



Hawkwood Books Blog : Boxing Day, 2025

The Sweep of History

The Season of Merriment and Festivities can be a challenge, for all kinds of reasons. Somehow, the purpose and intent have been lost. Two thousand years ago, the Jewish people were on the verge of extinction. Beaten by Babylonians, Greeks and Romans, they faced total oblivion. Everything they held sacred, the very faith itself, after a thousand years, was under threat. They needed a saviour. One had been promised, some said, and quite a few appeared, but only one survived the test of time.

The vast and complex chain of events from ancient history – ancient as it must have appeared even to the Jews at the time of Jesus – through civilisations and empires up to the present day would make us think that we have learned from the tempests of the past. Logically, these events should guide us towards calmer waters and saner leaders, more aware, more humble, more altruistic, followers of truth and justice. Obviously, something in this logic is not quite right.

On this Boxing Day of 2025, there are the usual disturbing reports of peace breaking out in war zones and war breaking out in peace zones. Plus ca change. After three thousand years and more, still there is tribe against tribe, culture against culture. The leader of the free world is a figure that polarises views, hailed as a man of the people on one hand, the quintessence of crassness on the other. Whatever he is, and whatever every other leader of every other country is at the moment, there is something disappointing in the seismic past bringing us to this volatile present which often feels aimless, random and just wrong.

Way below the news-making bullies of our various cultures, you and I try to go about our daily lives from the cradle to the grave as independently as possible, as peacefully as possible. I don't think that many of us see ourselves as part of any historical movement at all, but we are. This is only seen in retrospect, over generational time spans. I don't understand much of what I see and hear, but societal patterns are always changing.

Whether Jesus would have been content knowing that his birth would be celebrated in part by the miracle of television showing Mrs Brown's Boys and reruns of Morecambe and Wise, I doubt. But neither would we be happy in a culture oppressed by religious zealotry. All of it is story, much of it illusion. The only reality is the one we make ourselves, which is quite daunting and quite a responsibility.

The thing is not to be afraid, despite the weight of history and the fragility of our own lives. Best to face up to it rather than ignore it, to consider the sweep of history rather than sweep it under the carpet. There may or may not be forces at work, pushing us hither and thither to a predestined end. My way will not be your way, but in the tumultuous events around us, we should be free to find the path that suits us best. Floating boats comes to mind, making sure we can choose which boat to float and not be swept along in the stormy seas of outdated Ozymandian politics.