

## The Nativity.

Night of wonder, sight of glory,  
Night all solemn and serene,  
Night of old prophetic story,  
Such as time has never seen:  
Sweetest darkness, softest blue,  
That these fair skies ever knew.

Night of beauty, night of gladness,  
Night of nights—of nights the best.  
Not a cloud to speak of sadness,  
Not a star but sings of rest;  
Holy midnight, beaming peace,  
Never shall thy radiance cease.

Happy city, dearest, fairest,  
Blessed, blessed Bethlehem!  
Least, yet greatest, noblest, rarest,  
Judah's ever sparkling gem:  
Out of thee there comes a light  
That dispelleth all our night.

Now thy King to thee descendeth,  
Borne upon a woman's knee;  
To thy gates his steps he bendeth,  
To the manger cometh he:  
David's Lord and David's Son,  
This his cradle and his throne.

He, the lowliest of the lowly,  
To our sinful world has come;  
He, the holiest of the holy,  
Cannot find a human home.  
All for us he yields here,  
All for us he lives and dies.

Babe of weakness, child of glory,  
At thy cradleth we bow;  
Poor and sad thy earthly story,  
Yet the King of glory thou:  
By all heaven and earth adored,  
David's Son and David's Lord.

Light of life, thou liest yonder,  
Shining in thy heavenly love;  
Naught from thee our souls shall sunder,  
Naught from us shall thee remove.  
Take these hearts, and let them be  
Throne and cradle both to thee!

HORATIUS BONAR.

## The Sacred Festival.

Christmas comes to the world as its most sacred festival—to the world, we say, not alone to the church; for of all days upon which the sun rises with a brightness and significance above that of other days, the anniversary of our Lord's advent into the world is the most universally significant, the most truly a festival day for the whole race. Preserved by the church, it still belongs to the whole family of mankind. Whether one listens to Christmas hymns that rise among the arches of God's house of worship, or in distant islands of the sea watches the gold and purple morning steal over the wide water and unresponsive wilderness, he is still among the number of those for whom the advent angels sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to men." Not to any chosen land, not to any favored institution, does our Christmas festival belong. It is the anniversary of mankind's redemption. Christ died for the world, and rose again: that is the truth which we proclaim from our pulpits, and reiterate in our Christian literature, and lift upon the voice of song, and publish to the nations of the whole earth. And if Christ died and rose for all, Christmas, the day when He was born into the world, must mean as much for the Hottentot as it does for the American, as much for the pagan as for the Christian. All men, whether they join in our anthems of joyful praise or not, are involved in the significance of Christ's birth, death and resurrection. When the hands of the clocks touch the midnight hour, on Christmas Eve, one cannot say, "It is Christmas here in Boston, or here in London, or here in Berlin;" for that glad day dawns in every corner of the earth, and it is Christmas everywhere. The universality of this sacred festival, therefore, is the first thought which presents itself, as we seek the deep and true significance of the Christmas anniversary.

"Joy to the world! the Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room;  
And heaven and nature sing."  
May this glad Christmas anniversary, with its inherent spirit of optimism, and love, and charity, help us to wider and deeper conceptions of the meaning of Christ's advent into the world!

But there is another aspect of the sacred festival which claims our attention. It is not only universal, it is special. Christmas means, or ought to mean, so much to each individual soul! It has a wonderful intention, as well as extension. There are certain things in every man's life which should make the Christmas anniversary to him especially sacred. None of us can say except for ourselves, what these things are; but we all know that, considered with special reference to our own lives, there is a peculiar significance in the day which commemorates the advent of the Son of God into this world. The fact of the Christ-life in the world, and our relation to it—facts which sum up the whole significance of our present existence—are involved in the true conception of this sacred anniversary. "What is my present relation to the Christ?" should be the serious thought which

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presents itself to every soul at this Christmas season. In what respect is my life different than it would be if Christ had not come into the world? Is the Christ-idea shaping itself out in what I think, and say, and do? It is a very different thing to believe in a general way that Jesus Christ came into the world, and came into the world to bring a universal salvation, and to believe devoutly, trustfully, reverently, that He came into the world to save me. That is where the special and specific significance of this Christmas anniversary has its application to each of us. Do we grasp the personal importance of the great fact which we celebrate?

What import as to personal holiness does this recurring Christmas season bring to us? The life whose inception we celebrate is a life which, if we call ourselves Christians, we are pledged to share. It is the life which Christ bequeathed to all His followers when He was taken up into heaven. Each one of us, who is living according to Christ's will and Christ's spirit, is living out His life—as it were, taking up and continuing that pure, and sweet, and beautiful Oriental story which the biographers of Jesus have left us. If Christ has any representatives in the world, we must be those representatives. Indeed, has not He Himself commissioned us?

Each new anniversary of Christ's birth into the world ought to be a new occasion of consecration for all those who bear His name and share His life. To be more like Him—that is the great privilege, that is the great duty of every Christian. As the years roll by, and the figure of the historical Christ grows more and more remote; as times, and customs, and opinions change; as new generations are confronted by new problems, and become absorbed in new and vaster enterprises, there is danger that this Christ life, whose advent we celebrate every year, will become nothing but an old and beautiful romance, a story out of the past, a kind of conventional ideal toward which men may, if they will, aspire, but which is wholly out of touch with our modern life, and out of harmony with our modern conditions. What the world needs, in such a crisis, are men and women who will so transport and translate the spirit of the Christ-life into this modern life of ours, so live out His ideal in consonance with all these strange and new modern conditions, that skeptics may see that it is no impractical, impossible thing to be Christ-like in this last decade of the nineteenth century—no ascetic, visionary existence to be a follower of the meek and holy Nazarene—but natural, and practicable, and manly.

And such men and women do exist. We could point them out; we could call them by name. These are they who at every season when there is a special influx of the Christ-spirit—whether such occasion be private or public—make that period a time of new consecration, new devotion of themselves—heart, soul and body—to the will and the service of Christ. May this joyful, hopeful Christmas festival be such a time for us all! Let us try to catch anew the spirit of our Master. Let us try to make His life our life, that we may more truly, more effectively, represent Him to the world. And with all the joy, all the light-hearted merriment, all the social delights of this happiest festival of the year, may we mingle a lofty seriousness of purpose, a prayerful, earnest desire to draw from it some new inspiration for Christian living, some fresh impetus to consecration and to service.—*Zion's Herald.*

## His Rejectors Being Judges.

Christ Jesus has impressed the world for good as none other ever has. This much is admitted by even his rejectors. He is an historic character. Throughout Christendom men hear of him and form opinions respecting the fact of his existence and of his character. To form an opinion of another intelligently it is necessary to ascertain some facts respecting his life and the impressions he has made upon others. In forming an opinion of Christ, we may properly note the testimony of his enemies, of his friends, of himself, and of his deeds.

## HIS ENEMIES.

His biographers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all assert that as a class the scribes and Pharisees who lived contemporary with him were his enemies. In John 10: 20, 21, where some of them had said, "he hath a devil and is mad," others of them said, "these are not the words of him who hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" In Matt. 22: 16, the Pharisees and Herodians say to him, "Master, we know that thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth." In John 7: 46 the officers sent to arrest him returned, and as an excuse for not having taken him into

custody said, "Never man spake like this man." In Luke 23: 14-22, and in John 18: 38, we have the testimony of Pilate, the Roman procurator who, after a most careful examination of the whole case, declared, "I find in him no fault at all," but to placate the Jews he delivered him to be crucified. For a sample opinion of his modern rejectors we quote from Colonel R. G. Ingersoll's reply to Judge Black. He said, "For the man Christ—for the reformer who loved his fellow-men,—for that great and suffering man, I have the highest admiration and respect. He taught his fellow-men that love is stronger far than hate."

## HIS FRIENDS.

Peter in Matt. 16: 16, 17, in answer to the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Christ pronounced a blessing upon him for making the noble declaration. In John 6: 69, the disciples declare, "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In John 9: 19, the man whose eyes had been opened declared, "He is a prophet," and in verse 33 he said, "If this man (Christ) were not of God, he could do nothing," for (verse 31) "We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

## CHRIST'S TESTIMONY OF HIMSELF.

In Matt. 22: 42, Christ having asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" and they having replied, "He is the Son of David," he then quoted Psalm 110: 1, and said, "If David then called him Lord, how is he his son?" implicitly asserting that he was the Lord spoken of by David. In John 9: 35-37, Christ asked the healed blind man, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and he answered, "Who is he Lord, that I might believe on him?" Christ replied, "Thou hast both seen him and he it is that talketh with thee." Immediately the man said, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped him. Here we notice that Christ not only admitted that he was the Son of God, but permitted the man to worship him as such, a thing that even an angel would not permit. (See Rev. 19: 10). In John 4: 25, 26, Christ especially declares himself to be the Messiah, "I that speak unto thee am he."

## HIS WORDS AND WORKS.

If Christ was not superhuman, why are his words and his works, as eighteen hundred years of subsequent history have proved them to be, so inimitable? What man could to-day produce the equal of the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the sower, of the lost sheep, of the talents, of the prodigal son? Who could have invented his conversation with Nicodemus, with the woman of Samaria, and his words to the scribes and Pharisees, as given in Matt. 23, and in John 6, 7, 8; also, his pathetic words to his disciples in John 14, 15, 16? Surely not the illiterate fishermen of Galilee. Daniel Webster declared that the Sermon on the Mount was far beyond the power of man to produce. The sermon exists, and so do the parables and the other words referred to. How came they into existence? Let those who disbelieve in the divinity of Christ account for the existence of that which is far above the ability of man to produce.

## CONCLUSION.

Christ claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, and permitted the people to worship him as such. A god man, as even his enemies declared him to be, could not and would not play the part of a deceiver, hypocrite, and fraud. But either Christ was what he claimed to be or he was not a good man. Therefore Christ was what he claimed to be or his enemies have been deceived or have testified falsely concerning him. "What think ye of Christ?" Look at his words, his works, his influence on the world for good to-day, and then answer as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God."—*The Scope.*

## A Christmas Lesson.

In the gospels we have the history of the Incarnation; in the epistles we have the explanation of the history. It is a new revelation of God; the advent of a strong Son of God; a new religious hope for sinful and sorrowing men. This is the great note of all the New Testament writers, this is the great central fact and inspiration of Christianity. However Jewish the prophet, the great human mission of Christ overpowers the Jewish feeling. Israel sees the "light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as the "glory of his people Israel." It is the advent of the Redeemer whose Gospel is to be preached to every creature—whose kingdom is to have no end. This is another great and wonderful harmony of the New Testament writers: how

did they get it? How did these peasant Jews rise so grandly above the pride and prejudice and exclusiveness of their nation? There was nothing in Judaism, as there was nothing in Paganism, out of which such a world-conception as the Christian Incarnation could have grown. Almost every religion had cherished the idea of an Incarnation. It appears in Greek mythology, in Hindoo avatars; but the Christian Incarnation as told in the gospels is so radically different and transcendent, that it could not have grown out of these. Human nature confessed its need of an Incarnation if it was to be redeemed; it had perhaps faint traditions of the first promise; only Christianity realizes a rational and moral idea of it.—*Rev. H. Allen, in the Golden Bore.*

## The Significance of the Advent.

The birth of Christ has given such glory to God as I know not that He could ever have had here by any other means. We must always speak in accents soft and low when we talk of God's glory; in itself it must always be infinite and not to be conceived by us, and yet may we not venture to say that all the works of God's hands do not glorify Him so much as the gift of His dear Son, that all creation and all providence do not so well display the heart of Deity as when He gives His Only Begotten and sends Him into the world that men may live through Him? What wisdom is manifested in the plan of redemption of which the incarnate God is the centre? What love is there revealed! What power is that which brought the Divine One down from glory to the manger; only Omnipotence could have worked so great a marvel! What faithfulness to ancient promises! What truthfulness in keeping covenant! What grace and yet what justice! For it was in the person of that new-born Child that the law must vengeance find recompense for injuries done to divine righteousness. All the attributes of God were in that little Child most marvelously displayed and veiled. Conceive the whole sun focused to a single point and yet so softly revealed as to be endurable by the tenderest eye, even thus the glorious God is brought down for man to see Him born of a woman. Think of it. The express image of God in mortal flesh! The heir of all things cradled in a manger! Marvelous is this! Glory to God in the highest! He has never revealed Himself before as He now manifests Himself in Jesus.—*Surgeon.*

## Nominal Christians.

Is there an important distinction between nominal and real Christians? Every one taught by the Holy Spirit will affirm that there is a vast difference between these two classes. Those who only acknowledge Christ in name may be called professors of religion, but, alas, cannot be reckoned as genuine confessors or possessors of His saving grace. Here is a distinction unalterably fixed, and as momentous in its consequences as it is eternally certain. Those who have indulged the dream of their own security in the merely nominal condition, but who have come at last to the experience of conversion, delight to bear testimony to this radical difference. It is now their chosen theme. At home and abroad, in private conversation and in public declarations, these converted souls speak forth in no uncertain or equivocal words. They are ready on all proper occasions to show the deficiencies of the former state, and to acknowledge with unfeigned humility that they had been living "without God," and without a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

"He has been converted," said a loving sister recently of her brother. It was announced to us with that religious enthusiasm that is always in order under such circumstances; it was spoken in the full recognition of the fact that in childhood he had been consecrated by godly parents in Christian baptism, and had been all through the years regarded as upright and as a professor of religion in acceptable Church standing.

But now the change of heart had taken place. Wonderful, indeed, is that change. Inward delights have clarified the judgement as to spiritual things and made cross-bearing easy. Frigid formalism is now no longer the characteristic of his profession; rather simplicity of expression and warmth of soul are its chief characteristics. Different? O, who can fully portray his new life of fellowship with Jesus, of comforts in answered prayer, of peace in believing, of enkindled aspirations for a higher living in service for the Master?

Are we not startled when we think it possible that multitudes are now living under the delusion that mere profession will answer—that heart conversion is not so necessary?

If this be the real condition of so many (and we may rationally concede it is), we do not find it difficult to explain the secret worldliness, the lack of self-sacrifice, the frequent betrayals of Christ, the vacillations of purpose, and the open disregard of the divine commandments which are so often seen in the professing church.

Let us consider this question right away, so serious throughout the whole Christian world. Let it be met everywhere lovingly, and yet faithfully. Every motive that would prompt us to seek after the non-professing multitude and bring them to Christ should urge us to seek to save these also who are as certainly lost. How soon it will be that these—unless they should repent—will knock at the door of eternal life only to hear Him say, "I never knew you." The thin garb of a mere Christian profession will then be consumed by the fires of the judgment. Nothing O, nothing, in that day will avail but Christian character, the "good, silver, and precious stones," wrought in a perfected, sanctified, Christ-like nature.—*Advocate.*

GRACIOUS HUMILITY.—If you have not discovered that you are fallible, if you never confess yourself mistaken, it is to be feared that you have not made much progress in self-acquaintance, nor attained to any great growth in grace. One of the leading laymen in our late General Assembly, a lawyer of recognized ability, said: "I used when I was a young man to think I was never wrong; but since I have more gray hairs I have discovered that I am almost as apt to be wrong as right." Humility and modesty are always the marks of the highest worth or wisdom.—*Presbyterian.*

## Random Readings.

When outward life moves wholly against one's wishes, he is truly great whose soul becomes a sanctuary in which patience dwells with hope.—*H. W. Beecher.*

You may have a rough voyage through life, but you have nothing to fear while you keep unbelief below, faith on deck, and Christ at the helm of your little bark.

Solitude produces earnestness. When we feel the danger to which men are exposed by sin, we are anxious to save them, and earnestly speak the words of life.

Every man has in his own life follies enough in his own mind troubles enough; in his own fortune evil enough, without being curious after the affairs of others.

After all, Christ's doctrine is the world's powerful magnet. It is this which really draws. The story of Jesus and his love still melts and conquers the heart. His word needs no charm of rhetoric to make it effectual. Spoken in weakness and yet in love, it becomes the power and the wisdom of God.—*Inquirer.*

The man who has the pious fear of God in his heart, so that he seeks to please and obey God, has no occasion for any other fear. God is sure to be his protector anywhere, and at all times. He need not be afraid of death or hell. Dying will do him no harm; and, as to hell, he has the assurance of the Bible that God has not appointed him into wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## TRAINS WILL ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN.

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10.40 A. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John and points east.  
4.20 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John, St. Stephen, Houlton and Woodstock. No connection with St. John on Monday by this train.

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From St. John 6.25, 8.30, a.m.; 4.30 p.m.; Fredericton Junction, 8.15, a.m.; 12.10, 5.55 p.m.; McAdam Junction, 7.00, 10.50 a.m.; Vancorbo, 10.25 a.m.; St. Stephen, 5.45, 7.45 a.m.; St. Andrews, 7.20 a.m., except Mondays and Wednesdays, at 5.15 a.m.

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