

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

By W. Edmund Smith

"This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." Every day of warmth and sunshine is a gift from the hand of God, and we receive it in appreciation as a token of His beneficent providence. Of these we have had many during the past year, which has been crowned with the goodness of God. But this day, Christmas Day, holds a unique place among all the days we commemorate. It is the Day of all Days.

Every nation and people celebrate events, and the births of those which have an interest only for themselves. But the birth of Jesus has created an interest and devotion which knows no national limitations; it crosses all seas, enters all countries, (even that country behind the so-called "Iron Curtain"), and strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of humanity. We have here an unexplainable miracle apart from the sovereign power of God. Confucius, Gutama or Buddah, Mohomet and other religious teachers, lived and died. Their bodies crumbled back to kindred dust; but no one thinks of Jesus as being dead. What an absurdity to think of a monument having been erected to his memory! We sing and shout: "He lives, He lives; the Lord of life and glory". And the universal spirit of love and goodwill which is especially dominant at Christmas-time has its source in the birth, and all the events in the life and ministry of Jesus which reached its climax at Pentecost.

During the last forty years we have seen this old world torn by two of the most terrible wars in all human history. On no less than nine Christmas Days, the modern weapons of war poured forth their awful destruction upon life and property. How could any tender sentiment survive such holocausts? How could it be possible for faith in a loving God to survive amid such scenes of bloodshed and suffering? But faith and love did survive and above all the noise of battle, and amid all the harrowing scenes of battle-field, in hospital and on ocean wave, the Christmas spirit spoke a language of faith and hope and love which made men to believe still to see the goodness of God in the land of the living. How the singing of the beautiful carols and expressions of faith and love fanned to a flame fires, which perhaps had been burning low!

Angels from the realm of glory came to herald what to the eyes of carnal men, seemed to be a feeble expression of divine love and power. Our natural feelings find little to stimulate their admiration of a travel-worn pair of peasants, shut out of the inn to find a place of refuge amongst the cattle of the stall. We repeat an expression we often see, "The weakness of God is stronger than man, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. This was demonstrated in all the attendant circumstances in the birth of Jesus. God had bowed to place in the arms of that beautiful virgin the God-child, in whom were met the "hopes and fears of all the years." How different that birth from that of the child recently born to the royal pair in Buckingham palace! All the world hailed that event with joy. Even those who are allergic to royalty were thawed out and breathed a prayer that God would bless the child. The entire world through ether waves, telegraph and cable, telephone and the ubiquitous press, was throbbing with interest. We all pray "God bless the child". But what place will he hold in the minds of the people

of the world and even of England, though he live to reign as long and prosperously as did Victoria, after two thousand years have gone by! We see today great signs of the peaceable dissolution of the British Empire. The little child just born may never reign. But all the might of Britain and her colonies would rise up to smite the power that would do harm to that child. He is safe in the love of a great nation.

But the security of Jesus was from above. Herod thought he could crush that little life as one would crush a fly. True he could slay all the little children of Bethlehem but he could not touch Jesus. Yet it was all so natural. Fiction and imagination would have pictured a heavenly guard coming to carry mother, father and child to a place of safety, or else smiting the soldiers of Herod with blindness or death. The Heavenly music from the skies was changed into wailing in those Judean homes. On that humble beast of burden that humble lowly pair sought a place of refuge in Egypt, the same land which had afforded a haven to one of the earliest progenitors of our Lord. The God of Jacob was his refuge.

As my mind sweeps back over the pages of history, sacred and profane, we could picture the stygian darkness which enveloped the world when Jesus came. Grecian culture, the finest the world has ever produced, and which reached its finest flower in the "Golden age of Pericles" had no power to save Greece from national ruin. Rome, that vast empire, with its city on the seven hills, of which Augustus said "I found it brick and left it marble", was tottering to its fall. The heathen historians paint the moral picture in blackest hues. The world seemed ready for another flood which would sweep all the filth and corruption from the earth.

Then Jesus came. It seemed just a tiny spark of light. The devil tried to crush it. It became a flame at Pentecost. And here in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-eight we celebrate the birth of Christ. Truly, he has received a kingdom which cannot be moved. Think of all the wreckage of nations which has strewn the shores of time, in the last two thousand years! But our Christ is marching on. The babe of Bethlehem is now, right now Lord and King, not in the realm of meat and drink, but in the hearts of those who love and serve him. Millions who never looked upon his physical face, would die for him because he lives in their hearts. He is the king of their lives. Not only on Christmas day, but every day.

What though cannon boom around the place where Jesus once lay, remember Herod's sword was bathed in blood there; remember, that about forty years after Jesus was crucified, the Holy city fell, with the greatest loss of life that ever was known in the destruction of a city in ancient or modern times. Our Christ came up and has gone forward with his kingdom, through the stress and strain of war. There have been ebb and flow in the tides of spiritual progress. But I am so glad that my heart is inspired with a heaven-born confidence that Jesus is marching on. I have joy in Christ each day. I feel the quickening of his life-giving power in my heart that makes me shout and sing. In the rush of the mighty throng in which I mingle often, I am at times moved to tears as the lovely carols sound forth. Hallelujah! what a saviour! I may not live to see Christmas Day. What of that! I have my Christmas-time already. I see the stores jam-

med with things beautiful, cheap or costly. I thank God for so many things I don't want. Give me Jesus. He makes every day a Christmas day, and every day a Thanksgiving day. He is multum en enum.

God bless all the readers of the Highway! It will not be the gifts you receive that will make Christmas Day worthwhile. If He who was born in Bethlehem's manger be born in your heart you will envy no one their costly array. Amen!

I wish you all a glad Christmas and a Happy New Year.

THE PARALYZING EFFECTS OF MORAL REQUIREMENTS

By J. B. Chapman, D. D.

Seeking for the reason for King Saul's visit to the witch, we think we found it in his desire to possess the benefits of supernatural ministrations without paying the price in moral and spiritual rectitude. He could have heard the voice of God through legitimate channels, only he would have to repent and turn back to God in heart and life, and that he did not want to do. Saul's case throws light upon all cults and fancies which seek to know the peace and help that God promises without themselves meeting the demands of the prerequisites in repentance and devotion.

In the markets of this world there are perhaps none who do not prefer first quality, but they shy away when the price is named, and they take the inferior article because it can be obtained at smaller cost. Bargains have a tremendous appeal, although the thoughtful person knows they are scarce. Usually we get about what we pay for; sometimes we get less, but we seldom get more. Even the thief or bandit who thinks to get something for nothing usually wakes up when it is too late, and says what the great majority have known all the time, "Crime does not pay."

In the world of religion there are those who make a graft by proposing to offer men just as good religion as they get elsewhere, and at a much lower cost. Some propose to let men in on the supernatural, where they can communicate with the dead, and find out much about the future life without demanding that the candidate turn from his wicked ways or make amends in any sense. Others lift up a banner announcing "no creed but Christ, no law but love," and tell the people to come with them where there are no rules to observe, no budgets to pay, and where religion is offered on a free and easy payment plan. But here, just as in the markets of this world, the cheap is more expensive in the end, and "There is no substitute for quality."

Speaking from the standpoint of the merchant, it has been found that the steady customer who returns again and again is of more value in building a dependable business than the passing trader who comes in just for prices and who may be cheated upon the ground that he probably will not come any more any way. "Good goods at a cheap price" is an appeal to many, but the dependable customer believes it is better to say, "You will remember the quality after you have forgotten the price."

Speaking as a customer, old-time repentance is the prerequisite of old-time religion, and continual obedience is the price of victory. But to have a religion that satisfies in life, furnishes a bridge over the stream at death, and gives assurance of everlasting blessedness in heaven is worth all its costs. Let us forsake all we have that we may be His disciples.