

The President's Christmas Message

The word Christmas means "mass of Christ". Writings upon the walls of early Christian tombs seem to indicate that Christmas has been celebrated as a festival of the birth of Christ since the first century.

The date of Christ's birth is not known with certainty. It was not until 354 years after His birth that December 25th was first observed as His birthday, but since the year when Bishop Liberius of Rome observed Christmas on December 25, that date has been permanent.

The season which we now call Christmas was a period of great pagan celebrations on the part of ancient peoples. When the Christian faith began to spread, it was thought best to replace the heathen festivals with the Christmas celebration. Roman emperors objected at first, and many Christians were persecuted and put to death for its observance. But with the recognition of the new faith by the Emperor Constantine, the celebration of Christmas became established.

Now, once again, Christmas is to be celebrated throughout the world. It is interesting to consider some of the Christmas customs and practices of other lands, and to see how we have adopted similar customs in some instances.

In ENGLAND, for example, the holiday season is celebrated much as it is in our own land. Special church services and family gatherings take place on December 25. Santa Claus is a welcome guest in English homes, but he has a lot of competition from Father Christmas—an elderly gentleman wearing tail coat and beaver hat.

Mistletoe and holly decorate the household and doorway in England. Plum pudding and mince pie are on the table. The Yule log, whose cheery blaze has become a symbol of warmth and light in a season of cold, burns brightly in the fireplace.

In NORWAY, SWEDEN, and DENMARK, the ever-green tree is put up in homes. The season in SCANDINAVIA begins in mid-December and ends after New Year's in a gay party. Gifts are delivered on Christmas Eve or the following morning by the "tonte," two kindly old gnomes. One, an elderly old man with a white beard, red hood, and bell, looks very much like Santa. The other is a little old woman carrying a basketful of sweets.

In BELGIUM and the NETHERLANDS, the holiday season begins on December 6, St. Nicholas Day. On the eve of this day, according to legend, St. Nicholas, clad in brilliant red robes, gallops through the sky to drop gifts down the chimney for all good boys and girls. Their youngsters leave their wooden shoes on the hearth before going to bed as ours leave their stockings.

Most of us know that the Dutch colonists brought St. Nicholas, or Sinter Klas with them to the New World, and he became our Santa Claus.

GERMANY has its St. Nicholas, also. In German homes, however, he is just an advanced messenger of the Christmas season, and his task is to check on children's behavior. The real holiday begins on Christmas Eve and presents a familiar sight. The entire family gathers around a gaily decorated Christmas tree to sing carols. Later, the head of the house distributes gifts. The Christmas tree is Germany's most colorful contribution to our Yuletide heritage.

In ITALY, FRANCE, SPAIN, and some LATIN AMERICAN countries, the Creche may be found in almost every home during the Christmas season. Creche is the French word for cradle, and also means manger. Miniature figures of Joseph, Mary, the Three Wise Men, and the Shepherds, are grouped around the Christ Child in the manger, against a background of moss, stones, and branches. It is displayed on a mantle or a table, and most of the holiday observance centers around it in these countries where the religious aspect is stressed.

AUSTRALIA has its summer at Christmas time. While the Pacific Ocean countries follow many customs similar to ours, it adopts them somewhat to the climate. Rather than eat a big dinner at home, for example, an Australian family may go to the beach and have a big picnic.

In addition to Christmas celebrations at this time of

the year, there is, also, the great Jewish festival of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication. In 164 B. C., the Jews of Palestine defeated Antiochus, who had tried to abolish their religion and force Greek worship among the Jewish people. With the defeat of Antiochus, the Jews were able to restore the sacred light in their Temple and resume their worship. The anniversary of that victory for religious freedom has been observed ever since, and the celebration lasts eight days.

In AMERICA, Christmas will be celebrated in many ways, for representatives from many different countries have brought their heritage with them, either in part or in toto.

The traditions and festivities are good if they are expressions of joy because Christ is magnified at this season. It is possible for one to know the basic facts concerning Christmas, and even to participate in Christmas festivities, and yet be quite unaware of their significance and relevance to life today. I hope this will not be the case with members of our college family.

The true meaning of Christmas is this—with deliberate purpose, God Himself has visited this little planet, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is my hope that all of us, as well as our loved ones and friends, shall be consumed neither by the commercialization of Christmas nor by irrational rejoicing, but that we shall see with new eyes the marvel of God's visit. Let us make the One whose Birthday we rightly celebrate become to us real, alive and contemporary.

Then we shall understand the meaning of Christmas and be able to communicate with sincerity, the "good tiding of great joy which shall be to all people."

In the spirit of Christmas, I wish for all of you, all the joys and happiness which this season affords.

"DR. BRUCE"

Our New Year Resolutions

By JOE SUMLER

With the coming of the new year we will all be making resolutions of one nature or another. Nearly everyone makes a resolution, but it is doubtful if many have ever thought of the good a well-planned resolution could bring to their lives.

Most of us will make resolutions concerning things we have done, or habits we wish to break, or other items of little importance.

I know one person who has made the same resolution for several years, and says he has to break it so he will have something to resolve the coming year. To him this is a big joke.

Now think of the good that would come to us if we make and kept just one resolution a year that would make us better members of the society in which we live. Most of us have short-comings that we would like to overcome, or have goals we wish to reach. If we seriously resolved to do one thing a year to improve ourselves and try our best to stick by this, we would in a matter of time, see how easily it would be to control our lives. This can be an important part of the Christmas season.

Are we thankful for what we have? Do we find ourselves doing things we know are not appreciated by others? Are we satisfied with what we are attaining, living as we are? All of these things we should think of in making a resolution.

After we have a resolution, the hardest part has just begun. Many will feel the resolution will soon be forgotten by others, so it is soon cast aside. The fact is there are only a few people who care if you improve your life or not. So it is entirely up to you, and the strength of your willpower. If you can stick to one good resolution for a year it will by that time become a habit and you will have made the year a success.

This season, before we make any resolutions, let's determine what we need most to improve our way of life. Then the resolutions we make will have meaning to us, and we will benefit greatly by them.

Good Luck, Editor-in-Chief!

The members of the Chowanian staff would like to express their appreciation to Joe Sumler, editor-in-chief during the past two semesters, for the excellent job he has done. He was elected at the beginning of the second semester of last year and his term will end this semester. A new editor-in-chief will be selected at the beginning of next semester who will take Joe's place. Joe will become student advisor for the balance of this term.

Joe is a Graphic Arts student. He is a hard worker and any newspaper will benefit by having him on its staff. Although he has not had full cooperation at

all times from some members of the staff, he has managed to get *The Chowanian* out on time.

Joe takes the time to help any member of his staff who asks for his advice. He is a kind and considerate person, and welcomed any ideas to promote improvement of the publication.

Joe will graduate in May and go out in the world on his own. We, the members of "The Chowanian" staff, would like to wish him the best of luck.—B.C.

Summer School

Chowan College will hold Summer School classes, June 8 — July 17.

Stories From Life

Shoemaker's Christmas

By JOHN D. McCREADY
Chairman English Dept.

The editor-in-chief looked up as the cartoonist entered. "Let me see that drawing," he said.

The other man handed him a sketch he had prepared—a relatively small picture which occupied the center of an entire page, on which nothing else appeared.

"Hum . . . I think I agree with the managing editor," he said, "that this is not Christ-massy enough for this Sunday's issue. No Santa Claus, no red-nosed reindeer—no tree loaded with gifts, no stockings hung by the chimney. I believe that for once you've missed it." (The artist did not often miss; he had hit the bull's-eye many times, before and after he had won the highest award in a nation-wide contest).

Then, seeing the disappointment in his face, the head editor added, "Let's take it to the Big Chief (referring to the publisher) and let him decide."

"I'm perfectly willing." The two men made their way past a maze of desks, each with its man busily occupied with his special task in the production of a metropolitan newspaper. At last they reached the office of the one whose word was law. They explained their errand, and handed him the sketch.

It showed a rude shelter or stable in which a man and a young woman were bending tenderly over a babe who lay asleep in the straw. Above the building shone a single bright star. The picture bore no title, and there were no words attached, except that underneath it was written a verse from the New Testament.

"The managing editor feels, and I feel, that this picture is not Christmasy enough—no Santa Claus, nor the other things that we had in mind for our paper the Sunday before Christmas. We appreciate our cartoonist here — but we feel we need something different." The editor-in-chief was speaking, and he made his point in a few words.

The publisher, a large, burly man, was for a few moments deep in thought as he gazed at the simple but artistic picture and the words beneath it. Then he looked up at the influential member of his staff who had just stated his objection.

"You have brought this to me for my decision. Well, here it is:—the picture's all right. Publish it."

Then, to make the reasons for his decision clear, he went on—"Look at this picture, and look at that verse— from the Gospel of St. John. You think the whole thing's too religious. But I'm telling you that there wouldn't be any Christmas except for what that picture and that verse represent. Listen—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . ."

And so it was that a prayer of the cartoonist was answered. Not a prayer made only after he thought his cartoon was in danger of being rejected. It was a prayer made some days before, in keeping with his daily habit of kneeling to ask God's guidance; a prayer made as he was searching for a theme for his Christmas cartoon.

And so it was that millions of people in a huge city read the words of John 3:16 the next Sunday, and a Shoemaker's cup of joy was full.

For the cartoonist was named Shoemaker.

And the great paper for which he worked was the *Chicago Daily News*.

And Frank Knox — one-time Secretary of the Navy—was the publisher used of God that Christmas—he and his artistic co-worker—for the proclaiming a fresh of the greatest news ever told.

"Christmas Greetings"

The Staff of *The Chowanian* extends Christmas Greetings to everyone at Chowan College.

THE CHOWANIAN

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