

## "All Things are Re-Aligned"

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An Christmas Eve Reflection including  
Malcolm Guite's poem, *Christmas on the Edge*.

Luke 2:1-20

December 24, 2020

Please read the Bible passage. You can find it [here](#).

The "Great Conjunction" is when Jupiter and Saturn look so close together that they appear to be one shining object in the night sky. It happened a few days ago. It was the closest they'd been since 1623. Another major conjunction happened in 7 BC. Some think this was the star the magi saw that led them to Jesus. Now, all this is from our perspective. Really, these two giant planets stay far apart. If they could, I doubt they would care what we see.<sup>1</sup>



A photo was taken from the 1968 Apollo 8 spacecraft as it orbited the moon. It shows Earth, the home of everything and everyone we've ever known, sitting against the dark of endless space. So fragile.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_conjunction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_conjunction)

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earthrise>



Another photo was snapped the Voyager I spacecraft as it was leaving our solar system. They'd pointed its camera back toward home. Can you see us? We're that tiny blue dot, backdropped against a band of colour. So small.<sup>3</sup>

A new simulation from the European Space Agency shows the tracks of stars as they will move through the next 1.6 million years. These are only a handful of our Milky Way galaxy's stars. It has between 200 and 400 billion of them. Our Sun is somewhere in there. So unnoticeable.<sup>4</sup>

Our Milky Way is one of more than 2 trillion galaxies. There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on Earth. Our Sun is just one. Our Earth, a minuscule flicker lost on the edge of the cosmos.<sup>5</sup>

II

So lets get smaller. The Roman Empire! Under its first emperor Augustus, it covered most of Europe, North Africa, Western Asia. It ruled Egypt, where the pyramids were already old news. It ruled Greece, expropriating its ancient knowledge and philosophy. Spain and Syria, France and Libya, and soon Britain . . . all belonged to it.

Then there was Judea, ruled for Rome by its puppet king Herod. Off to the side. Butting

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<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale\\_Blue\\_Dot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_Blue_Dot). The background colour was an illusion, created by the Sun's light reflecting off the camera.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.esa.int/Science\\_Exploration/Space\\_Science/Gaia/Gaia\\_s\\_new\\_data\\_takes\\_us\\_to\\_the\\_Milky\\_Way\\_s\\_antcentre\\_and\\_beyond](https://www.esa.int/Science_Exploration/Space_Science/Gaia/Gaia_s_new_data_takes_us_to_the_Milky_Way_s_antcentre_and_beyond)

<sup>5</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galaxy>

against the desert. Too often a bothersome mess.

Still, Judea did have Jerusalem and its Temple of the Jews. Everyone agreed, it was impressive. But don't linger there.

Walk away from the city, into the hills and scrubby fields, to *Beth-Lechem*. "House of Bread" that means. That's about all that's there: bread, a few houses, and yes, sheep. It claims fame as the birthplace of a king, long ago. List the world's places of politics, and economics, and cultural significance, however, and *Beth-Lechem* is at best a stray scratch on the page.

A backwater.

*Yosef*. Such a common name. He's a tradesman from town who'd sought work up north. *Miryam*. An even-more-common name. She's the girl he's found and married in *Natzrat*. Can you imagine, a place even less than *Beth-Lechem*! (Good catch, *Yosef*.) Look at her belly, though, and do the math. Now it makes sense. And she's ready to burst. The place is crowded. We've got no room. Put them in with the animals.<sup>6</sup>

### III

There Mary births her boy. Out back. Away from polite, respectable company. Far from home. Her first mouth to feed.

But for anyone else, he's just another name to add to the tax register. Just another Jew living under Herod's madness. Just another subject for Emperor Caesar Augustus, the son of a god. Just another creature, of just another species, on just another planet, orbiting just another star, lost in just another galaxy, spinning through the ever-expanding cosmos.

And, this one Mary births is . . . the One who made her. The Creator of all that's created. The Master of all lords and Ruler of all kings. Who was from before all beginnings, and set the stars to their spinnings. Who writes the laws of nature, plays dice with physics, and evolves the giraffe to make us laugh. Who spoke a word before there was anyone else to hear, and made everything appear.

This one whom Joseph holds is . . . the Son of God, of one being with God the Father, who together dance in the delight of the Spirit. God from God. Light from Light, whose weight can now be measured in ounces or grams. The Creator, now cradled. The Sustainer, now suckled. The Redeemer, now wrapped in swaddling clothes.

The Maker in a manger, at the edge of a house, at the edge of a town, at the edge of a map, at the edge of a planet, on the edge of a galaxy, at the edge of the everything else.

IV

Now, listen to this poem. It's by Malcolm Guite. It's called *Christmas on the Edge*.

*Christmas sets the centre on the edge;  
The edge of town, the outhouse of the inn,  
The fringe of empire, far from privilege  
And power, on the edge and outer spin  
Of turning worlds, a margin of small stars  
That edge a galaxy itself light years  
From some unguessed at cosmic origin.  
Christmas sets the centre at the edge.*

*And from this day our world is re-aligned  
A tiny seed unfolding in the womb  
Becomes the source from which we all unfold  
And flower into being. We are healed,  
The end begins, the tomb becomes a womb,  
For now in him all things are re-aligned.<sup>7</sup>*

V

How is it for you, living on the edge?

These days? A bit edgy are you?

We've been removed from things that centred us. Knocked off of our stability.

I'm talking about the pandemic, but there are other things too, right. What has dislocated you?

"*There was no place for them.*" Do you find yourself without . . . a place?

Dislocated?

God, the very Centre of everything chooses to be found in those edgiest of places. To be birthed! Birthed, the One who was all birthings' beginning. So *Beth-Lechem* becomes *the* place where this most astonishing thing happens. Far from the headlines. Away from the cameras. Unnoticed in centres of worldly power, the Centre himself goes to the edge, where his courtiers are chickens, his government ministers are barnyard animals, and his wealth is straw. His banquet is his mother's breast. His throne is his father's shoulder.

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<sup>7</sup> Malcolm Guite, *Soundings of the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Church Year* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2012), 15.

And your place, where you are dis-located, is precisely the sort of place where God chooses to be discovered,

Your place, where you feel homeless, is precisely where he is. And because Jesus is there, you are at home.

Your place of dislocation, he's re-aligns. It's now a place of holiness. A place of sacred encounter.

You might feel lost, but you are not lost to him.

You might feel like your on the edge of everything, but he has made that his centre.

*We are healed,  
The end begins, the tomb becomes a womb,  
For now in Jesus all things are re-aligned.*

Amen.