

The Irish Times takes on Christmas

We in the (still somewhat vaguely Christian) West have long been told that the Three Wise Men visited the newly born Jesus, when Mary, Joseph and baby were forced to shelter in a stable in Bethlehem, in the then-Roman province of Judea. However, according to this year's Christmas *Irish Times* editorial (['open unashamed advocacy](#)). It would seem this impartial propensity extends to the white-washing of the Jewish connection to Israel and/or the Middle East (Abraham it would seem was first and foremost "a wandering Aramean," while the Sea of Galilee oddly becomes the "Syrian Sea") – other than perhaps indirectly evoking the tyranny of Herod as a parallel of today's Israel, closing off Jerusalem to Jesus.

Indeed, despite the *Irish Times*' heavy-handed moralising over migrants who are supposedly fleeing the war-torn Middle East, but most nonetheless prioritise passing through numerous safe-havens to access the wealth of Germany, the ever-liberal *Irish Times* could not even afford a word or two for the suffering the Middle East's Christians, which are persecuted both in times of war and peace, and have been targeted by Jihadis to devastating effect for merely celebrating Christmas. Below is an extract:

[...] The Christmas story begins with a displaced couple from Galilee finding there is no room at the inn in Bethlehem. There they are visited by wise men who travel from what is now Iraq across desert, rock and snow to a humble, temporary dwelling on the West Bank, and in the words of TS Eliot find :

The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.

This family is soon forced by the murderous plans of a cruel tyrant to seek refuge in Egypt. Even when they return, Saint Matthew's Gospel recounts, it is not safe for them to settle near Jerusalem and they move once again to Nazareth. Indeed, before the drawing of modern political borders in the Middle East in the 20th century, the hymn-writer John Greenleaf Whittier placed Christ's life story "beside the Syrian sea".

From the very beginning, the Bible is a shared story of forced exile, asylum and refugees. It is a story that begins with Abraham, a wandering Aramean, and that continues with exile in Egypt and in Babylon. Yet it always remains a story of hope and return, of compassion and love, of freedom and long yearning for peace and justice. [...]