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Our Happy-Merry Season

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all people I will be glorified,'" And Aaron held his peace.

— Leviticus: 10:1-3 *English Standard Version*

Today is the first day of Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights. According to the Jewish calendar on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the first of eight candles were lit, just after sundown Tuesday evening. The celebration marks the rededication of the Second Temple during the Maccabean Revolt in the second century BCE, as well as the miracle of a small jar of consecrated oil, which burned for eight days in the Temple's menorah, when the quantity was only sufficient for one day. The New Testament says in John 10: 22 that Jesus celebrated the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah).

On December 9, 2011 President Obama had a "Hanukkah Party" in the White House. As a

Christian I find the President's party pretty much in line with the "strange-profane-unauthorized fire in the Leviticus quotation above. I also realize that many historic White House Hanukkah celebrations would not be considered kosher in the Jewish sense, but for some reason I find this date and the whole lack of any sort of sanctification or glory given to God, to fit the party occasion properly. I also read a number of writers who thought that the President would not treat a Muslim religious observance with such inaptitude.

The great thing that separates we humans from all of the lower animals is that we are inventors, or creators if you will, and with our



mental and physical inventive creations we are able to innovatively construct cultures. This week we will look at our totally unique human attribute, which drives our whole world's economic engine this time of year. That creation is religion.

Every human being that has ever lived; spent his life developing, worshiping and dying according to their specific interpretation of a personal religion. Over the centuries the invention of religion has become quite limited, yet variations on these themes are mixed together to help us create our individual personalities.

Hanukkah is not a Biblical religious festival, yet as we noted, the most famous Jew in history, Jesus from Nazareth celebrated it. About two weeks short of 2,176 years later, the cleansing of the Jewish temple was celebrated half way around the world by the President of the United States.

While the birth of Jesus, the founder of Christianity, is discussed in the Christian New Testament supplement to the Old Testament Jewish scriptures; again there is nothing in those pages that say we should celebrate Christmas. Yet Christmas, during this dark time of the year, drives the yearly economic engine of the world's consumer economy.

The probability of Jesus being born on the calendar equivalent of December twenty-fifth is slim to none. While we don't know for sure, most religious scholars believe he was born on one of the important Jewish religious festivals, but as far as the actual day, we really don't even know for sure the real year.

However if you really want to understand the nature of the Christian Messiah becoming an actually breathing and living human being, a totally common date seems totally appropriate. Perhaps Jesus was born on your birthday; more fitting, you were born on his.

We do know that December twenty-fifth was chosen, not because it was near the winter solstice and the church scholars were too stupid to get the date right, but rather so that Jesus could be circumcised in the temple on our western's secular culture's New Years Day.

In our highly evolved culture is it still appropriate to say Merry Christmas?

The so-called war on Christmas has slowly been subject to much entropy in recent years, but the Happy Holiday's just won't go away, because when you get right down to it, our secular world is just as anti-Semitic as it is anti-Christian, it just depends which way the wind is blowing that particular moment.

Christianity for its part, especially the various denominations, non-denominations and sects of Protestantism, has attempted to overcome this stigma by focusing on cultural relevance. Therefore for most people, the church has become just another institution telling people how to live their lives according to a specific series of laws, which this religious-political Christianity believes will save the nation.

In the process they have become the fundamental reason the country and the world have lost their moral compasses. A church practicing themes of a Christless Christianity, materialism and monetary prosperity, succumbs to the laws of entropy, just as has happened in the world of finance we discussed last week.

The churches' graceless vain attempts at relevance allows for the reality of all the economic hype that this season produces: Black Friday, the day after the American Thanksgiving, Cyber Monday and there are also Super Sale Days until after the New Year, of course focusing on the weekend, when people have time to shop, instead of work in that boring, low paying service job, unless of course you work in retail.

For the true atheist it is also difficult to carry their godless religious card this time of year. *We wish you a Happy-Merry Holiday Season, because it gives or gave me a job the rest of the year.*

What would drive this economic seasonal period if it were not for the holidays? Would we all just sit around our big screen TVs and watch football bowl games, eat boiled potatoes, sauerkraut, root vegetables, and drink beer?

We began this week's merry discourse with the reality that two sons of Aaron, the High Priest, brother of Moses, decided to take the religion of the Exodus into their own enlightened hands and found out they were not all that enlightened in their religion.

Our human religions are all really religions of law. The Ten Commandments of the Exodus were and are a codified religious law given to the Jewish people by God on Mount Sinai in the wilderness. In reality this law was really a codified version of human common law, written on our consciences and has existed since God created man and woman. It is that common law that really has allowed us to develop a human culture in which we can create our specific interpretations of religion, and establish essentially the rule of law.

This historically has brought about what we call the rise and the dominance of western culture. Not only does western culture rule the world, but also it was western culture that gave us Christmas in the form that drives a goodly portion of world consumerism and even the demise of the Debt Supercycle.

For those who wonder how this drive came about, especially at the expense of other civilizations such as the Chinese, there is a distinct possibility these blessings arose out of something beyond the scope of human created religion. This really doesn't gain any cognizance at all in an advanced human religion where people evolved from some form of advanced primate eons ago, but in a young earth religious setting, as outlined in the Bible, it does make a lot of sense.

Sometime after the myth, when God destroyed the world by a worldwide flood, thousands of years ago, Noah, whom after religion has named this flood, got drunk and two of his three sons covered his drunken nakedness. One son's religion let the old man sleep it off. In Genesis 9:25-27 when he awoke, Noah provided the following religious blessing and curse:

Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.

He also said, Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let *Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.*

That blessing pretty much describes the rise of western culture and its supremacy in the world today. It also doesn't bode well for the future

dominance of Chinese stateism, even in the not too distant future; especially in the context of evolving atheistic-material elitism.

Again we see a pronouncement of religious law, base upon common natural law, governing human behavior. We can generally, or commonly see from these examples, that human culture is built upon the application of law. In the United States we pride ourselves on the rule of law, but it seems that finding and expressing that rule amongst all the current political noise is getting more and more difficult.

What is missing from our human endeavors, where the guilty are always punished, except for my transgressions and not yours, is any thought of a concept known as grace. In grace we don't get what we deserve, not even some concept of a lesser or reduced punishment. In grace we are not punished at all even though we deserve it.

That grace concept is so inhuman, it would seem we are programmed only for law. The world of economics is built upon the law of supply and demand. As we will discuss next week, economics doesn't do a very good job with creativeness outside these two parameters.

However creative invention, and even to a lesser extent its half-baked relative, innovation, are really components of a universe outside the constraints of our laws. We vaguely comprehend the virtues of common grace, but it is totally apart from our concepts of secular or religious law.

Beauty, love, compassion, are just three in a long list of human common grace attributes that don't fit in our law abiding world, and even more so, in our law disregarding world. Yet even though we have trouble defining those attributes, they, at the most inopportune times, override our legal and religious laws. How unsettling is that?

So into this dark dying world, in which it is always winter, but never Christmas, a legal world ruled by "Bah! Humbug!" a few primitive people attempt to celebrate a couple of Happy-Merry Seasonal Festivals. In one of those a bottle of oil that should have burned only for one day lasted for eight.

In another, a light shown into this world, which really was not in any sense a common miracle, however

unlawful that miracle might be. This miracle was that the specific grace of God entered a legal structure and over a short period of time in a backwater province of the Roman Empire, changed human history.

That miracle of Jesus, (Jeshua, Joshua, God Rescues) was that God became man, lived a sinless life, was crucified on a cross for our justification, and was raised from death as the timeless hope that all of human law had become subject to the unmerited specific grace of God.

The reason for the season, thereafter changed forever, is that this season is no longer subject to the rules of the calendar, of life and death and the requirements of all law. This reason is not apprehended by our logical mind of rules and regulations, yet it still apprehends the hard hearted as it did, throughout our short history on this earth.

We have created through our desire for lawful order, a festival of a Merry Christmas; Christ's Mass, or Holy Communion, the Eucharist of God's redemption of human law, simply because it truly was and is a representation of simply the unmerited grace of God. Nothing more! Nothing less, could change the history of the world.

Merry Christmas everyone!