

"Christmas Return"

Edwin Raymond Anderson

Somewhere I have read the story of a father and mother who stood arm in arm, before a bright, glowing Christmas tree on a tender Christmas Eve, with tears in the eyes and an ache in the heart which somehow could never be put to words. The house was now silent, for all the guests had gone. These guests were the children who had come home for a Christmas eve family gathering with each other and with mother and dad. Gifts had been given and received, first laid under the tree to form a pretty family picture, then taken to their respective homes. And here in the silence of the house, with the children gone, mother and add stood, looking down at the bright glowing tree, and looking beneath, to that one lone gift package which had been left there. The wrapping had been torn away to reveal the gift, and then the whole left for abandonment and forgetting . . .

Which, beloved, I take as a parable of so many searching things for our heart, at this Christmas season. It is to be regretted that, into many a circle, there has crept a cold, commercial spirit about the blessed coming of the Christ child. We make so much of the outward which amounts to so little in the way of true, inward reality. There is the "special program," but somehow the heart seems to carry along as it does alas! for all other seasons, with a Christ Who somehow is always managed to be crowded into some cruel, secondary corner. All high heaped holly can never compensate for lack of true heart holiness. Gay outward wrappings can never replace the true inward wonder of His Coming; and all the giving and taking of gifts will but count for sad wind, if we have not, first given ourselves back to him. We may have the "tree," but alas! "if the gift be left behind!" Leaving Him with grief and with wounding; what could e'er hope to hide that?

And if this Christmas season is meant to speak of giving and receiving, we shall again be brought to face the searching crux-stone—have we verily given ourselves, with renewal of consecration and surrender, to that One Who so loved us and gave Himself for us? Or perhaps, we have "gotten used" to the wonder, so that it commences to wane, seeing that the story is often related many times before. Paul had to beseech the Romans to present themselves a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1), when there should never have been the need of such tearful, pleading beseeching! There should have been glad willingness even before first mention. And in that respect, we are like they at Rome, who must oft suffer the reminder of the continual giving and giving and giving of ourselves, back and back again to Him Who so gave Himself for us, to the glorious All and gracious Full. It is His only desire of a "return of His investment" of love over and upon us.

And then, there are so many who are strangers to divine grace. The coming of the Christ child is a pretty picture, and nothing more; therefore the pity and the peril. And yet, it would hardly do to berate the sinners, if the saints appear to act so sinfully about

that which is the true, Scriptural, spiritual "Christmas spirit." We have songs for the season; but the soul ought to carry some holy sobs for those who as yet are outside the fold. We have gaiety; but how easily doth it become a glaze to gloss over the grimness of the times! What a season of opportunity to tell out the Message of the Good News. But first, beloved, there might be the need of a holy session alone and apart with the Lord for a "personal gospeling" of our own hearts, which all too easily have lost the "first-love" praise and wonder for this Glorious Move upon the part of God.

We read concerning the wise men, that, after their holy meeting with the Christ child,

GOD IN CHRIST ON EARTH

What condescending grace had He
Who left His throne that He might be
The Saviour of lost men like me!

For thus He came to earth.

The glory of eternity

Was His to have and His to see,

For of the Godhead, one was He—

How could He come to earth?

The cherubs flew with lightning speed,

His will to do; His Word to heed—

All heaven moved as He decreed,

And yet He came to earth.

He formed the world and mapped its
way,

He parted darkness from the day;

He boldly caused the waves to stay—

And then He came to earth.

He flung the lights of heaven high

With brilliant glow throughout the sky,

The marvel of each passerby—

'Twas He who came to earth.

He made the man and loved him too;

The man then fell and now how true

The need that he be born anew—

So Jesus came to earth.

His entrance was by lowly birth,

To find that man in all his mirth

Scarce knew the value or the worth,

Nor cared about His coming.

But yet He came, O matchless Name!

His peace to give, my soul to claim;

He wore man's flesh, but just the same

'Twas God who came to earth.

—S. F. Logsdon.

they "departed into their own country another way" (Matt. 2:12.) This was one of the marks of their "wisdom"; which in some measure so clearly shows up our spiritual dullness. What a pity that so many of the saints come to wonder of this season and this glory, taste of the marvels of grace which are so clearly evidenced, and then return to the daily tasks and ways, the same old, customary way! But rest assured, that that is never the way of His holy desire. Each meeting with Him at this holy occasion, should result in "another way" for these hearts and lives of ours.

There ought to be "another way" of these hearts being drawn anew and afresh to Himself, and of blessed revival and renewal burning a holy furrow through the way of the Holy Spirit of God upon us. There desperately needs be the "crushing of the customary,"

Good Tidings

By Rev. N. H. Wolf

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10). The good tidings which the angels proclaimed more than nineteen centuries ago made the Shepherds rejoice. They heard the message and believed it. They found the Christ lying in a manger and heralded the message abroad. The good news was told then, and it must be told today.

Christmas is a time of Sacrifice. The Christ Who made the great sacrifice of coming down to man's humanity in the incarnation is a standing rebuke to every form of pride or selfishness in every believer. How can we be selfish when He has bountifully shared, and continually shares the blessings of His redemption for us? We too must share our joys and blessings with those who have not. Christmas is a time of loving yieldedness to our Lord, and a life of joyful sacrifice to our fellowmen.

Christmas is a time of Meditation. This is the season when we must meditate on His eternal love for us. The gracious heart of God beats in tenderness, comforting and caring for His own. Consider these words: "As a Father pitieth," "As a Mother comforteth," "As a Nurse cherisheth," "As a Hen gathereth," "As a Shepherd seeketh," "As an Eagle fluttereth," and "As a Bridegroom rejoiceth." Let His marvelous love, manifested in the incarnation, and at Calvary stir our souls. Let the message of the open tomb and the hope of His return a second time, thrill your heart. What a Saviour!

Christmas is a time of Missionary Vision.—"Good tidings—to ALL PEOPLE." At a little village in England a number had congregated to attend a service of worship and to hear an outstanding minister of the gospel. The chapel was full. Many who were obliged to remain outside crowded around the open doors and windows. After the opening service the speaker commenced his address. He had not proceeded far when a voice was heard from without, "Speak louder, we cannot hear; remember those outside." Those words were not forgotten by the congregation and should not be forgotten by us who live many years later. "REMEMBER THOSE OUTSIDE!" Outside the church, at a distance from the means of grace—those who know not God, who are strangers to eternal life and the salvation provided for all in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"That sweet old story must be told,

The Gospel story must be told;

The story strange and true,

'Tis old yet ever new,

That sweet old story must be told."

—The Challenger

and the deeper consciousness of His peerless, perfect, precious Person. And believe me, beloved, apart from that we have but—"left the gift of the tree," and gone back into the night. May the Lord Jesus have the pre-eminence with and in and through us, for this time, receiving the gift of, "That I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10), as the praise and worship of Himself, Who verily is so worthy of all!—American Holiness Journal.

We Wish All Our Readers A Joyous Christmas