

The New-Church MESSENGER



DECEMBER, 1938

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THE NEW-CHURCH MESSENGER

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Christmas Greeting

WE wish for all our readers a Happy Christmas. May the celebration of the Feast of the Incarnation bring to you all a sense of deep and abiding joy. There is much in the disturbed condition of the world to limit our sense of happiness. War, confusion, social unrest and the enforced idleness of millions of workers have a disturbing effect on the mental state of all people. The misery and unhappiness of our brother man limit the joy of even those who are free from threats of war and financial insecurity. There is little joy in feasting while others are starving. Our gaily dressed and decorated homes and churches remind us painfully of the fact that there are 125,000,000 homeless people in Asia. No one with quickened sympathies can avoid a feeling of sadness in remembering the miseries that afflict mankind. Yet these things need not entirely rob us of our Christmas joy. For the eternal verities still remain. It will forever remain true that for the redemption of the human race the Mighty God of the universe was born as the Babe of Bethlehem. It will forever remain true that "The Shepherd of Souls" came to seek the sheep that was lost. Even in storm-tossed times those eternal facts of history remain unshaken. Through the earthly mists and vapors dense that rise from man's inhumanity to man the sunshine of heaven still streams into our hearts. "Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion" is still the Divine message of the Church.

There is a legend that at the moment of the Incarnation the world was hushed in peace. This may be merely the outcome of wishful thinking, but the fact does remain that at the time when Christ was born in Bethlehem no serious war was being waged in the Roman Empire. But the state of the world in those days was incomparably worse than it is to-day. Amid all the unrest of the present age there remain blessings that came from the Incarnation and of which mankind can never be robbed. We enjoy spiritual freedom, we can enroll ourselves among the redeemed, we are heirs of salvation. There are supremely great gifts from the Lord of which no man can rob us; and in the contemplation of these great gifts our hearts can be full of thankful joy.

Further than this we can look forward with confidence to the ultimate triumph of righteousness. The ebb is always followed by the flood tide. And if to-day there seems to be a recession in the tide of righteousness we lack no confidence in the ultimate triumph of our

Heavenly King. Though there be many things to diminish our joy on the earthly plane we have but to dig a little deeper to find the springs of heavenly joy. We can still sing in all sincerity:

"Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King."

We can still, and perhaps with quickened ears, listen to the angelic song, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Christmas Trees

DURING the past two weeks Christmas trees have been much in evidence. They come to the city markets by hundreds of thousands. They find willing purchasers; and now in homes, schools, churches and other places they glow with colored lights and are decked out with shining ornaments. On Christmas Day many of them will bear presents for members of innumerable families. For a few days they will stand bravely in their evergreen foliage. Then after Twelfth Night they are discarded and most of them go up in flames. They are not, however, forgotten. They linger in the memory of the children, and their successors will be hailed with joy at Christmas of 1939.

It is a commonly accepted belief that the idea of the Christmas Tree came to us from Germany; but the Germans themselves probably got it from the Roman Saturnalia nearly two thousand years ago. Whence the Romans got this idea no one knows. It is interesting to note that the Christmas Tree is older than the Christian era. The poet Virgil was born B.C. 70, and in the Georgics (ii. 389) he speaks of the festal tree with its pendant toys and manikins: *Oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.*

It is not fanciful to assume that in the pagan use of the decorated tree at festivals the old Italian tribes were perpetuating a very old custom that originated in the Ancient Church. Trees correspond to the perception of truth. May not the ancients have put trees in their homes and have decorated them, as a symbol of the perception vouchsafed to them by the

Lord? By the ornaments they would denote the varied knowledges acquired by this God-given faculty of perception.

Are we stretching imagination too far in this assumption that the Christmas tree custom had its origin in the knowledge of correspondence once possessed by the Ancient Church? We think not. It seems reasonable to assume that far back in the history of the Church men sought to symbolize the Tree of Knowledge. At their seasons of rejoicing they reminded themselves of the perception of truth once possessed by their ancestors; and they did this by the symbolic use of trees. Be that as it may, the fact remains that by our modern use of the Christmas Tree we may remind ourselves of the great fact of the Incarnation and the truths associated with our knowledge of the Divine Humanity. So we may see in the myriads of trees that help to intensify the spirit of Christmas something more than mere vegetation. They become symbols of our perception of that "tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

A. W.

The Incarnation Foreknown

THE God, who was worshipped in the Ancient Church, was the Lord in respect to the Divine Human, and it was known to them that it was the Lord who was represented in all the rites of their church; and many of them knew also that the Lord was to come into the world, and to make the Human in Himself Divine.—(A. 6846.)

The Birth of the Saviour

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. (And this enrollment was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be enrolled with Mary his betrothed 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 first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Now, there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, an 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 peoples. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who 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 that is 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.

—*Luke ii. 1-20.*

A Christmas Symposium

Prophecy and Fulfilment

By Wilfred G. Rice

AS a timely means of preparation for the joy of Christmas, may I suggest the following course of study. In the story of the greatest prophecy in the Bible, and in its miraculous fulfilment, we have a lesson most appropriate for the anniversary so near at hand. With the hope that all who undertake the study now to be outlined may receive a new and deeper understanding of the Lord's saving mission, let us "search the Scriptures" for further light.

All through the Scriptures there runs the promise of a Messiah. Veiled as the promise may be at times to those who are unacquainted with the spiritual sense of the Word, the message in general is written in letters that he who runs may read. Though we who live in peace and security, our own masters in a land where all are free, can hardly know the fulness of the hope that sustained the children of Israel during bondage and persecution, we may share with them the noblest words of their prophets.

The first reference to engage our attention is found in *Genesis* iii. 15. In the deeper sense of the judgment upon Eve there is included the promise that the Messiah would be born of woman, subject to all the trials and temptations that visit the children of men. Before turning to the New Testament (*Matthew* i. 18-25; *Luke* ii. 7) for the fulfilment of this prophecy, it would be well to gain a broader view of its implications. The best way of gaining this information is to consult the first volume of the *Arcana Coelestia*, especially numbers 250-260. As an example of the light disclosed by these passages, may I quote from *Arcana* 256:

"Not only faith but the Lord Himself also is called the seed of the woman; both because He alone gives faith and thus is faith, and because it pleased Him to be born—and indeed into a church which had fallen entirely into an infernal and diabolical proprium, through love of self and of the world—in order that of His own power He might unite the Divine celestial proprium to the human proprium in His human essence, so that they should become one in Him. For unless He had united them the world would have perished utterly."

Another important early prophecy is the one which declared that the Messiah would be

of the line of Abraham. (*Genesis* xii. 1-3.) In revealing the deeper significance of the blessing upon Abraham, Emanuel Swedenborg said:

"Because the Lord is now treated of, more arcana are here contained than can ever be thought and declared. For here, in the internal sense, is meant the Lord's first state, when born; which state, because most deeply hidden, cannot well be set forth to the comprehension; only that He was as another man, except that He was conceived of Jehovah; but still that He was born of a virgin mother, and by birth derived infirmities from the virgin mother like those of man in general." (*A.* 1414.)

Most familiar, perhaps, and certainly most beautiful of all the prophecies are those which adorn the book of *Isaiah*. To recount them all, even those in which the promise is clear in the sense of the letter, would require page after page of direct quotation. For the present purpose, therefore, it seems best to include only the following:

(1) "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (*Isa.* xi. 1.)

Externally this verse identifies the Messiah with the lineage of David; in the deeper sense it is one of a group of verses describing Him as one who will judge from Divine wisdom, saving the faithful and destroying the unfaithful.

(2) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (*Isa.* ix. 6.)

From the outline given by Swedenborg in the book *Prophecy and Psalms* we learn that this beautiful verse relates to the Lord's protecting power against evil and falsity.

(3) "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (*Isa.* liii. 5.)

Here, indeed, the spiritual lesson lies so close to the surface that no comment is needed.

Impossible as it would be properly to outline the vast subject of Messianic prophecy in one brief study, the presentation of some of the outstanding portions of the prophecy may be of service in encouraging others to pursue the subject further. In conclusion, therefore, may I direct all who may be interested to the following important references:

The Birthplace of the Messiah—(*Micah* v. 2).

"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 from of old, from everlasting."

The Time of His Coming—(*Daniel ix. 24-25*).

His Sufferings and Death—(*Isaiah liii; Zechariah xiii. 7*).

The Resurrection—(*Hosea xiii. 14; Psalm xvi. 10*).

The Ascension—(*Psalm lxxviii. 18*).

From the study of these and countless other verses that might be cited there is one experience that is sure to await all earnest readers: a deeper, more rationally grounded belief in the holiness of the Word and the divinity of the Lord.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

His Star in the East

By Martha Mason

AT this holy season of the year, our thoughts turn to memories of past Christmas Days. These memories are increasingly precious, although a touch of sadness may cloud the picture of childhood Christmases that were made joyous by parents and friends who have now gone from our sight, there is pleasure in new ties that have been formed and in the younger generations that are bringing their contributions of happiness and enthusiasm to newly established firesides. We hear no less fervor than formerly in the singing of the stirring old words, "Oh come let us adore Him!" The little Christ child always moves the hearts of men. We can still assert that "a little child shall lead them."

While the familiar Christmas story warms our hearts at each anniversary of the coming of the Holy Child to live and work among men, we must recognize that to-day with ever increasing understanding of the meaning of His Words and of those that had been written previously by inspired prophets, men are receiving afresh the Divine life.

History records the dark days through which the Church of Christ has passed during the years since the Holy Child was visited by the shepherds and by the wise men from the east. Catholics and Protestants have made many earnest efforts to build up His Church, but too often they have forgotten that "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." At this Christmas season of 1938, we are sadly aware that the Christian Church has become so weak that in many countries its

uplifting influence is but little felt and in some countries, jealous government officials dare to make definite efforts to crush it.

Jealous leaders once crucified Christ and persecuted His followers, but the spirit of Christ lived on to become stronger than before and the disciples, even in martyrdom, spread His teaching. The older forms of the Church may rightly have gone into decay. Perhaps the evils that had accumulated in the course of the ages could be gotten rid of only by the sacrifice of much of the structure itself.

As persecutions have always served to shock people into realization of injustice and have aroused them to action to correct existent evils, so to-day our sleeping consciences are being stirred. More than ever are we eager to bring back peace on earth and good will to men. There may be around us, as around the shepherds who were watching over their flocks on that holy night, a multitude of the heavenly host singing anew their message of love for God and man.

We have only to look about us and to listen to the voices of our prophets of to-day to be reassured that even in this year of discouragement, the influence of Christ is still at work. The old temple may have to be thrown down until there is not one stone left upon another, but a new one is even now rising in its place.

It is somewhat significant that a large group of earnest and devout men and women of the City of New York are working for a religious center for the coming World's Fair. They feel

that in the midst of exhibits showing progress in material lines, there should be a place for refreshment and growth of man's soul—a place for contemplation of spiritual things.

More and more clearly ring out the voices of statesmen advocating a wider brotherhood of men, and extending to nations the same moral standards that are demanded of individuals.

We can have faith that the star in the east which once stood over where the young Child was, is even now visible and will guide us aright. If we would join the ranks of the "wise men" of to-day, we will recall from forgotten corners of our hearts the memories of happy Christmas mornings, when, as children, we celebrated the Saviour's birth. We will revive the influences

that have guided and inspired us since those early days. We will open minds and hearts to new life and strength that are above and around us ready to give us courage and wisdom. We will make ready the gifts which we will wish to offer at the shrine of our Lord.

Having prepared our gold, our frankincense, and our myrrh, we can turn our faces toward the east where the star of faith and hope and love is marking our way. Keeping in mind Christ's words to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," we are confident that if we follow the star in the east, we shall be going toward Him. The journey may be long, but if we persevere, we may be able to say at last, "We saw His star in the east and are come to worship Him."

The Prince of Peace

By Othmar Tobisch

IT is obvious that we are living in times which bespeak the coming of another great war. Many nations are arming feverishly. All are looking suspiciously across their boundaries to see what technical means the other nations have developed to create terror from the air and on the ground. Some are building large fleets. Others are engaged to build up large new empires in the East and in the West. Agencies which have been created to forestall large conflicts, like the World Court at the Hague, the League of Nations at Geneva, are ignored.

Only recently the western nations passed through a great crisis, and only narrowly was a war averted. Is this great catastrophe only postponed, not averted? There are those who believe strongly that we are inevitably drifting towards another great conflict.

What shall the individual do who is himself a peaceful person and sees himself involved in forces of evil and destruction?

In such times, when things look hopeless for the lover of peace let us look back upon similar conditions which prevailed in the life time of the greatest prophet of Israel: Isaiah. Round about little Judah great empires were striving to subdue each other. Nineveh sought to smite

Egypt. Egypt fought to hold what it possessed in Canaan. Syria, Moab, Edom, the little kingdoms professed allegiance to those who had momentarily the upper hand. Isaiah looked upon these scenes of bitter hostility. He saw the doom hang over the nations which so arrogantly proclaimed their greatness. As he saw the destruction of cities, wrought more horribly than perhaps takes place to-day in China, he did not abandon hope. In the atmosphere of his times, charged like ours with the will of strong men to conquer more territory, enslave more people, acquire more loot, Isaiah was able to say: ". . . and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The Divine promise was given through him, who saw the slaughter and the warfare, and the cruelties of his day and said: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined." The prophet sees "every boot of the warrior and the mantle rolled in blood" become food for fire. War shall cease. Instead, "unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given:

and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be: Wonderful—Counselor, Mighty—God, Father-Eternal, Prince-of-Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end.”

In this revelation to Isaiah we must see the ray of hope even for to-day. For this prophecy was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. In him, this Prince-of-Peace was given to the world. It is His kingdom which is ever increasing. We are moving toward a warless world, not as fast as many of us wish, but in accordance with Divine Providence which works with the rationality and the freedom of men, and not against it. The Lord has come as the light, the light of the world which clearly shows that “he who taketh the sword shall perish by the sword.” The Lord has vanquished the demons of war as He conquered the hells and put them in order. This took place in the spiritual world. It is now slowly taking place in the natural world. Peace upon earth becomes from generation to generation a stronger desire among men of good will. The will to peace is increasing among

many. The Prince of Peace is extending his government, first in the hearts of His disciples, and through them in the governments of the world.

As we see new war clouds gather, let us remember always to look beyond with the vision of Isaiah. The will to peace is stronger than ever, otherwise the prayers of literally millions in the Western World would not have been uttered only recently. These prayers were a tremendous force. They preserved peace. As individuals this Christmas when we sing . . . “peace on earth” let us resolve to will peace! Willing peace is our power. By willing peace we refuse to be drawn into thinking evil of others. We shall not judge the other nations, for judgment belongs to the Lord alone. We shall harbor no animosities. If others hate, we shall not sin by hating likewise. But steadfastly we must hold before us the truth that the Lord alone will establish peace in His own good time. He rules the nations. Living in His truths we shall know Him as the Prince of Peace.

Our Own Christmas Day

By Mary Seward Coster

THAT there is a God of Love and that He is ever present with man is the most beautiful truth that men can know. Almost universally men believe in a Creator, a far-away God, the First Cause of all that is but only a belief in God's Divine Humanity can bring Him closer to men. The story of how, through the ages, God has progressively revealed His presence to men thus becomes the most beautiful story in the world. This story, in its broadest aspect, embraces all time and all people for, in its unfolding chapters, it tells of the successive steps by which the Lord came down to man, as man turned more and more to the externalities of life. The final chapter began on that first Christmas Day over 1900 years ago when the Lord assumed man's own nature and, by making it Divine, became God-with-us even on this most external plane of life. No wonder that men have loved to celebrate this Birth-

day through all succeeding generations!

But this story is more than history; it is prophecy also, and the vista that it opens before us of life's possibilities is a very wonderful one to contemplate. The Lord comes into each individual life in a similarly progressive way and the last and most beautiful chapter begins for each of us when we welcome Him into our *outer* life and when after that He lives it with us. Throughout our lives He has been near us in an inner way. He came in our early days, before the strength of our self-life closed the door against Him, and He gave us then the seeds of eternal life. These seeds have never died and, evil or self-centered as one's life may become, we can never say that we do not know of a higher way of living. The Lord is continually calling to us through the inner conscience. But the Christmas story tells of the possibility of a new nearness of the Lord when He is born

in our outer life also, when we begin to feel in our own hearts a new love for what is good, and to see in a new way the miracle of the Lord's near presence with us.

The Christmas story is found at the beginning of the Gospels, but the whole Gospel story follows out of this beginning. The Lord, born into our outer life, will not stay merely in the manger there. As we read the Gospel story we may know that it is telling of a time when He will be walking with us in our every-day experiences of life, just as He walked with the disciples of old. He will answer our earnest questions as He answered theirs and, through all the outer parables of daily life, He will help us to see within them their lessons of eternal significance. As He thus opens our eyes we shall know how blind we have been before. As

He opens our hearts to hear life's deeper calls for help, we shall know how little we have heard before. As He gives new strength to our lagging footsteps, we shall realize how weak we are without Him. As He puts new courage into our doubting hearts, we shall know how much we need Him always. Little by little the Gospel story will unfold in our own lives and, as belief in ourselves wanes, He will ascend on high in our hearts and we shall see Him there, the one Source of all life and our Saviour from ourselves.

The day that starts this chapter of life is our Christmas Day, and its anniversaries will be celebrated with increasing joy as the significance of that almost unnoticed Birth becomes more real to us.

A Twice Fulfilled Promise: God With Us Forever

By Antony Regamey

"And of His fulness have we all received."—John i. 16.

IT is the heart of the Christmas story that in Christ-Jesus God gave Himself to men in a fuller measure than He had done before. Yet that little word "of" in our text is exceedingly important.

"The Word was God." "The Word was made flesh." "And of His fulness have we all received." This is the statement of *John*, presumably writing from his personal knowledge and experience of Him. What did he mean by it?

Did he intend, as some seem to think, to convey the idea that God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ only partially? To a somewhat larger extent, perhaps, than He has been able, before or since, to show Himself in and through other good and remarkable men? And yet in no different way? Or did He want us to think of our Lord as the Apostle Paul taught us to think of Him when he said, "In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and to understand that whatever limitation there was of God's fulness in Christ was not in His life and person, but in those who received Him?

This is an important question. And there can be no doubt that this last fact is true, whether or not God was in Christ in His fulness.

No man may claim to receive and partake of God in His fulness, to know all about Him, and at the same time retain his sanity. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

When we attempt to fathom God as He is in Himself, and to imagine all that is implied in such terms as eternity, infinity, when used in reference to Him, our understanding staggers and reels. We may be right when we confess our belief that God is infinite love, and wisdom, and power. We may even see quite clearly that it is so, and that it could not be otherwise. But we can no more grasp in its entire significance such a necessary conclusion of our reasoning about Him, than we could stop count-

ing if we made up our mind to find out the largest figure that can be conceived.

In other words, no matter how completely God may desire to reveal Himself to men, it is and shall ever be "of" His fulness, but not His fulness that they shall receive. Some more. Some less. All, according to their stage of growth, spiritually, in His image and likeness. But even the highest angel, still according to his limitations.

So the astronomer juggles with galaxies and light years, whilst we laymen are amazed, and cannot have but a simple and vague idea of the meaning of his complicated mathematical formulas. But he knows that about which he is writing. Step by step he has grown into his mental ability to apprehend cosmic laws that are above the ken of the average men. But even the astronomer knows that for him there is still much to be learned.

Perhaps John did not mean to convey more than this fact that men, by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, were given to partake of God's fulness to the extent of their ability to receive it. Perhaps he meant to leave the other question open, as to how much of Himself God was enabled to reveal by assuming our human nature. But there are few thinking Christians in our day, who do not feel the need to find at least some answer to it one time or another.

Indeed, the personality of Christ challenges them. Was He a man like other men, in whom God was as He is in us all? Or was He God clothed in our flesh? And if so how could the infinite and eternal become finite and temporal, and yet remain itself? We can do no more at this time than to suggest a direction in which the answer to this may be found, knowing full well, at the same time, that a belief in the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is not arrived at, essentially, by logical arguments and reasoning, but by perception and inner experience.

We speak of God, as He is, in terms of infinite love. Love is what is deepest in God. Deeper than His wisdom and power. It is God's innermost being. And it may be that a comparison — though necessarily inadequate, between His love and human love at its best, might help us answer the question, or at least throw some light on it.

To begin with, true love does not depend upon either time or space. We love our dearest friends just as much, whether they be near or far, and at this day and hour or that. Though it expresses itself in time and space, it is independent of them. Another thing which is also true of love, is that it cannot be divided, lessened, by any act or outward expression of it. It is in the nature of love to give itself. But though it gives, it is not diminished, nor (in its truest manifestations) can it give itself partially. Each and every one of the infinite number of possible ways in which it can be shown embodies, "incarnates" the whole of it. So God could be in His fulness in Jesus Christ without ceasing to be Himself, and to manifest Himself in other ways.

It is true, however, that from our viewpoint of time and space, God's great gift of Himself in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, was a limitation; at least as long as He lived on earth among men. If in His inmost soul, indeed, was the spirit of the divine, infinite and uncreated, in His body of flesh and the human nature and consciousness which He answered, He was just as finite as we are, at least until the time of His resurrection and the completion of His glorification by means of which He returned unto His eternal Fatherhood. It is not to this temporal and spacial manifestation of Him that the New Church addresses its worship. Not to the historical Christ as such. Not to the babe in the manger; not to the lad in the temple; not to the suffering body hung on the Cross. But to the glorified, divine and risen Christ, to the eternal and infinite personality of God who was, through Him, teaching men that He also was a man, the Man, from the beginning, and that they were because He was; that in Him they could receive the power to become the sons of God.

The true meaning of Christmas to the New Church is to be found, not in the incarnation alone, but in its results and purpose. In the fact that God came to dwell among men, in a body of flesh, for a brief period of time, in order that they may know Him to be man, Divine, and yet Human, caring for them, warm, near and personal, and that by receiving of His fulness they may rise above themselves and forever grow more like Him. At the time

of His first coming, men did indeed receive of His fulness, in and through His numerous acts of kindness, and these immortal principles of the true life, which He taught them to make their own. Yet this very body of flesh which He assumed, prevented them, to see Him as He was, or what He was in the process of becoming.

So He spake unto them of the necessity of His overcoming such temporal and spacial limitation. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father." "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." In other words, He had come into the world that they might know Him, as the Word made flesh, but that He may abide with them and all men forever, He did need return unto His Fatherhood and come again, this time to dwell in them; come to their consciousness of His eternal presence within. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

Only so could men receive a larger and ever-increasing share of His fulness.

But how were they indeed to find Him, after—to all appearances He had gone? He seems to have taken special care to tell them. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you . . ." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in My love . . ." "If a man love Me, he will keep my words . . ." "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Me." "I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill." And after the resurrection, on the way to Emmaus, "He opened the Scriptures unto them, and expounded the things concerning Himself."

The true meaning of Christmas, to us New-Church people in this new age, is that the Word was made flesh, in the fulfilment of all the truths it contains concerning the life that is called Spiritual, in the person of the Lord, that by approaching Him, now and always, through His Word, we may find Him, and receive ever more of His fulness, in our souls.

It is that at this day, He comes again, unto all men. Not in a physical body, on the material clouds of heaven, but in this new revelation of His eternal heart and mind, now made

available to all, in the opening of the Scriptures' inner truths, in the unfolding of their spiritual meaning. In the ability which He gives all to receive evermore of His fulness, as they find Him present, the living Word, in that Word which as He said shall not pass away, but abide eternally.

The true meaning of Christmas for us is that in His Holy Word God dwells with us forever, for in and through that Word we know all we can know of Him, and of ourselves and as we learn to make our own the truths which it enshrines, and to translate them in experience and life, He comes to dwell within us, as the Spirit of truth, teaching us all things needful, and bringing them to our remembrance.

As we awake to that new light, which is that of His presence, "let there be light," we learn to separate in our minds the things which belong to our heavenly life, and those which are only of this earth, earthy. We are by Him gradually created anew. We are led out of our slavery to the ways of the world, and of our own self-seeking, to the conquest of our Canaan within, to the land of promise. And if in our later experiences our first attempt to realize the kingdom within is frustrated, if it ends in exile and failure, yet as we hope in Him, and once more prepare the way, He comes Himself within our souls and though we many times betray and crucify Him in our ignorance, yet He rises anew; until by the power of our clearer understanding of Him, and closer communion with Him, we find Him to be our God and Saviour indeed, in His Humanity glorified, the only God of heaven and earth.

The Incarnation Foreordained

As God from His very essence burned with a love to unite Himself with man, He must needs in order to do this, veil Himself with a body adapted to reception and conjunction. For this reason He came down and took on a Human in accordance with the order established by Him from the creation of the world; which order was, that by means of a power generated from Himself a Human should be conceived, carried in the womb, and born, and then increase in wisdom and love, and thereby draw near to a union with its Divine origin. Thus God became Man and Man became God.—(T. 838.)

THE ALLIANCE PAGE

And the angel . . . said; Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with Thee: blessed art thou among women. . . . And behold, thou shalt . . . bring forth a son, and shalt call His Name JESUS.—Luke i. 28, 31.

. . . Because Mary, His mother, afterward represented the Church . . . in this respect she is to be called His mother.—Canons ix. 8.

THE CHURCH

My soul doth magnify the Lord
And glorify His Name
One Christ, one Church, one open Word
Angelic hosts proclaim.

—Selected.

In our thought of Christmas, and its place in the Christian Calendar, we may like to remember that the doctrines of the New-Church teach that previous to the Incarnation, conjunction between God and man "could not be effected except through an angel," and that "Redemption . . . has been effected by Jehovah God Incarnate, who is our Lord Jesus Christ."
—*Selections from Coronis.*

NEWS!

By Carolyn Blackmer

OVER nineteen hundred years ago words were proclaimed that forever bear the name, good news or gospel: "For unto us is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." So great was the glory of the news that it struck fear in the hearts of the humble shepherds who listened to it. For all the oft-repeated prophecies, when it came, it was unexpected, amazing, that the Lord God should come down among men. And the news of the Lord's life continued fresh and compelling enough to change the whole western world as the apostles went forward to proclaim it.

To-day what is the force of the Lord's message? It seems to have lost its power to stir us to little more than our traditional feasts

and commercialized gift-giving. Since it no longer seizes the imagination, perhaps it is no longer news. If it has become too stale, too oft-repeated to catch our attention, what can we do to awaken ourselves to the awe-ful wonder of the shepherds or the live eagerness of the early Christians?

We have no need to feel timid or suspicious about these warm emotions. Let us read the gospels as if for the first time. Here is news, indeed! It is stirring and thrilling with the power of great unseen forces: angels singing, Jehovah Himself come down. And yet it is appealing to the tenderest feelings because of its familiar commonness: peasant shepherds on the hills, a shed, a mother, and a new-born Babe. Our imaginations are stirred to new perceptions of the meaning of the news. We find that we can best read it as if it is happening now and not as past history. We are brought to its present reality, and what has been there all the time, comes forth to us as unexpected and wonderful as to the shepherds. We find a way of keeping the news forever new, learning for ourselves the present reality within the words. It is a blessed Christmas indeed for us. Now gifts become symbols of the Supreme Gift wrapped in swaddling clothes. Surprise, and thankfulness as we unfold the gift enclosed, are reminders of our unfolding of what is hidden in the Word. Feasts recall the deep satisfaction and exhilaration of tasting the food and drink spread before us in the Word. So the second Coming of the Lord in the power and glory of the inner reality of the Word, makes all things news, even to the news of His first Coming.

I Walked One Night in the Shepherds' Field

By John Finley

I

I WALKED one night in The Shepherds' field;
The stars in their wonted courses wheeled
And no new glory the skies revealed,—
There was no peace on earth.
But as I climbed the Bethlehem hill
I saw one bend o'er one who was ill
And another bearing coals to fill
A neighbor's empty hearth,—
And I knew that the Christ was there.

II

I walked up the Mount a little space
And peered through the shadows for His face,
But found Him not in the pictured place
Beneath the olive trees;
Then turning toward Kidron in the night
I saw the men on their way to fight
In Jordan's hell for a thing called Right,
Nor hating their enemies,—
And I knew that the Christ was there.

III

Then I walked alone in Galilee,
Where He fed the thousands by the sea
And taught and wrought in His ministry
Of human brotherhood.
There did a Presence my way attend,
And there I heard the voice of a Friend
Say, "Lo, I am with you to the end,"
And my heart understood,—
I knew that the Christ was there.

MARRIAGES

BROWN-LAUGHLIN.—At New Iberia, La., on December 15th, Albert Emery Brown, son of the late Louis C. Brown and Mrs. Marion Frost Brown, and Miss Ruth Laughlin. Mr. and Mrs. Brown will reside at Bossier City, La.

HUNTER-SPEAR.—On Wednesday evening, November 23, at eight-thirty p.m., in the Church of the New Jerusalem of Los Angeles were married William Howard Hunter and Mary Spear. William Hunter is the son of the Rev. and Mrs. John R. Hunter. Mary Spear is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Blake Spear, of St. Louis. Her father was an active New Churchman, first in Cincinnati, then in St. Louis. The Rev. Andre Diaconoff officiated.

PERSONALIA

Miss Hazel Ruhl, of the New York Society, spent the week-end of December 3rd, with Miss Betty Smith, of Philadelphia.

BAPTISMS

DONOVAN.—Diane Roberta, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Richard Donovan, Newburgh, N. Y., on November 23, 1938 at the Fryeburg New Church.

URICH.—Ronald, son of Kenneth and Patricia Urich, born July 13, 1934, baptized by the Rev. Arthur Wilde on Sunday, December 4th, in the New York church.

OBITUARY

SPAMER.—Andrew P. Spamer passed from this world on Tuesday, December 6th, after a brief illness. He leaves a brother, Adolph, and his wife, Fanny Wilen Spamer. The burial service was conducted by the Rev. F. Sidney Mayer and Dr. John H. Day on Thursday, December 8th.

Andrew P. Spamer was born in Baltimore in 1864, and has been a member of the Baltimore Society since youth, and one of the Church Trustees for many years.

He was always sympathetic, cheerful, and capable as advisor to those who confided in him. In his younger days he began with the law office of Edward Otis Hinkley, then went with the Safe Deposit and Trust Company, retiring as Vice-President two years ago. The Baltimore New Church will take proper action in honor of his memory.

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

CHICAGO (KENWOOD)

At a recent meeting of the Young People's League a small sum was collected for a donation to assist in missionary work in West Africa. Then too, "the responsibility of attending a worthy family during the Christmas season was approved, and donations of cash, clothing or food are being solicited by the members."

The following helpful paragraph is taken from *The Kenwood Message* of December 5th:

"Bad habits are among man's worst enemies. Good habits are among his best friends. Habit makes an action that would otherwise be difficult become comparatively easy. Church attendance is no exception to the rule. Habit makes this desirable, but sometimes difficult action, one that is easy and pleasant to perform. Those who attend church regularly witness to this truth."

NEWTONVILLE, MASS.

On December 14th the regular monthly all-day sewing meeting of the Women's League was held in the church parlors. The sewing is for the Red Cross. A thirty-five-cent luncheon was served.

The members of the Sunday-school commenced their Christmas memory verses in the week beginning December 11th. The pastor's sermon on December 11th was on "Death Takes a Fall."

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

Sunday, December 11, was observed as young people's Sunday in Los Angeles. The sermon in the morning was on the "Four Creatures" in the Book of *Revelation*, chapter 4. The League met in the evening at the home of the President, Mr. Albert Rado and Jessie Rado.

Sunday, December 18th, was Christmas celebration Sunday. The regular morning service was held and in the afternoon a Christmas pageant, directed, as last year, by Mrs. Paul Dresser, was presented. Following the pageant the Christmas tree celebration was held in the Parish House.

On Christmas Day no session of the Sunday-school will be held; but instead a service of song in the church at eleven o'clock in the morning.

The Los Angeles visit of the A. N. C. L. Field Secretary, Miss Lydia Seymour, was a great success. She and her brother arrived on Tuesday, November 8th. There was a special meeting of the League at the Litz home in Altadena on Thursday, November 10th, at which the Leaguers heard Lydia describe the activities of A. N. C. L., and give suggestions in which we could cooperate. On Friday afternoon and evening, November 11th, a beach party was held at Palos Verdes, concluding with a get-together at the home of the Schellenbergs where we saw moving pictures of Leagues from the whole United States, taken by Julia Gunther. The Seymours left before the Sunday services, to be in Riverside on Sunday morning, November 13th. They came back for the week-end of Sunday, November 20th, when Lydia spoke briefly to the congregation. Everyone felt that she was a fine leader and was charmed with her presence.

The young people particularly made friends with her. As a result of her visit the League has decided to hold two meetings a month. Beginning with January the Los Angeles League will meet on the second and fourth Sunday evenings. They have also adopted a plan of study she brought, on *The Adventures of Life*. The study meetings are to start in January. The outline divides into four parts: Birth—Work—Marriage—Death. These will be studied in the light of the New-Church teachings.

A. D.

PRESTON, MD.

Thanksgiving was observed at the Church of the New Jerusalem with a religious service on Thanksgiving eve. The Methodist Church cooperated with us in the service according to a custom established here a few years ago. The weather proved to be very bad, rain having fallen during the whole day and right up to the time of the service, which interfered very greatly with the attendance; still the attendance was good, considering the weather conditions.

The Rev. Immanuel Tafel of Wilmington preached the Thanksgiving sermon. The ministers of both the Methodist Church and the Church of the New Jerusalem had part with him in the service. All present seemed well pleased with the whole service.

Previous to the meeting the minister of the New Church had been invited by the *Preston News* to write a guest editorial on Thanksgiving. The editorial was written. We were given front-page space, well lined off, with the picture of a large turkey, the emblem of Thanksgiving, at the top. Mention was also made of the guest editorial in the *Baltimore Sun* a few days later.

T. L. N.

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CALENDAR

January 1.

New Year's Day; the Feast of the Circumcision and of the Name of Jesus.

Sel. 100: "Give the king thy judgments, O God."

Lesson I. Gen i. or Isaiah lxxv.

In place of Responsive Service the Te Dominum,
B. W., p. 389, or other settings.

Lesson II. Matt. i.

Gloria, Benedictus and Faith.

Hymns (Mag.) 155: "Let every heart exulting
beat."

154: "To the Name of our Salvation." or,
471: "From glory unto glory!"

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