

Christmas, 1948

AS the 1948th Christmas approaches, it finds mankind living in a fabulous world.

Man flies through the air faster than sound. He sits in his home and sees and hears, as they happen, events that are transpiring far away. He lives in a luxury that, by comparison, makes the palaces of old the meanest hovels. And he has learned more, in a hundred years, about the workings of the human body, and more, in a few decades, about the intricacies of the human mind, than he had in the previous ten centuries.

Life in today's world appears amazing and complex indeed in contrast with that of the simple shepherds, who kept watch over their flock by night in the crude world of two thousand years ago.

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And yet has anything basic changed?

For speed has not affected the moral order, nor has science discovered a substitute for character.

And is it not as true today as it was of Peter when he denied his Lord that our greatest problem, and our bitterest battle, are within ourselves? Is it not still true that all real happiness and peace come from within us, rather than from without? And is it not as true now as it was two thousand years ago that our greatest difficulties grow out of the problem of one man's relationships with another?

It is only the surface that has been affected by or vast scientific and technological developments; beneath that surface life itself is little changed. For it is man's yearnings that determine his life, and man's hunger for something that cannot be satisfied with bread alone remains the same.

And the solutions of life's problems is as simple in the twentieth century as they were the day they were started. For has the paradox that a man must lose his life to save it changed one whit? Or have television and the atom bomb altered the sublime truth that the only antidote for hate and force is love?

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As in the days of Augustus Caesar, we find among nations greed and trickery, and suspicion and fear and hate. We still find, too, the nations looking upon force—which is a palliative at best—as a panacea.

And yet such is the faith of some men—a torch lit from that flaming life that had its beginning nearly two thousand years ago—that we move forward. Whether it be the newspaper account of the adoption of a world charter of human rights or the five-year-old's letter to Santa Claus, ending with a plea to "remember my brothers and sisters", we have evidence of progress. The letter and the newspaper dispatch are perhaps equally significant, for the charter would be meaningless without the spirit of the little boy's letter; each is a remembering of brothers and sisters.

In today's world, even so, the charter may seem an empty gesture. But so, no doubt, did the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence when that document was written. That charter, too, was based on faith.

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And so we come to another Christmas . . .

And so boys and girls smile in anticipation. And so men and women are literally "men of good will", for a day at least. And so, as another year's hopes and fears, difficulties and disappointments, trials and despairs, are begun, some men will continue to have faith and to strive; to battle for the rights not of themselves alone, nor of their nations alone, but for the rights of all humanity.

And so long as there are faith and courage and love, the world will go forward — by fits and starts, with backings and fillings, perhaps, but inevitably forward — toward that heaven on earth that the Man of Galilee so confidently declared is possible.

Beautiful Music

Sunday night's Christmas cantata was a musical achievement.

Critics, possessed of a technical knowledge of music, undoubtedly would agree, and the program met a test perhaps even more severe, for it held the rapt attention of persons of all ages and all tastes. Furthermore, they left the church with feelings of joy and contentment written on their faces.

Mixed with that was a feeling of pride, because it was their friends and neighbors who had given this splendid performance; it was local persons who had the talent, and who had done the hard work that must always precede such a fine performance. It was a community, as well as a musical achievement.

We need more such music and more such community achievements.

Now The Birth Of Jesus Christ Was On This Wise

AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

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THE angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Then said Mary unto the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

And the angel answered and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."

And Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her.

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NOW the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. . . . Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

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AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of

the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

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NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.'"

Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt have I called my son".

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. . . .

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life". And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. . . . And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.



May true happiness come to you and yours on this Day of Days.

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