

### **Ice with Whisky?**

*Isaiah 527-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 11-4; John 11-14*

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth.  
(John 114)*

It was brought to my attention that the MacKinley distillery had a new product this year. The Antarctic explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, had taken this whisky with him on his aborted British Antarctic Expedition of 1907. The distillers have tried to make a selling point of this and in their advertising tell us that, as they abandoned their attempt to reach the South Pole, they left three crates of this whisky buried in the ice. You must forgive my way of thinking, but why would you make a selling point of something left behind? I certainly won't be spending £150 on a bottle that men in desperate need of consolation and comfort left behind.

I doubt that, were these cases of a good single malt, they would have been left behind.

Isn't that one of the difficulties surrounding Christmas? We spend our time recreating something that never existed or wasn't worth creating in the first place:

- ✠ Christmas is for children? It may have been about a child, God incarnate in the new-born Jesus, but I doubt that all the boys under 2 in Bethlehem thought that the arrival of the Christ child was for them when Herods' soldiers arrived with orders to execute them!
- ✠ Christmas is a time for families? The reason we often just see families at Christmas is because they aren't the people we choose to spend time with! It is a problem waiting to happen when you get people who know each other well enough to dislike each other and for long enough to have ammunition together in a confined space fuelled by indigestion and alcohol.
- ✠ The Christmas message is peace and goodwill to all people! In a world that is seldom without conflict and where a great deal of that conflict is motivated by religion, the message wears thin.

When Christmas is defined by a saint rebranded by Coca Cola in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, illuminated by trees imported in the previous century at the whim of a Prince Consort, fuelled by a spirit of consumerism that few can afford and celebrated on a date

borrowed from pagans frightened of the dark we have a blended product that I would rather leave in the ice!

Christmas isn't a sugar coated opportunity for sentimentality: it is a time for realism. God saw that we couldn't change the world on our own because we were incapable of changing ourselves. Only by becoming one with us could hope be born, and only by our becoming one with him will hope be secured.

The Christmas faith isn't something we would want to put down, far less, abandon. Neither will it let us go!

I assure you that I will, as part of my celebrations indulge in a 21 year old single malt (a numbered bottle from an identified barrel) - there will be no sign of ice!