

Christmas

Dr. A. W. Cleaves

Pastor of First Baptist
Church, North Main Street

To me, Christmas is in part the festival of the child. No one who has ever watched a child as, on Christmas morning, he has come down stairs with eyes full of wonder and joy, and with a body alive and expectant, can question thereafter the presence of pure joy on earth. Nor, if he has given time and thought and hard-earned money to the purchase of gifts can he fail to see the truth in the saying that, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

But Christmas is far more than this. For it is the festival of the Divine Child, who is God's greatest gift to men. The stories of the manger and of the shepherds and of the singing angels and of the wise men all centre about one fact—namely that God has visited His people.

The One whose birth is heralded is the manifestation in time of the Eternal Glory. And he who looks with the eyes of faith may see how human and homely, using the latter word in its best sense, God is. He has invested the divine with the human in order that the human may be taken up into the divine. He is not far away, but has His dwelling-place in the midst of the homes and hearts of people. I may speak to Him and be sure of understanding. He may speak to me, and I can hear.

So it comes to pass that, to me, Christmas is a time of deep inner peace and joy and hope. It calls me to praise and to thanksgiving. I say to myself and to others, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift." Perhaps I do not only say it, in my heart I sing it.

Rev. George S. Pine

Former Editor of Episcopal
Diocesan Record, World
Traveler and Scholar

Thanks to the printing press as well as to the ministry of the Church countless millions know the details of the Christmas story. There is nothing to add to it.

There is, however, an old saying that may give a clue to its valuation. "The proof of the pudding (let us call it a Christmas pudding) is in the eating." The meaning of the Christmas story is realized in the doing, in its re-enactment many times in many seemingly small ways.

The humble shepherds eagerly grasped the angel's report and hastened with gifts a hand and found the Babe in the manger; and later the Wise Men from the far East came and entering the house found Him and presented Him their costly gifts. Shepherds and Wise Men wherever they went spread joyfully the news of their find.

Rev. R. H. Schacht, Jr.

Minister of First Congrega-
tional Church, Unitarian,
Benefit Street

It is so good to have Christmas and the Christmas spirit return. Never were we more in need of them!

We are living in a time which is the focal point of many important tendencies. The machine, for example, has been releasing us more and more from various laborious and time-consuming tasks. We have witnessed the piling up of surplus goods on one hand, and dire want among the needy masses on the other hand. This has set us thinking as never before about a readjusted social and economic life.

Fine religious people everywhere are having a new vision and a new sense of responsibility in the matter of adjusting the shocking inequalities in the distribution of what are now plentifully available materials for a basic right existence for all human beings. People have come to see, also, that this basic right existence includes not only food, shelter and clothing, but spiritual and cultural opportunities and stimuli as well.

Precious tradition tells us that 2000 years ago the angels sang at the birth of the Wondrous Child Whose birthday we celebrate so joyously each year. The song they sang was "Peace on Earth, good will to men." Despite awful defeats and handicaps man has persisted down through the ages in trying to build that "Kingdom of God" in which man might be able to live as the angels sang.

The material possibilities of building that "kingdom" were never before within the reach of human hand and skill as they are today. The great possibilities for good—or evil—which lie before us, are high over our heads. Tremblingly we wonder if we can get together and build it now that the material means are here. The answer is "yes" as sure as night follows day if we can come together spiritually.

The precious Christmas spirit is a clear demonstration that we can get together spiritually, that we can unite our minds and hearts to live as true neighbors. God grant that it renew our faith in man, and in the power of good men to live, labor, and sacrifice joyously that a world may be built in which all our neighbors may each and everyone have fair and just opportunity to achieve Life Abundant, so far as human control can make it possible.

Listen, friends, those terrible machines that have put half the world out of business may become our very best friends, when we have learned to adjust ourselves to them.

The ancients thought, when the lightning struck, that Jove in anger was hurling thunder-bolts at men. Now we know that whenever lightning struck it was crying to say, "Hold, men. I am your friend. Trust me and I will carry your messages, in seven seconds, around the world. I will drag your great heavy

Max L. Grant

Jewish Co-Chairman of Rhode
Island Seminar on Human
Relationships

My Christian Brothers, I rejoice in the opportunity of extending to you in this Holy Season my heartfelt greetings and good wishes. May Yuletide bring you health, happiness, peace of heart and contentment of soul.

I should like to continue in this personal vein. I should like to dwell more on the cordial relations that prevail in our State and community between Jew and Gentile. But we live in a world trembling on the verge of great fears—fears which trouble our hearts even in this season of gladness.

There is the fear of war. Any day a Nazi trooper crossing into a Polish village, or a Japanese aviator flying over a Siberian tundra may start a conflagration which will circle the globe. Whether that conflagration will be stayed, you, my brothers, assembling in churches under the Cross of the Prince of Peace, have the strength and the power to determine.

There is also the fear of the godless paganism which has raised its head in Germany. Your Christian brothers in that unhappy land have met the issue by preaching for God. With the courage which only a religionist can muster, they declare that God is not only the Father of Aryans but He is also the Father of all Christians whether they spring from the loins of Jewish or Nordic mothers.

Paul once said: "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all." Is it too much to ask of you, my Christian brothers in America, that you in the spirit of Paul tell your Christian brothers in Germany that He is not only the Father of all Christians, but the Father of all men, whether these worship in church or in synagogue?

In the midst of a distressing situation there is happily prevalent in our land a spirit which declares that over and above a government of law there be a government based in social justice. Will you standing in close ranks in millions of pews resolve that the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man resound beyond the cloistered walls of churches, that these fiery words penetrate in legislative halls where the laws of the land are made, in shops where the wealth of the land is produced, and in stores where it is distributed so that they extend to the poor and the sick, and the aged, to young and to old, to men and to women, without distinction of race or creed?

Write these words not as one who gives advice and holds himself apart, but as one of the many who wish to lend a hand and together with you build a more livable and more lovable world for the greater glory of man and of God.

Rev. R. S. Hubbard

Rector of St. Martin's Epis-
copal Church, Orchard Ave-
nue

To Saint Nicholas the Lord Christ turns in this year of His grace, nineteen hundred and thirty-three, and says, "Let us go to earth, and see how they keep the feast of My Nativity on this 1900th anniversary of My Resurrection."

Quietly into the room where the children were playing with some of their new toys stole a Presence. Amid the babble of little voices there was a benediction there for all who would stop to receive it.

Down near the counter of the store laden with Christmas gifts for people to buy, pretty gee-gaws, stole the Presence. Betty, the shop girl to her companion in misery, "Oh, my feet are so tired!" "How much is this bracelet?" "Fifty cents, madam." "Why are they so expensive? Haven't you got some of those I saw here for 35 cents?" "No, madam, they were sold out yesterday." "Well, why don't you keep a supply on hand! Rotten system! Your things are all too expensive!" "Sorry, madam!" "You ought to be!"

Somehow there seemed something strange in this scene, and the Holy Pair left it.

A quiet, small church, with worshippers kneeling in silence. A poorly clad woman who had slunk into a back corner seat, out of reticence, suddenly feels a Presence in her heart. The words of the Divine Service seem to have a new thrill as the minister continues with the service. Then the congregation rises to sing, "Thou didst leave Thy Throne and Thy Kingly Crown! . . . Come to my heart, Lord Jesus; there is room in my heart for Thee."

Is there? What does Christmas mean anyway?

Redeemer of Our Race." Reger. Missa Patronus Ecclesiae, Josef Lechthaler, forms the music of the midnight Mass; Motets during ablations and Postlude numbers are from J. S. Bach.

Mozart's Seventh Communion Service in B flat will be sung at the choral celebration ushering in the Nativity, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, East Providence, Christmas Eve at 11:15. As the prelude, a string quintet with organ accompaniment will render J. S. Bach's chorale-prelude, "Jesu, Meine Freude," and Karg-Elert's "Freu dich sehr, O Meine Seele." Anthem selections include "A Bright Star Shining" by J. S. Matthews and a Bach chorale, "Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light." During the Communion the string quintet will play "Aus Meines Hersens Grunde." Karg-Elert and the organist, Hollis E. Grant, will play "Es ist das Heil," by the same composer. Rev. John A. Gardiner, rector, will preach the sermon. The quin-