

The Chowan Herald

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The Symbolism of Christmas

Editor's Note: The following article was written by Charles G. Reigner, Litt.D., LL.D., 4035 Belle Avenue, Baltimore, Md., and is reprinted by permission of "The New Age."

Once more, in the endless cycle of the years, we are in the midst of the Christmas season. Throughout the year we observe various holidays, such as Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Armistice Day, for example. In our hurrying time, when the superficial is so greatly in the ascendancy, we often fail to give thought to the profound significance of these special "days." Not only do they perpetuate the memory of far-reaching historic events, but they also set before us a challenge to meet the complex and intricate problems of our day in the same courageous spirit in which our forefathers met the problems of their day.

Christmas, however, is a day for all humanity—a day which is forever dedicated to home and childhood. In our material age the Spirit of Christmas is often deplorably commercialized. And yet, back of all the sordid extravaganzas that too often mar the Christmas season, there lies a deep-felt understanding of the fact that Christmas is "The Children's Day." Whatever men may individually think of the Child for whom Christmas is named, history teaches us that His birth was the grand event which divided time in twain. When we write about the days of antiquity, we designate a particular year as "B.C."—before Christ. We speak about our time as the "Christian Era," and denominate a specified year as "A.D."—Anno Domini, In the Year of the Lord.

Christmas is thus first of all a fact—the most epoch-making fact in human history. It commemorates the birth of a Child, born to poor parents in an obscure nocturnal country in the long ago—a Child who, without sword or pen, divided time into Before and After. Christmas dignifies womanhood and motherhood. It sheds luster on the home. It emphasizes the joy of giving, of bringing gifts to those who are near and dear to us by the ties of friendship and human relationship. Out of the brief life of that Child grew all the beneficent influences of civilization—care for the young and the aged, for the sick and the poor, for the inherent rights of men everywhere simply as men and human beings.

Yes, Christmas is a fact—a fact attested by the story of the human race through nearly two millenniums of time. Wherever you look, you will find that "story" marred and mutilated by hate and enmity and all manner of unbrotherliness. Yet, the light of Christmas shines high above the sadder shadows of our world. Christmas is a fact, just as the sun in the heavens is a fact.

Christmas is also a symbol. "By symbols," wrote Thomas Carlyle, "is the world guided and commanded, made happy, made wretched. He everywhere finds himself encompassed with symbols, recognized as such or not recognized. The Universe is but one vast Symbol of God."

Let us look at just two of the symbols by which Christmas is encompassed. First, there is the symbolism of "good tidings of great joy." Christmas is a symbol of joy, of happiness, of peace. It is the one day in the year when most people try consciously to cast selfishness and greed out of their hearts. On Christmas Day more than on any other day they realize, to some extent at least, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Christmas has thus become inseparably intertwined with the idea of giving and with the inward joy that comes from making gifts.

How large a part the word gift plays in the V.S.L. We read that "the gift of God is eternal life"; that "faith . . . is the gift of God"; that "every man has his proper gift of God." It is not at all strange, therefore, that Christmas is the veritable symbol of the joy that flows out of giving—of the joy, too, that comes from receiving gifts. The joy that shines in the face of a little child when he sees his gifts on Christmas morning is a reflection of the joy in the heart of mother and father—a reflection, too, of the joy in the heart of God who gave His Son as a gift to humankind that all men everywhere might know the way of life, the fundamental fact in the Christian faith.

In the second place, Christmas symbolically portrays the divine in human life—a union which brings heaven and earth together. The deepest meaning of Christmas is simply "God in man." In that meaning lies all the world's hope for a better day "when swords shall be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more."

One of the profoundest ideas of our generation is this: "Since it is in the minds of men that war be-

HEARD & SEEN

By "BUFF"

Edenton's trash collectors realized Tuesday morning that somebody had been eating oysters around Jackson's Radio & TV store on West Eden Street, for there was a huge pile of oyster shells to be moved. Well, the Red Men had an oyster roast in the rear of the building Monday night and every one of 'em had a belly full, except Gus Bunch—he had about two bellies full. That gang can really put away the oysters and, if I'm correct at judging Gus Bunch is the champion oyster eater of Chowan: Tribe of Red Men.

Charlie Overman and Jack Mooney sang a duet, "The Bells of St. Mary's," at the Masonic Christmas party Wednesday night of last week. When they went to the piano, Mrs. Jack Mooney, the pianist, asked what they were going to sing. "It doesn't matter," said Charlie, "for Jack and I are going to sing 'The Bells of St. Mary's,' no matter what you play." Anyway the applause was so great that they were obliged to sing an encore. "Well, you asked for it," said Charlie, "for we haven't rehearsed this piece." But about that time somebody piped up, "You don't have to rehearse, both of you sleep in the same choir, don't you?" Well, I know Charlie does and I know his preacher knows it, too, for when speaking at the Rotary Club before the Edenton-Bessemer football game, the Rev. R. N. Carroll said, "I hope those who go to the game will get back in time to get some rest so that they don't sleep in church."

A little boy in the Edenton Elementary School answered a question correctly one day last week but he got a zero just the same. The boy was asked, "What is the largest city in Australia and for what is it noted?" The boy wrote on his paper, "I don't know, I have never been there."

A person has to be careful how he talks, it seems. The other day three local ladies were in a kitchen preparing some sort of hifalutin spaghetti dinner. One of 'em said, "I believe I'll saute the onions and peppers." But one of the other ladies promptly piped up, "If you girls are going to start talking like that, I'm leaving." Anyway all of 'em were on hand when the spaghetti was done and it was while at the table one of 'em wound the spaghetti around a fork until it went about half way up the handle. She was duly warned by one of the others, "You better be careful, you'll be liable to puncture your windpipe getting it off the fork."

Two colored men apparently lost themselves in the hospital the other day. They were no doubt looking for somebody's room and as one of 'em poked his head in the office, the other said, "No, dat's not the place. Dat's where you pays up." Maybe one of 'em wasn't so much lost after all.

With so many parties and other affairs going on, a fellow has a dekens of a time keeping up with the going-ons. It's no wonder a fellow no-is a day or two to rest after the Christmas holidays. And then some people say there's nothing to do in a small town.

State Highway Patrolman Mack Rogerson urges all motorists to be particularly careful during the holiday season and handed me the following, a Motorist's Prayer:

"Our Heavenly Father, we ask this day a particular blessing as we take the wheel of our car. Grant us safe passage through all the perils of travel; shelter those who accompany us and protect us from harm by Thy mercy; steady our hands and quicken our eyes that we may never take another's life; guide us to our destination safely; confident in the knowledge that Thy blessings go with us through darkness and light, through sunshine and shower . . . forever and ever. Amen."

I've not had time to look over the large number of Christmas cards. This will be one of my pleasant duties on Christmas day. It's great to have so many friends. Thank you, everyone.

gins, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be built. Unless there is something divine in the human, those defenses can never be built. Christmas assures us that the divine does dwell in men; hence there is hope. That hope, in the long last, rests not on paper writings, diplomatic arrangements. It must be built—slowly, painfully, but eventually—into the will for peace which Christmas throughout the ages has symbolized.

It is not enough, however, to discover truth; we need to live that truth—to put it into practice in our daily thinking and acting. "The hope of the world, and of each of us," says Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, "lies in the growth of the divine in man—in your life and mine—refining lust into love, and greed into goodness. Also, since we have the same spark of Divinity within and the same starry ideals above us, it behooves us to love one another, to seek to know, to understand, and to help our fellow man. For here, in truth, is the basis and the prophecy of brotherhood."

Christmas, then, is the symbol of a new beginning in the life of mankind and of each individual, a life that has in it possibilities of spiritual enrichment because it is touched with an indwelling spark of divinity.

Back of the simple, human joys which Christmas emphasizes and brings to the surface of our lives are those profound truths which ring down through the corridors of time. As men and as Masons we shall do well, at this joyous Christmastide, not to be satisfied with merely the outward expressions of the Christmas spirit, but seek also to penetrate to the heart of that symbolism with which Christmas is everywhere encompassed.

4-H Clubbers Visit Community Shut-Ins

The Cannon's Ferry Local 4-H Club held a very successful meeting on Thursday night at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Drew Welch. Eighteen 4-H Club members (9 boys and 9 girls) from the Cannon's Ferry Local Club and two boys from other local clubs attended the meeting. The clubs met early and loaded into cars at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Welch and then made several visits to people in the community who are shut-ins. They sang Christmas carols, presented the person with a gift of fruit, wished them a Merry Christmas and then returned to the meeting place.

Persons who were visited by this club were: Mrs. Winslow, Mr. Smithwick, and Cleve Hollowell. Each of the persons visited expressed appreciation and complimented the 4-H Club work. After the club returned to the Welch home, they had recreation and exchanged Christmas gifts. Incidentally, Mr. and Mrs. Welch have two children, Billy and Bonnie Lou, who are good 4-H Club members.

Contributions Short For Children's Home

The Christmas Fund Drive of The Children's Home Society at Greensboro fell behind for the first time this week with contributions amounting to \$23,549.90 through Friday, December 17, the 19th day of the drive, according to Charles W. Gold, Jr., president of the Society's board of directors.

The increase in the number of new contributors this year indicates a new public awareness to the need for good adoption work, but the decrease in the amount of contributions has caused the current campaign to lag behind last year's drive.

The home gave services to 16 children from Chowan County, mostly babies, since 1947 and three couples seeking to adopt a child from October 1, 1953, to September 30, 1954.

Lost

"Shay," offisher, wheresh th' car?"
"You're standing on it."
"So wonder I couldn't find it."

Colored School News

The annual Christmas Musical Program, directed by Miss G. M. Davis and C. S. Jenkins, was presented Sunday, December 19.

The program was divided into three parts. The High School Band played a medley of Christmas carols and provided music for the professional of the high school and elementary choirs.

The second and third parts of the program consisted of music by the High School Choir and the Elementary Choir.

"The Christmas Story," narrated by Ruby Jordan, featured Henry Bond, Reginald Burke and Angus Small as soloists. Other soloists for the High School Choir were Ruth Sutton, who sang "Ave Maria," "Jean Thou Dear" and "Babe Divine," "O Holy Night" was sung by Reginald Burke, Henry Bond and William Collins were featured in the final selection "White Christmas."

Soloists for the Elementary Choir were Noah Blount and Doris Leary, who sang "Winter Wonderland," Deborah Guy was soloist for "Away In A Manger."

Christmas scenery for the musical program was supervised by George Gray.

On Friday, December 17, Father Francis Smith, rector of St. Ann's Catholic Church, gave a message in the spiritual significance of Christmas decorations.

The Christmas tree, stated Father Smith, is a symbol of the tree of forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Father Smith concluded his message by stating that Christmas should be in the hearts of men, women, and children.

Father Smith was presented by T. I. Sharpe, who pointed out that this was the first assembly program for this year dealing with the Yuletide season.

The Elementary Choir, directed by Mrs. G. M. Davis gave two selections. Prayer was offered by Mrs. F. Hines Modlin.

The Edenton Hornets played host to Queen Street High School, December 17 in the gymnasium.

Queen Street High led throughout the game showing a three-point lead over the Hornets at the end

of the first quarter of play. The final score for the game was Edenton High 35 and Queen Street 50.

Records for each team are as follows: Edenton 18 fouls, Queen Street 16 fouls; Edenton made 7 out of 22 tries for free throws and Queen Street made 12 out of 23 attempts.

James Hedgeboth was the high pointer for the Hornets. Hedgeboth scored 13 points. Allen Murry made 12 points for Queen Street.

Members of the Hornet team are: James Hedgeboth, Ernest Blanchard, George Gilliam, Ernest Jones, Lenton Carter, William Hedgeboth, James Burke, Joe Collins, William Bonner and Haywood Harrell. Managers of the team are Calvin Nixon and Henry Bond.

"Guest At The Inn," a three-act Christmas pageant, was one of the attractions presented for parents, teachers and friends at the monthly meeting of the Edenton High School PTA. George Gray was the director of the play.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit, the president, William Collins, presented tickets to all persons entering the gymnasium. The holders of lucky numbers were presented gifts. Four gifts were awarded.

The principal, D. F. Walker, gave remarks concerning regulations of bus routes and the necessity for changing routes in order to comply with State requirements.

Music for the meeting was presented by the Edenton High School Band under the direction of C. S. Jenkins and the High School Choir, directed by Miss G. M. Davis.

PTA meetings are held the first Tuesday night of each month at 8 o'clock.

Two Edenton Boys Completing Training At Lackland AFB

Fred Lassiter, son of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Lassiter, and Willie T. Boyce, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. T. Boyce, are completing their Air Force basic military training course at Lackland Air Force base. Their basic military training is preparing them for entrance into Air Force technical training and for assignment in specialized work. The course includes a scientific evaluation of his aptitude and inclination for following a particular vocation and career.

May your Christmas be bounteous and full of good cheer.

PRESTON'S

G&W SEVEN STAR

90 Proof!
\$2.40 PINT
\$3.80 4/5 QT.

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Every happiness at Christmas time

Here are our best wishes for a memorable Christmas—abundant with good cheer and good fellowship.

SMITHSON ELECTRIC COMPANY

PHONE 650

Season's Greetings

and to all our friends and neighbors . . . may you enjoy a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous New Year.

We thank you for your patronage in the past year. We hope that in the coming year you'll continue to drive in at the familiar Sinclair sign.

J. C. PARKS

SINCLAIR SERVICE STATION

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J. M. VAIL

MERRY CHRISTMAS

May the carols of Christmas ring out in joyous melody their message of good cheer.

Chowan Storage Co.

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