

# Commentary: The radical, revolutionary faith of Christmas spirituals

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There are about 6,000 known spirituals, sometimes called “sorrow songs.” This extraordinary body of literature contains multiple sub-sets, none more potent, more poignant, more powerful than those that deal with the Christmas narratives.

✘ Robert Darden The stories in Luke’s gospel about the birth of Jesus resonated with the unnamed and unknown slave poets in a profoundly personal way, perhaps more so than any other in Scripture, save the crucifixion. Perhaps it was because the African-American slaves of the 19th century were strangers in an appallingly strange land, landless refugees, constantly on the move, helpless pawns in sweeping geo-political games. They were foreigners, aliens, living a precarious existence in occupied territory ruled by a harsh dictatorship that, literally, considered them to be worth less than cattle.

**[Read the full column in the Dallas Morning News.](#)**

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