



Christmas Reflections – A Hint of Christmas

I have before me a six-year old's rendering of a giraffe. Its body has the shape of a large tennis ball, yellow with streaks of orange. Its neck reminds one of a long rigid cane cut from a Louisiana sugar field. A banana seems to serve for a tail, and four large green tree trunks for legs. It is all together delightful. Even more delightful was the way it was presented to me, with a smile and kindness. It was a wonderful piece of play and even more wonderful, that a bright-eyed child would, without vulgar display, freely present such a gift to her former principal. There was a tinge of grace in the play, the picture, and the presentation. Such graces shape the heart of a child. Such graces make for a hint of Christmas every day.

The dark sky had already paled a little in its frame of cherry-pink chintz. Eternity framed in domesticity. Never mind.
One had to frame it in something, to see it at all.

— Jan Struther, *Three Stockings* —

Chintz is a shiny cotton fabric upon which is printed a floral pattern, a warm and suitable frame for an infinite sky. And it seems a good metaphor for Christmas, the infinite, ineffable God made flesh, a baby held by His mother. This reminds me of a rather striking concept, learned during my days as a theology student – obediential potency. In its broadest sense obediential potency means the openness of every creature to the Creator's power to effect in it something beyond the powers of ordinary natural causes. By virtue of its very existence, every object of creation is positively ordered in accordance with God's power to act in it and through it, having the potential to accomplish a specific divine end. Chintz possesses the potential to both frame an infinite sky and be a divine instrument revealing something of eternity. In cloth and sky, we can discover something of God, for even the rocks may cry out. Tongues and hands may serve as the instruments of God. Human flesh assumes divinity. Christmas comes.

Immanuel, God with us, was made manifest in Bethlehem two thousand years ago and is still at work today. We are all too aware of our profound flaws, the many ways in which we prove ourselves inadequate vessels. But still, He uses us, you and me. May there be ever more of Christmas in us and through us.

Image: Guido Reni, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, [National Gallery, London](https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-the-adoration-of-the-shepherds), Public Domain