the FBI affidavit describing Islamist terror suspect Mohamed Osman Mohamud’s plan to bomb the Christmas tree ceremony in Portland’s Pioneer Courthouse Square is a chilling experience. Mohamud, a Somali-born naturalized U.S. citizen who attended Oregon State University, told undercover FBI agents he dreamed of performing acts of jihad in which hundreds, perhaps thousands, of

Americans would die. “Do you remember when 9/11 happened when those people were jumping from skyscrapers?” Mohamud asked the agents, according to the affidavit. “I thought that was awesome.”

In months of preparation with men he thought were co-conspirators but were in fact undercover agents, Mohamud backed up his talk with action.

After initially making email contact with Islamist radicals in Pakistan, he took part in constructing what he hoped would be an extraordinarily powerful bomb, scouted the best location for the attack, parked the van containing the bomb near the Christmas tree crowd, and, finally, dialed the cell phone number he believed would detonate the explosives.

“I want whoever is attending that event to leave either dead or injured,” Mohamud said of the 25,000 people expected to take part in the event.

That Mohamud was arrested and no one was hurt is a testament to good intelligence and law enforcement work. Having Mohamud behind bars has undoubtedly saved lives in Portland; had he not encountered the undercover FBI agents, he might have worked with actual terrorists to construct a bomb, or he might have simply gotten a gun and carried out “an operation here, you know, like something like Mumbai,” as he told the agents.

What is ironic is that the operation that found and stopped Mohamud is precisely the kind of law enforcement work that Portland’s leaders, working with the American Civil Liberties Union, rejected during the Bush years. In April 2005, the Portland city council voted 4 to 1 to withdraw Portland city police officers from participating in the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force. Mayor Tom Potter said the FBI refused to give him a top-secret security clearance so he could make sure the officers weren’t violating state anti-discrimination laws that bar law enforcement from targeting suspects on the basis of their religious or political beliefs.

Other city leaders agreed. “Here in Portland, we are not willing to give up individual liberties in order to have a perception of safety,” said city commissioner Randy Leonard. “It’s important for cities to know how their police officers are being used.”



A once-familiar scene now banned from America’s public schools

Do we dare wish you ‘Merry Christmas’?

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cry with Christians nationwide challenging politically-correct, holiday-neutral retailers, municipalities and even the White House.

If you receive a card from President and Mrs. Obama this season, you will find that nowhere does it mention the word “Christmas.”

The card selected by the Obamas announces: “Season’s Greetings.” Inside, it reads: “May your family have a joyous holiday season and a new year blessed with hope and happiness.”

Congressman Henry Brown, (R-South Carolina), says abandoning “Merry Christmas” at Christmastime is just plain wrong. He has introduced a resolution calling for the protection of the sanctity of Christmas. So far, 44 lawmakers, Democrat and Republican, have co-signed the bill.

Presidents have been sending holiday cards since 1953. The White House told Fox News that the Obamas are celebrating Christmas this year but they recognize that other Americans are celebrating other holidays this time of year and that their holiday card reflects that idea.

In 2008, President George W. Bush’s card made no reference to Christmas.

However, it did include a passage from the New Testament, Matthew 5:16. “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Democratic National Committee spokesman Hari Sevugan said this year’s White House card aims to be “inclusive.”

“It makes perfectly good sense for a president of all the people, all the 2,000 different religions and the 20 million non-believers in this country, to send out a card that says this is a good, happy time of year but without referring to any one specific religion,” he said. The Obamas’ Christmas card was paid for and distributed by the DNC.

Each year, it seems it can never be too early for liberals to begin their annual war on Christmas. However, this year has seen some early victories for Christians.

“Right outside Washington D.C. in Loudoun County, Virginia, the board of supervisors was considering a proposal to ban all seasonal holiday displays including Christmas trees, manger scenes and menorahs on the grounds of the county courthouse,” reports Roberta Combs for Religious Rights Watch.

Hearing of the potential ban, veteran Christian rights attorney John W. Whitehead of the Rutherford Institute wrote to the county supervisors that their proposed ban would only serve to heighten community tensions and “could reflect a hostility toward religion on the part of the Board of Supervisors, as well as an intolerance for the diverse makeup of the residents of Loudoun County.”

Furthermore, wrote Whitehead, “The U.S. Constitution and jurisprudence make it possible for the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors to celebrate the diversity within their community by establishing a thriving marketplace of ideas rather than adopting a sanitized, politically correct government message. Indeed, Loudoun County should lead the way in adopting a model protocol for holiday displays that embodies the spirit of the First Amendment.”

Whitehead pointed out that anti-Christmas hostility by liberal elected officials has only increased during the past decade and it is time for it to stop.

“Many schools across the country now avoid anything that alludes to the religious celebration of Christmas – such as angels, the baby Jesus, stables and shepherds. In many of the nation’s schools, Christmas carols, Christmas trees, wreaths and candy canes have also been banned as part of the effort to avoid any reference to

Christmas, Christ or God. One school even outlawed the colors red and green, saying they were Christmas colors and, thus, illegal.

“This antiseptic, colorless course does not have to be your chosen path,” advised Whitehead. “The law clearly falls on the side of allowing holiday displays.”

The board of supervisors agreed.

Loudoun County Supervisor Eugene Delgaudio the wrote to Whitehead: “I am pleased to inform you that the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors sided with the Constitutional precedent you outlined and voted to continue to allow the displays. Only one Supervisor dissented. Your letter provided a powerful, clear argument in favor of inclusion and freedom of expression. I cannot thank you enough.”

There are other positive signs. The trade journal *Advertising Age* actually declared that the “War on Christmas” is over and that the pro-Christmas crowd has won.

Their article cited the American Family Association’s famous list of retailers who won’t use the word “Christmas” in their advertisements – a list which has shrunk this year.

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Do we dare to wish you 'Merry Christmas'?

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Randy Sharp, the AFA director of special projects, said that in the past five years the group has seen the percentage of retailers recognizing Christmas in their advertising rise from 20 percent to 80 percent. Only eight retailers are left on the group's list of "Companies Against Christmas."

This year, the AFA drew special attention to Dick's Sporting Goods, a national retail chain which boasted an online "Holiday Shop." The AFA sent an Action Alert to its 2.3 million supporters in mid-November urging shoppers to boycott Dick's this year.

It also called for consumers to email President-Chief Operating Officer Joseph Schmidt and then call Chief Marketing Officer Jeff Hennion. The retailer declined to comment or return phone calls.

However, after the boycott was announced, the retailer did an abrupt about-face.

According to their vice chairman, Bill Columbo, "We have made significant changes from past years, when 'holiday' was the dominant theme of our advertising." He apologized for not returning AFA's phone calls and letters earlier to convey this message.

Dick's issued a statement to AFA and its pro-Christmas supporters, outlining their plans to incorporate "Christmas" in their advertising:

Sunday newspaper inserts will read "Christmas 2010." This will continue each Sunday through Christmas. Additionally, the firm's website will display the Christmas message as will the company's television commercials.

As a result of Dick's response, AFA canceled the boycott.

"All across America, companies are coming to realize they should include Christ and Christmas in their advertising," writes Combs.

However, eight firms are still on the AFA list—companies refusing to use the word "Christmas": Barnes & Noble book stores, CVS pharmacies, Office Depot business supply stores, Radio Shack electronics stores, Staples business supply stores, SUPERVALU grocery stores and Victoria's Secret lingerie stores.

But the war is not won. In Colorado, Larimer County Sheriff Jim Alderden is having to put up with a placard promoting atheism at his fourth annual "politically incorrect" Christmas tree-trimming party.

"It's certainly not as incorrect as it once was," Alderden said of the event.

A sign by the secular-oriented Colorado Coalition of Reason will be on display along with a menorah next to the Christmas trees and a nativity scene. Marvin Strauss, the group's leader, wore rubber gloves to shake hands with Alderden last year.

The public event uses no government funds and includes carolers, rides in a horse-drawn carriage, prayer and refreshments—all with an unabashed Christmas theme. It began in 2007 in response to efforts in Fort Collins to avoid religious holiday



Angels appear to the shepherds in an artwork by an unknown artist

decorations on public property.

Sheriff Alderden was annoyed, so he raised private funds for his "Politically Incorrect Christmas Tree-Trimming Party."

"Everything is all about political correctness and letting people do their own thing," Alderden said, adding that "everybody objects" when it's Christian. "Everytime you try to inject God, it seems like forces come out against people of faith."

Sheriff's spokeswoman Eloise Campanella said this year's tree-trimming event will include the sale of crafts contributed by jail inmates. Donations and proceeds will benefit gifts for low-income children.

An unexpected result of the event is that the City of Fort Collins turned away from its plans to ignore Christmas. This year it will sponsor a display that includes Frosty the Snowman, Santa Clause, a Jewish menorah candelabra and a Nativity scene.

Without a doubt, there is a war on Christmas. Groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, argue that government-funded displays of Christmas imagery and traditions violate the

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Don't let the thought police hijack Christmas!

by Dr. Angus Koolbrieze, special to *Christian Crusade Newspaper*

Happy Holidays? How lame does that sound!

Rejoice! This is Christmas. The season for celebrating the birth of Christ.

Unfortunately in some parts of the world, the thought police are trying to hijack the meaning of Christmas. Loony political correctness, in its insane quest to turn the world into one big generic homogenous blob without any interest, humor, culture or free expression is campaigning to remove any reference to Christ from Christmas. Yes, that's a bit like removing any reference to apple from "apple pie" or America from "the United States of America."

It's OK to say, 'Merry Christmas.'" When I was growing up, that we should say anything else was unheard of. It was not that everyone celebrated Christmas, but everyone respected everyone else's right to celebrate Christmas.

But in America's drive to be all-inclusive, in recent years certain groups have sought to silence other groups' right to express themselves as they see fit. A certain minority has been so callous as to deprive Christians, particularly, of their rights.

The most annoying example of this happened recently. An atheist group placed a poster right by a nativity scene in a state capital. The gist of it was that there is no Heaven or Hell or angels.

How long will we endure this "political correctness" that is so often directed against those who love Jesus Christ?

Political correctness is being used by the enemy of our souls to dampen our spirits and to silence us. Why? So that we may be conformed to this present age, an age God beseeches us, yes, pleads with us in His Word that we should not be conformed to. So the question is, out of love for Him, and out of appreciation for what we did—are we going to sell ourselves out and start saying what they say? Or are we going to stand up for truth and righteousness?

On its face, there is nothing inherently wrong with throwing "Merry Christmas" out of our vocabulary, and saying "Happy Holidays." But in so doing we have given place to evil. Satan will try to get us to make that little, itchy-bitsy concession because he has a much larger plan: to stamp out the voice of the Christian in the marketplace. He will make it look like the highest good is making sure we don't offend other people.

We are called to be salt and light. In order to do that, we must continue to have a voice. So go on, put up that tree, knowing your Saviour was hung to one for your salvation.

Give gifts in honor of the birth the greatest gift of all!

And at the top of your lungs, to spite the forces of evil—proclaim "Merry Christmas!"

Celebrate your freedom of speech! *Merry Christmas!*

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U.S. constitution—specifically the First Amendment, which prohibits the establishment by Congress of a national religion.

The battle over whether religious displays should be placed within public schools, courthouses and other government buildings, has been heated in recent years.

U.S. Supreme Court rulings starting with *Lynch v. Donnelly* in 1984 have permitted religious themes in government-funded Christmas displays.

Since these rulings have been splintered and have left officials uncertain of their limits, many such displays have included secular elements such as reindeer, snowmen and elves along with the religious elements. Other recent court cases have brought up additional issues such as the inclusion of Christmas carols in public school performances, but none of these cases have reached the US Supreme Court.

A controversy regarding these issues arose in 2002, when the New York City public school system banned the display of nativity scenes, but allowed the display of supposedly less overtly religious symbols such as Christmas trees, Hanukkah menorahs, and the Muslim star and crescent. Such a policy angered many, including commentator Bill O'Reilly, who in 2006 said such a policy was "anti-Christian." The school system successfully defended its policy in *Skoros v. City of New York*.

One of the most prominent Christmas tree controversies came in 2005, when the City of Boston labeled their official decorated tree a "holiday tree," prompting a protest from the Nova Scotian tree farmer who donated the tree that he would rather have put the tree in a wood chipper than have it named a "holiday" tree.

Donnie Hatt, the donor, was also quoted as saying "Ever since I was born, a tree was put up for Christmas, not for holidays, because if you're going to do that you might as well put a tree up for Easter."

Another controversy occurred in 2005 when the U.S. hardware retailer Lowe's advertised "holiday trees" in English, but "árboles de Navidad" (Christmas trees) in Spanish. In 2007, Lowe's started using the term "family tree," sparking protests and an about-face in which Lowe's claimed the term was the result of a printing mistake.

Lowe's began using "Christmas tree" prominently in advertising in 2009.

The Michigan Senate had a heated debate in 2005 over whether the decorated tree in front of the Michigan Capitol would continue to be called a holiday tree (as it had been since the early 1990s) or named a Christmas tree. The question was

revisited in 2006, when the bipartisan Michigan Capitol Committee voted unanimously to use the term "Christmas tree."

That same year, after threats of a national boycott, Sears (which owns Sears and Kmart) altered their marketing policies from using the term "holiday" to using the term "Christmas." The change of policy included the distribution of "Merry Christmas" signs to stores nationwide, and the changing of all instances of the term "holiday" to "Christmas" on their website and in stores.

Sears also included a "very Merry Christmas" greeting at their website from December 8 through December 26, 2005. Kmart opened the 2006 Christmas season with the slogan "Where Christmas comes together," and several commercials acknowledged Christmas, including one with the tune to "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

In 2005, Wal-Mart was criticized by the Catholic League for avoiding the word "Christmas" in any of their marketing efforts. The company had downplayed the term in much of its advertising. This caused some backlash among the public, prompting some groups to pass around petitions and threaten boycotts.

Wal-Mart announced that they were amending their policy and would be using "Christmas" rather than "holiday". Among the changes, they noted that

the former "Holiday Shop" would become the "Christmas Shop," and that there would be a "countin' down the days to Christmas" feature.

In 2005, Target Corporation was criticized not to using the term "Christmas" in any of in-store, online, or print advertising.

Over 700,000 petition signatures were sent to Target along with pledges to boycott the store. Within a week, Target pledged to begin incorporating the term "Christmas" in their advertising.

"Over the course of the next few weeks, our advertising, marketing and merchandising will become more specific to the holiday that is approaching—referring directly to holidays like Christmas and Hanukkah. For example, you will see reference to Christmas in select television commercials, circulars and in-store signage," Target announced in a press release.

In a 2007 interview with *Chief Executive* magazine, the Chief Executive Officer of Target, Bob Ulrich, stated that using "holiday" instead of "Christmas" had been a mistake.

"Frankly, we screwed up," he said.



A Nativity in the back of a pickup – one man's protest. He parks it in front of Detroit's City Hall, where the official Nativity scene has now been banned.

Christmas is a celebration of our Lord's birth

by Julio C. Calderons, special to *Christian Crusade Newspaper*

This is the time of year at the hen house when the ladies are molting and egg production is at a standstill or a trickle. This gives them time to gossip incessantly while growing new feathers. The big question is the debate over Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. It's an argument that I got into while editing the California Youth Authority Newsletter a couple of years ago.

I have yet to understand the removal of manger scenes from public places and keeping the menorah for Hanukkah. I am among those who protest the removal of Christ from Christmas or any other public display, just to not offend people from other religions or atheists.

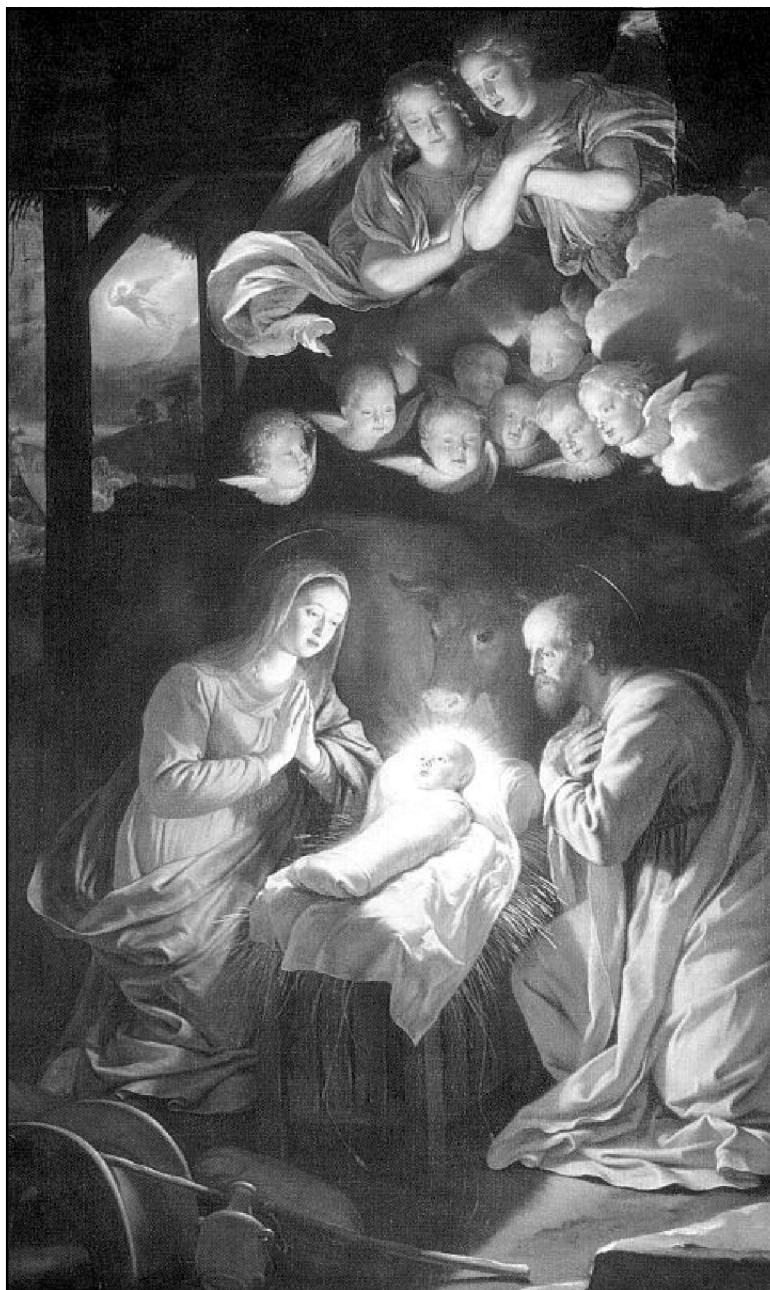
The fellow who wrote "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was a clever wordsmith or a fantastic marketing man. Think about all of those things needed to complete the song, and it all centers on acquiring each of those items from somewhere.

I don't think they had malls when he wrote the song, but surely, retailers existed that could provide them.

I am not anti-commerce. The more someone earns—the more they can give to their churches and charities. A rich person's ten percent tithes are certainly much greater than my ten percent. God bless them.

Some people are too easily offended. If I find something or someone offensive—I avoid them. Certainly, if a manger scene offends an atheist—don't look at it—just as they would a homeless person on a bus bench or with a tin cup or a Salvation Army bell ringer—people they don't seem to see.

I guess I could argue the facts that this country was founded on Christian-Judeo principles; or that the greater percentage of Americans are of a



"The Nativity" by Philippe de Champaigne (1643)

Christian faith to support keeping Christ in Christmas—but I won't.

Neither will I discuss what I "feel," only what I believe. Christ is making His way back into Christmas for the same reason He was being removed. Meeting the sensitivities of non-believers by retailers is slamming head-on with believers at the big chain stores. Mighty Wal-Mart has brought "Merry Christmas" back to their stores. They found out that even non-Christians liked being greeted with "Merry Christmas!"

Of course, this may never end the debate. We can expect the continued attack on Christ by the politically correct folks.

The only way to mute the Christmas folks is to have Congress pass legislation making "Happy Holiday" a national holiday. I know, that doesn't make any sense to me either. Nor does it make sense to mask over the fact the Christmas holidays are a celebration of the birth of our Lord. You can refuse to believe that He is the son of God, or not. I believe He is.

If you believe worms are reincarnations of ancestors, that's your right. I am not offended. I must apologize to those of you who do... for the many the chickens in the coop have eaten.

Once people get through the spend and spend period, they will gather in homes and churches; and once the happy voices of children fades; they will raise their voices in praise and remember the Christ child—who told us to be good to each other—and to love each other. "Peace on earth," is another popular phrase at this time of the year—unfortunately, only at this time.

Merry Christmas!

Christmas is the promise that we are never alone

by Bill Adams, special to *Christian Crusade*

A great theologian, Bible scholar Karl Barth, once was asked to be a guest lecturer at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

At the end of a captivating closing lecture, the president of the seminary announced that Dr. Barth was not well and was quite tired and, although he thought that Dr. Barth would like to be open for questions, he shouldn't be expected to handle the strain.

Then he said, "Therefore, I will ask just one question on behalf of all of us."

He turned to the renowned theologian and asked, "Of all the theological insights you have ever had, which do you consider to be the greatest of them all?"

It was the perfect question for a man who had written literally tens of thousands of pages of theology.

The students held pencils right up against their writing pads, ready to take down verbatim the premier insight of the greatest theologian of their time.

Dr. Barth closed his tired eyes, and he thought for a minute.

Then he half smiled, opened his eyes, and said to those young seminarians, "The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

My dear friends in Christ, I submit



Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus from the 2006 film "The Nativity"



"The Baby Jesus" by unknown artist

to you that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest love story ever written!

I wish with all my heart that everybody could read it that way, but I'm afraid to say that I meet people every day for whom the Gospel reads more like a used car contract.

Somehow in the midst of all those beautiful love verses, they hear only clauses and conditions and the spelling out of all the consequences should any of those clauses and conditions ever be infringed.

So I thank God that Christmas comes around once a year to remind us that God isn't concerned about our status or position in life. If God were concerned about any of those things, then I submit to you that the Christ of God would never have been born into such disagreeable circumstances as we find in the second chapter of Luke.

No, Christmas is the beginning of a classic love story with all the right ingredients.

But in all relationships of love, there has to be that first meeting, doesn't there? When I was a child, I remember asking "what if I had been born to another set of parents?"

I would never have known the love of the parents I know and love now.

My wife Kathy and I met 30 years ago when I went away to college for the first time. I still occasionally find myself asking those curious "what if" questions.

Do you ever find yourself asking those kinds of questions? "What if I had gone to another college in another part of the country? What if I had taken a job instead of going to school?"

My dear friends in Christ, I submit to you, that Christmas is a crossing of paths.

Christmas is where we find God intersecting with humanity! Christmas is our first and best meeting with the God who has desired us from the very beginning.

I submit to you that if it weren't for Christmas, we might never have known the intensity of the love that God has for us.

Mary and Joseph, far from home because of imperial rule, a peasant mother giving birth in unsanitary, substandard



"The Road to Bethlehem" by Joseph Brickley (1984)

continued on page 19



"The Holy Family" by unknown artist

means unconditional, and that God's love is completely and thoroughly inclusive.

We find that even you and I fall within the embrace of that love, and that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Peace begins with the knowledge that God loves and accepts us just that much. It begins with Christmas!

Now having said all this, I know that the Christmas season can give rise to some painful memories for a good number of people. People often think about the failures they have suffered and about loved ones they have lost.

I lost my mother at Christmastime, so I can resonate some with those feelings. But I also know this: *without Christmas my life would be positively unbearable!*

I would like to close by telling you a story about a nativity pageant that, like life itself, didn't go quite as planned.

The youth group was performing a manger scene. Joseph and Mary and all the other characters were in place and ready. They did their parts with seriousness and commitment, looking as pious as they possibly could.

Then it came time for the shepherds to enter.

Dressed in flannel bathrobes and towel head gear, they proceeded to where Mary and Joseph looked earnestly at the straw which contained a light bulb that was playing the part of the glowing newborn Jesus.

With his back to the congregation, one of the 12-year-old shepherds said to his buddy playing Joseph – in a whisper the congregation wasn't supposed to hear, "Well, Joe, when you gonna pass out cigars?"

The solemnity of the occasion was destroyed.

Mary could not hold back her laughter. The chief angel, standing on a chair behind them was the worst of all. She shook so hard in laugh-

housing. There was no fanfare, no royal delegation. They just laid Him in that manger and watched His little face and listened for His breathing, just like every new parent does.

No, this couldn't be anything but true love! True love accepts the beloved for who they really are.

God chooses to love us precisely because we are subjects of the human condition, not because of a favorable bottom line on a social and moral profit and loss statement.

Mary and Joseph had nothing to commend them except their humanity.

God had waited ever so patiently to send the One into our world who would be willing finally to embody the love God has for us

ter that she fell off her chair and took the curtained back drop and all the rest of the

props down with her.

She just kept rolling around on the floor holding her stomach because she was laughing so hard.

The whole set was in shambles – and the congregation was roaring in laughter, too.

But, the only thing that didn't go to pieces was that light bulb in the manger. It never stopped shining.

My dear friends in Christ, that baby in the manger is the light of my world, even when my world is in shambles.

In that baby, the divine and the human cross paths.

The infant Jesus is our living, breathing sign of the immeasurable love of God – the love He has had for all of us from the very beginning.

Christmas is the living promise that we are never, ever alone.

No matter where we are in life, no matter in what condition we find ourselves –

No matter how far we might stray away, or how unfaithful we are,

God will pursue us in love for eternity!

Yes!

It's a love that never stops shining.

May God bless each of you and those you love this Christmas!



"Adoration of the Shepherds" by Juan Bautista Maino (1612)

It is the birth of that love into our world that we celebrate on Christmas!

Who would have ever guessed that this crossing of paths, this intersection of the divine and the human, would take place so long ago in a remote, speck-of-dust village called Bethlehem of Judea?

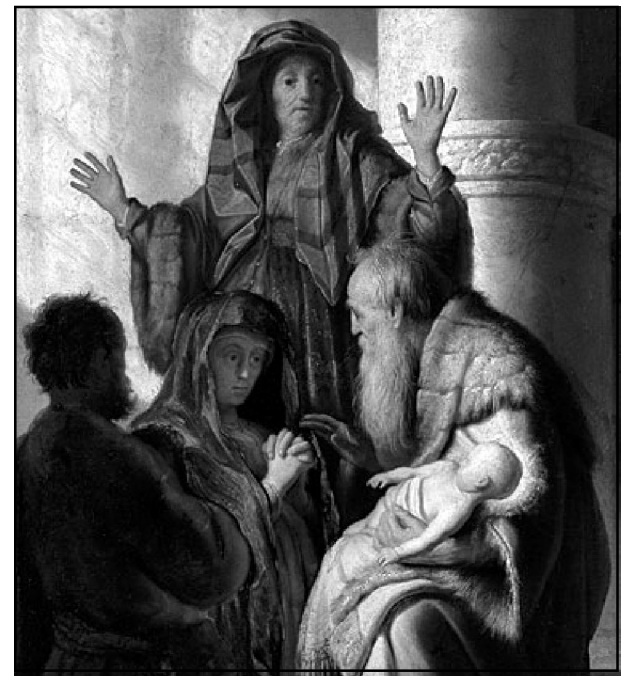
This is the night when God sent out a love letter of cosmic proportions.

As Jesus grew and went out into the world, so our understanding of just how much God loves us also grew.

We find in Jesus that God's love doesn't demand perfection, that forgiveness isn't given away sparingly but indiscriminately, that unconditional really



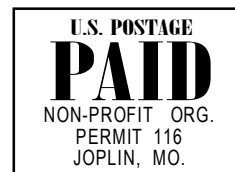
"Mary and the Young Jesus" by William Hale (c.1960)



"Anna in the Temple" by Rembrandt van Rijn (1628)

CHRISTIAN CRUSADE

Dept. 198 P.O. Box 21228
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74121-1228



An Open Letter from our publisher

December 2010

DEAR FRIEND:

Rejoice! This is Christmas. The season for celebrating the birth of Christ. Christmas is about Christ! No ifs, buts or maybes. Christmas is *Christ*mas. It's not Santa-mas, Holiday-mas, Mohammed-mas, Buddha-mas or any other something irrelevant-mas. It's *Christ*mas.

If you are sick of political correctness undermining the core of Christian societies and would like to stand up against the campaign against Christmas, I recommend you say "Merry Christmas" this season.

Encourage other Christians you know to proudly proclaim that *Christ* is the reason for the Christmas season. The next time someone wishes you a "Happy Holidays," respond with a hearty "Merry Christmas."

Send Christmas cards that feature nativity scenes. Do not support businesses that deny references to Christ in their advertising and promotions.

Tell them something like "I usually shop at this store, but as a Christian celebrating the birth of Christ, I will be spending my money this season at your competitor, because they have a lovely Nativity scene in their foyer. The denial of Christ at this store offends me."

Then vote with your feet! If political correctness is all about not offending anybody, then make it clear that you are offended. It cuts both ways. Enjoy the celebration of the birth of Christ openly and with pride. *Merry Christmas to you and yours!*

And join the staff of *Christian Crusade Newspaper* in spreading the truth of Christ's love! This year, give a subscription to *Christian Crusade Newspaper* to everyone on your Christmas card list. You can afford it ... it's free! We have been publishing the truth for 58 years – and we have never charged a cent.

We do ask you to do this, however. First, send us the names and addresses of those to whom you want to give a gift

subscription. Then, write them a note, telling them of your gift. That way, when they begin receiving the Newspaper, they will welcome it as a gift from a loved one – not an unsolicited piece of "junk mail."

Another way you can spread the truth, my friend, is on the Internet. If you enjoy forwarding interesting articles to your friends by e-mail, we need you to sign up as a Watchman on the Web. Go to www.ChristianCrusade.com and sign up today!

And, my friend, after you read this newsprint version of *Christian Crusade Newspaper*, can you make sure that it gets into the hands of someone who needs to know the truth? In this day and age, how can we be good stewards and just throw away our copies? Pass yours on! Leave them in the doctor's office waiting room! Give yours to a neighbor!

You are so vital in this battle for truth and freedom!

We depend on you! Write to me! We are always so grateful if you can send us a gift of \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 or whatever you can. Without your financial support, we can't pay the bills! But with your help, we are continuing and expanding!

Pray with me for America! The truth **must** be proclaimed! If you are a recipient of somebody else's *Christian Crusade Newspaper* and you are reading our pages for the first time, we'd like to offer you a gift. A free subscription!

Just write to us! Let us know what you think of this month's edition. *We want to hear from you!*

God bless you!
Go with God!

Billy James Hargis II,
PUBLISHER AND PRESIDENT



Christian Crusade



The late Dr. Billy James Hargis with
Mrs. Betty Jane Hargis and
Publisher Billy James Hargis II

Volume 58

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Number 12

Unto us
a son
is
born!

