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Notes: Christmas Vesper: The Logic of Christmas, 1965

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DATE 12/17/65 OCCASION VesperTHEME The logic of Christmas

1. Topic - more than 20 years ago

Wyston Hugh Auden - one of England's most brilliant poets published a work which was quite unexpected - slowly & gently he had come to the Menor as so many modern minds have come - thru

the valley of disillusionment & despair -

He called his work "For the Time Being" - a Christmas oratorio - in it, at one place, the Narrator becomes a proud

Roman, unaware, living as men live today - in the world of headlines - a world lonely and helpless and always carrying within itself the seed of its own destruction - the Roman speaks - his words have a strangely modern ring. I saw something like them in my newspaper yesterday.

"These are stirring times for the editors of newspapers"

History is in the making; Marxism is on the march

The longest aqueduct in the world is already under construction.

DATE _____ OCCASION VesperTHEME The logic of Christmas

True, the Western sea are still
infested with pirates

And the rising power of the Barbarians
in the North

Is giving some cause for uneasiness

But we are fully alive to these
dangers; we are rapidly arming

Our great empire will be secure
for a thousand years...

2. And at that very moment. Mary

was lulling her infant to sleep in a
manger and the shepherds heard her
song in the gracious night and the hand
of a child was beginning to tug at
the foundation of Empire - and the
logic of Christmas was beginning to crowd
out the logic of time, of power, of
history as men see it - the manger
had become the still centre of our
sprawling world -

3. The logic of Christmas - the ^{strange} logic
of lowliness & humility - I have often
tried to imagine what we would have

DATE _____ OCCASION VesperTHEME The logic of Christmas

done with the event known to us as Christmas - surely we would have trumpets, heralds, a long procession - he must be born in a palace - great public demonstration - in fact, this is just what his people expected - and so they missed Christmas - because it came by the logic of ~~Christ~~ Heaven - when they would never expect it - at midnight, under the huddled roof and wall - beside the oxen in his stall - away from drum and bawl call.

Well, what logical mind could ever think that the wistful waiting of 4000 years would be answered, at last, by the whimpering cry of a Baby in His mother's arms - this is the logic of Christmas - this is the way God does things - always completely unexpected and always completely right - and so it happened then - and happens now - that when the King of Kings comes only lowly men - only little men - only the humble

DATE _____

OCCASION _____

TUVespers

THEME _____

The logic of Christmas

men & beasts are by example to know
Him - you have to stoop low to
get into a Judean stable - whether it
be on the first Christmas night - or
now in the year of our lord 1965

5. And that's what means it so hard
 for the world to have Christmas -
its logic is ^{really} frightening, terrifying ^{if}
this is the way God is and works -
 what are we doing with our little pride -
 our little jealousy - hate - our striving
 and pushing - our lust for power &
 pleasure & gold - our bombs and
 planes & guns - these are the logic of man
the logic of momentary power - and
in the light of Christmas they are
 shown up for what they really are -
 cheap, tawdry, ugly - and finally
 completely hopeless - shown up by
the inevitable, eternal logic of
Christmas.

6. Even not so - 30 years later a first
 address - world had waited - God

DATE _____ OCCASION _____

THEME The logic of Christmas

speaking - surely: a pronouncement on
world event - Roman militarism -
oppression of nation - No - back to the
Holy Night - the logic of Christmas - echo
Blessed - poor in spirit - Thine is the Kingdom
of heaven - Blessed on the Mass - world
rolled on - new power - the logic of heaven

8. Chicago World's Fair - Chalice of
Antichrist - 50 A.D. - Holy Grail -

You had to pass many things - so
my wish for your Christmas - keep
traveling - past the lights and the gifts
the sentimentality & the sophistication
to find again the Holy Grail - new
faith - new hope - new power - shining
line stars - this is the whole story -

began so low down - in a manger -

^{xx} under the in a cave under a hill - then light
~~flashes~~ on the way of the logic of
the earth Christmas - sets you down - etc -

Phew
the earth