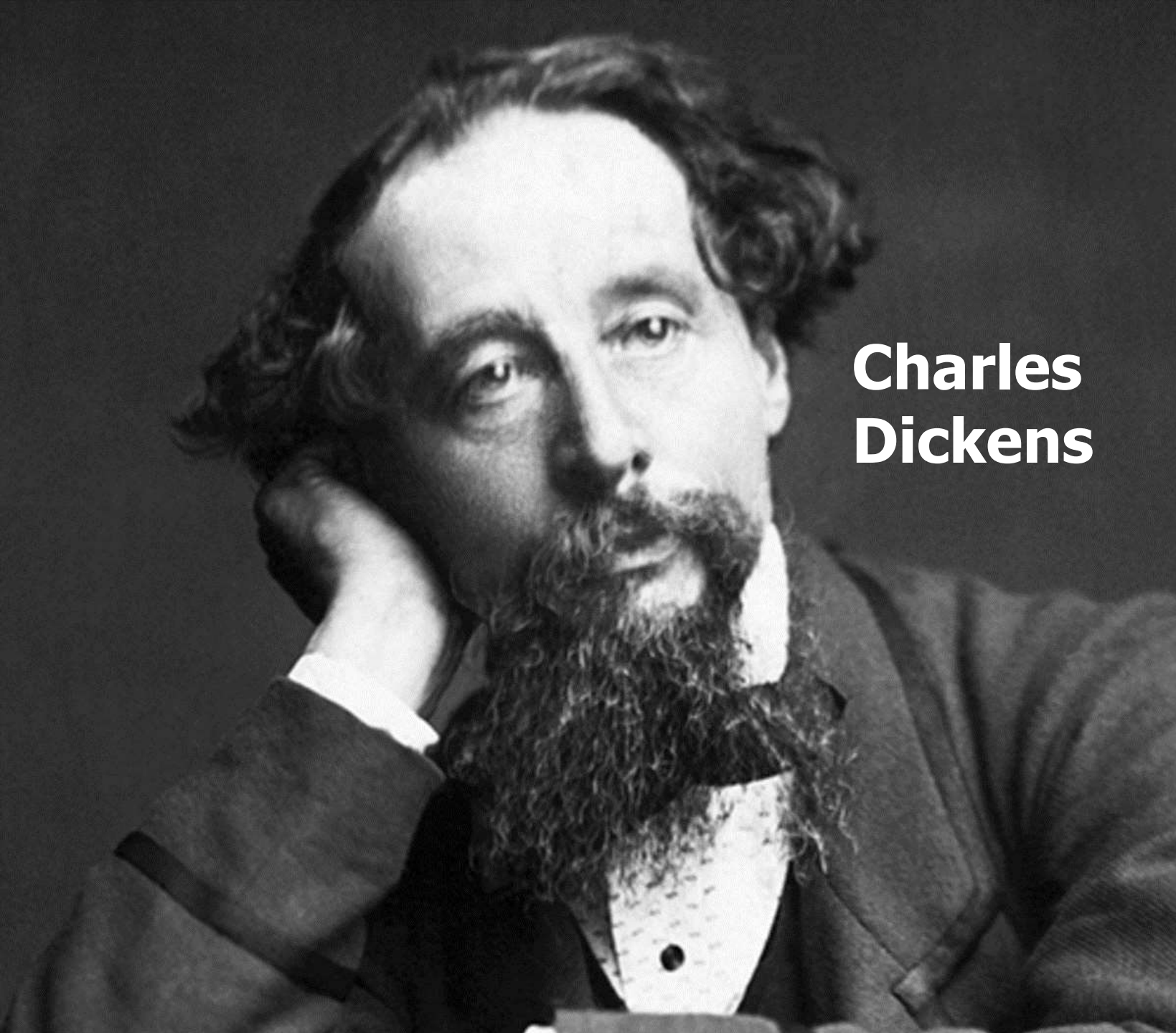


The Christmas Story



**Charles
Dickens**



Henry
Bessemer



Where Did Christmas Come From?

- Not celebrated until the 4th century, after lots of confusion about the date
- Over the centuries, syncretized with pagan elements
- Character of the celebration fluctuated through the years. For long periods it was just an excuse for drunken partying – and worse. Church suppressed it at times, though it was promoted as an obligation for titled landowners to do something to relieve the suffering of their tenants during the season
- So how did it go from an almost obscure and semi-scandalous and almost pagan celebration to a worldwide, suffocatingly sentimental retail juggernaut that drives the profits of almost all global retail organizations??



Started With Dickens

- Already a celebrated author, but by 1843 his sales were dropping and he needed a new hit
- He was also fervent Unitarian, who was passionate about the Gospel's mandate to love your neighbor, and who was embarking on a national campaign to draw attention oppressed workers, especially kids
- Out of desperation/inspiration, he converted an idea he had for a pamphlet about worker's rights into a novel about how Christmas changed a cynical businessman into a compassionate philanthropist
- A Christmas Carol became a best-seller and, – in one fell swoop – crystalized into the Western psyche, ALL of the Christmas traditions we practice today



Railroading Christmas

- 101- year old Jane Ann Brown, “for most of my life, people made more out of New Year’s than Christmas” – NY Times 1894
- That all changed by 1860, when the Bessemer Steel Process made it possible to produce thousands of miles of train track quickly and cheaply
- The Industrial boom in America created a massive boost in the creation of consumer goods in need of a delivery season, AND a reason to buy them. Christmas became the perfect excuse to push people into buying stuff they didn’t need
- 101- year old Jane Ann Brown, for most of life, people made more out of New Year’s than Christmas – NY Times 1894



Messed Up Message

- Dickens shifted the focus from Jesus to “the Spirit of Christmas,” a super-sweet combination of family and short-term benevolence to help people have Merry Christmas
- Railroads made it easier for people to buy everyone a Merry Christmas
- The Good News of Christmas – the coming of the Savior – was reduced to the Good News of automobile tires
- Good News – amazing new vehicle with all of these features, but the eyes of the world give each other tires for Christmas – WITH NO CAR!!!!



Don't Mess with the Message

⁵ Have this attitude [e]in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although **He existed in the form of God**, did not regard equality with God a thing to be [f]grasped, ⁷ but [g]**emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death [h]on a cross.** ⁹ For this reason also, **God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,** ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ **and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** Philippians 2



REJOICE, in Him We ARE

- deeply loved by God,
- fully accepted by God,
- completely and permanently forgiven by God,
- lavishly blessed by God,
- and eternally, perfectly embraced by God as his child; **a child who brings Him unspeakable JOY!!!!**