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Adeste Fideles

Anonymous, Latin, 18th century

Source unknown, 18th cent



1. O come, all ye faith-ful, joy-ful and tri-umphant; O com-
2. Sing, choirs of an-gels, sing in ex-ul-ta-tion, O sin-
3. The, Lord's great The, born this happy morning, O



4. Come and see the King, who is born in the King-
5. dom of David, and is the first-born of the King-
6. dom of David, who is the first-born of the King-
7. dom of David, who is the first-born of the King-
8. dom of David, who is the first-born of the King-



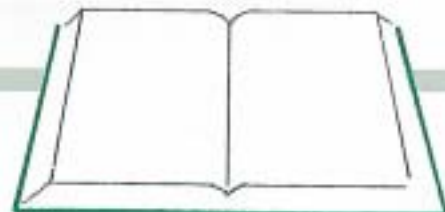
9. dom of David, who is the first-born of the King-
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13. dom of David, who is the first-born of the King-
14. dom of David, who is the first-born of the King-
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Adoration of the Child

—Luomo Photos



According to the Word

THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

**"There is born... a Saviour"
(Luke 2:11).**

Every village, town and city is decorated with beautiful colored lights. Evergreen trees are decorated and over radio and television we hear Christmas carols echoing their melody throughout these festive days.

We see many shoppers. Some are weary with the burden of shopping, others are filled with joy and laughter. During these days there is good will as far as the temporal things are concerned. We pause for a moment! What is the meaning of all this? Why the lights? Why the singing? Why the joy? And why the gifts?

The Christian knows the answer: nearly 2,000 years ago in the little village of Bethlehem, God fulfilled His promise which He predicted through the prophet Micah 650 years before. Caesar Augustus was just a puppet in the great drama. The people went to Bethlehem to be taxed because of Caesar's edict. Why did he do it? In Matthew we read of the chief priests and scribes in their reply to Herod as to where the Christ should be born, "It is written by the prophet." By so doing he declared that this thing happened in the fulfillment of prophecy, and so under the hand of God.

When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem the Savior was born. "It came to pass, while they were there the days were fulfilled 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."

There was no room for them in the inn. He was born in a stable and laid in the manger. He came—the glory of it, the wonder of it! When He came He bypassed the court, bypassed the palace, bypassed the inn and was born so low that no baby can ever be born more humbly.

"She brought forth ... she wrapped him in swaddling clothes." It is very beautiful, but, oh, the pity of it—the tragedy of it, the loneliness—in that hour of all hours, when womanhood should be surrounded by tenderest care, she was alone with her husband. "She brought forth her first born."

The "first born" does not mean only first in time, it means also first in place, first in order, first in importance. In the New Testament He is called the "First-born of creation, the first-born from the dead, the first-born among many brethren," and yet, there is a profound note. "Who is this child?" He is the Son of God. That is what happened in the stable in the little town of Bethlehem Ephratha. The Son of God in human form had entered the stream of human history.

The heavenly announcement came as the angel of the Lord stood by the shepherds and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. It was night, the shepherds were caring for their flock. The messenger did not appear at Caesar's palace, nor to the temple, but he came to the humble shepherds. At first they were filled with fear. We hear the angels' words, "Be not afraid"; then their declaration, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." To a weary world full of hearts filled with sadness and despair comes the good news, "There is born to you this day in the city

of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

His name has meaning: Savior—someone confronting all the sin of the world with regal authority based upon His redeeming power; Christ—someone confronting all the chaos of the world and who has the answer to all our need; Lord—one who confronts all eternity and all ages.

"He is born today," said the angel. "Where shall we find Him?" The angel continued, "And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." Before the shepherds could say anything, we read, "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts, praising God, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among men of His good pleasure" (New Am. St.).

This Child Jesus, after some 33 years on earth, completed His mission on the cross. We cannot separate the manger from the cross. On the cross He won the victory when He paid for all our sins and thus offers to all the gift of life.

Each year we pause and commemorate God's Gift to this world. Every one who will call upon His name shall be saved. So we bow with reverent hearts as we behold the wonder of Christmas and what God has revealed to us in the Scriptures. Everything hinges on the God-Man, Christ Jesus. He is the center of Scripture, the center of history, and must be the center of our lives if Christmas is to have its rightful meaning. It is not a holiday but a "holy day." If this has been our experience we can sing "Joy to the World" with a heart full of joy and peace.

—Ernest Langness

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Little John and Christmas

by Bjarne Nordtveit
Huglo, Sunnhordland, Norway

Every morning from the window of my boyhood home I could see an old man come out of his little hut up in the hills and walk by our home over towards the boat-house and the fjord.

He wore wooden shoes. On his head he had a dark, almost three-cornered hat with a wide brim that flopped down over his ears. A long, coarsely woven jacket hung almost to his knees. And on his back was a little fishing knapsack which was tied over one shoulder.

If the weather was nice, he would carry his hat in his hand, and let the sun shine on his white bald head. If it was raining or stormy, his hat brim flopped extra far down over his ears. Huge rain drops would roll off the brim and down on his jacket which got mighty heavy and water-logged as the day wore on.

Often, too, a huge drop would form under his nose as he went homeward to his cold hut after an exhausting fishing trip out on the sea. Then the mischievous boys in the village would yell after him, "Today is drop-weather!"

But little John—that was his name—could hear nothing, for he was quite deaf. The name "Little" he had gotten in school. For, as the teacher said, "There were two boys with the same name, and I had to tell the difference between them when I was going to hear their lessons."

I was very fascinated by Little John. Not because of his huge hat, not because of his fishing knapsack, not because of the drops under his nose, either. I was fascinated by him because of his hearing trumpet, shaped like a crooked pipe and the curved mouthpiece

sticking up like a claw from the pocket of his jacket.

In my childish imagination, I thought one must be very important to be able to listen with such a "hearing ear." It was very mysterious and exciting.

But Little John seldom talked and listened even less often. And it seemed that he never took the trumpet out of his pocket or bent down in such a way that I could yell into it. That was why I was pretty disappointed about Little John.

Christmas came nearer and it was my birthday. Everything looked so clean when it was covered with the new Christmas snow. Everything was white—houses, hills, woods. And the little islands swam like white swans on the glassy calm waters of the fjord. The mountains were reflected clear and reddish-colored in the waters, the reflection from a dull, glowing December sun that hung low over the hills to the south.

I sat on my sled up on a high place and wondered about all these things that were standing on their heads down in the fjord. I had been to the store and bought some figs, my birthday present. Mother gave me permission to buy ten figs. "Then you yourself will have to figure out how many days are left until Christmas and how many figs you can eat each day because you can't ask for any more before Christmas Eve," she said.

It was my first big problem in calculation. And I was plenty proud that I figured it out so easily, but very disappointed over the answer. Ten figs—and ten days—that was only one a day.

While I sat on the sled, with the bag in my hand, there were only nine figs left. I saw a large ship

come sailing over its own reflection northward bound. It was the "America boat." I could tell it apart from a thousand other ships because it was larger and more beautiful, with two huge yellow smokestacks that towered so jauntily over her bridge. But today there were so many smokestacks! There were two which pointed downward also. Then I had to figure again—two smokestacks upwards, two smokestacks downwards. That made four smokestacks. Again, I was proud of my ability to figure out problems and began to let my imagination work some more.

The noise from the ship's engine echoed over the glistening mountains and spread to me and my sled. This gave wings to my newly born desire and dream to fly into the distance toward that promised land.

I stared at the ship. What did I see? There was a Christmas tree at the top of the mast. A Christmas tree with a pointed spear-like star at the top and other stars gleaming in the sun. I looked, entranced. There were two Christmas trees also. One that pointed upwards and one that stood on its head down in the water. The star on the latter I couldn't see because the waves from the boat broke the mirror in pieces. I knew that the star on the Christmas tree pointed up towards heaven, towards Jesus, towards the light. But what did the tree mean that stood on its head, that pointed down into the water—without a star?

While I sat and thought about that, Little John came suddenly up beside me. Softly as a cat, he came in the new snow and stopped a bit to the side and in front of me, but so near that I could touch the hear-

ing trumpet with my hand. There was a dull glow on the claw that stuck out of his pocket. What if he would take the trumpet out of his pocket, bend down towards me so I could yell, or sing, or whistle, or whatever else, in it!

But Little John was standing motionless, hat in hand, staring steadily at the ship—the Christmas boat.

I reached out my hand and touched the trumpet. It was smooth and cold. I bent forward and peered up into it. He must have at least seen that I was there but he only stared, not moving, at the ship.

Then I saw two warm tears that trickled from wrinkle to wrinkle down over Little John's weather-beaten cheeks. They continued trickling down over his beard and disappeared in the cold snow. Just think, Little John could cry! I had never thought that to be possible.

Suddenly he realized I was there, and went quickly off towards his hut. A big fish fin hung out over the edge of his knapsack. It waved and beckoned almost like a hand.

I coasted down towards home and went into the kitchen where Mother was baking fattigmand. They smelled delicious.

"The America boat came into the fjord," I said excitedly.

"Oh," she said and continued after a moment, "Is the Christmas boat so early this year?" She kept on working with the fattigmand.

"The boat had two Christmas trees," I began.

"Oh," was all she said.

"Yes, one with a lighted star that points up to the mountains and the sky and one that points down into the water. But that one doesn't have a star," I said, and edged closer to the table where the Christmas baking lay in a dish.

"Oh," she said again.

"Little John cried," I continued.

Mother turned and looked strangely at me. She wrinkled her forehead thoughtfully. "Yes, yes," she answered after a bit, "everyone has a right to cry now and then when he is tired or sick or unhappy with himself." The wrinkles on her forehead grew deeper.

"He stood with his hat in his

hand and looked at the Christmas boat," I said.

It was then that I heard the story of Little John.

He had not always been old. It amazed me greatly that he once was different than he was now. But Little John had been a sailor. He had sailed out on the ocean, yes, all the way to India, in his youth. He had had a good wife and a stalwart son who waited for him at home. When his son grew up, he went off to America. Two years afterward his wife died and Little John was left all alone in his hut up in the hills.

At first, letters from his son came very often. But then, suddenly, none came at all, until persistent rumors about his dissipated life over in America spread throughout the village. It was then that Little John first noticed that he was getting hard of hearing. Everyone that he met talked so low.

When Mother had finished telling the story, she said, "Now, you hide one of your figs until Christmas Eve. Then you and I will go up to the hills and make Christmas for Little John. I'll make it with my cleaning cloth and fattigmand and you will make it with your fig. Because even if there is much that has made Little John sad, it is not for sure that it will take so much to make him happy."

I thought Mother was being unreasonable. I would have to go a whole day without a fig. But because I wanted so badly to have a chance to either hear or talk in Little John's hearing trumpet, I struggled through the whole next day without opening the bag of figs. It was a mighty long day. Thus came Christmas Eve, and with it more newly fallen snow.

I went along with Father to get "Christmas wood." After that, we went into the woods and chopped down a beautiful Christmas tree. But all the while, I was thinking about how Mother and I were going up into the hills to make Christmas. It was unbearably exciting.

At last Mother put a cleaning cloth in a wash pail, took a basket with the fattigmand that were on

the table, and then turned to me, "Now you must find your fig. Then we can go."

I had already had it in my pocket for quite a while.

I walked in front of Mother, in Little John's footprints, up towards the hills. But we came to the door at the same time. Mother knocked. I waited, expectant, but not a sound did we hear from inside the house. Mother knocked again, harder. But again—no sound from within.

"Don't you understand, Little John doesn't have his hearing ear on," I cried impatiently. Mother opened the door and went in. I followed.

Little John was sitting by the table in his humble little house, when we entered and greeted him. He was just sitting quietly. Lying open before him on the table was a big old Bible, as soiled and tattered in the corners as my picture book at home. His glasses lay on the Bible.

Mother took off her coat just as though she were at home. Little John's face lit up a little at the sight of her white apron.

He took his trumpet up out of his pocket so he could talk with her. Mother went over to the table. She stood there for a few minutes looking at the Bible. Then she asked, "What verses do you like best, John?"

He didn't answer at once, but seemed to be giving it some thought. "Oh, you know I have my very own verse, if you can call it that. It's about like this: 'If I go against God, He is still faithful, just the same.'"

Mother nodded.

An old Christmas card lay beside the Bible on the table. The handwriting was almost worn off and illegible, but the printed letters were still clear between the picture of two angels in beautiful robes. I spelled M-E-R-R-Y C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S and thought the card had for sure come once upon a time on the Christmas boat.

Mother saw the card, too. She thought carefully before asking her

[Continued on page 16]

".. We hear Thy voice, O Son of Man.."

by Ramona Vaxvick
Outlook, Saskatchewan, Canada

For some reason or other, the street was more quiet than usual. The shouting children who usually lived long hours on the streets—played, ate, worked, cheated, stole—had all vanished tonight, swallowed up by the dark mud walls where here and there a dim flicker of light showed that a piece of bristly pig's skin was frying over an open fire. The children had merely transferred their quarrels to these crumbling adobe walls—home—where their ragged shirts and long-unwashed bodies matched their family and surroundings, but where the faint firelight was kind to these outward appearances. For many, it was the only warmth and kindness they ever felt.

So the street was quiet. From a tavern the clanging beat of a radio came through the short curtain used for a door, but it was a continuous sound which one became accustomed to and so did not seem to be really there. More often it was added to by angry voices raised in shouts of abuse as men quarrelled quickly from cheap strong liquor and a passionate nature. Sometimes the quarrels ended in pistol shots. Just now there was only the radio. Tonight there was not even the gentle sound of rain on the cobblestones.

Farther down the narrow sidewalk, a man was shuffling slowly homeward. His back was bent almost double from the load of firewood on his shoulders, and his bare feet, cracked with dirt and sores, limped painfully under his burden. Once in a while he glanced at the points of firelight piercing the darkness. He stopped for a moment in the murky light from the tavern, and then moved on, past each little shop, locked and barred for the night. It was getting late. But then, in the unusual stillness of the

street, he caught the sound of a different kind of music, and he stopped again.

Slowly he swung the pack of firewood off his tired shoulders, and slowly, almost cautiously, he lifted his head to listen. His brown face was shadowed by a dirty, ragged felt hat. But nothing could hide the deep lines of care, made deeper from dirt and disease.

"And ye, beneath life's crushing load,

Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow:"

The foreign words meant nothing to him, but perhaps the music had within it a sound of hope.

"Look now; for glad and golden hours

Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing."

He knew nothing of glad and golden hours, either in the past or in his tomorrows. He was late from the market, and had sold almost nothing. The way home was steep and when he arrived, his wife would be equally as tired, his children clamorous and shivering in the night air. Tomorrow he would go back down the trail and try again. But just for now he lingered, listening.

Sorrowing brother, in darkness yet dwelling, you don't know that a day of hope has dawned; that you do not need to fear death's dreaded darkness, nor tomorrow's hopelessness for God has given to you, too, the answer to your need—His Son, Jesus Christ. For He has come to take on Himself your sins. He will carry your burden, and give you rest, for He loves you—the kind of love that puts hope in your heart. But no one has yet given heed to your burden of sorrow. Right now your heart is dulled

from many disappointments. Peace and love are just fancy words in your ears—ears which are more tuned to the noise of the tavern, and the sharp voices of greed in the market place.

Take up your pack, and begin the climb. Soon we will see you no longer for the darkness will cover you.

Perhaps tomorrow someone will come.

* * * * *

She walked quickly because the wind was cold. In the quiet street her footsteps echoed from the dry crunching snow under her boots. Another block and she would be home. Lights shone softly through the right kind of drapes in each comfortable home as she passed. Hurrying in to her own home, she didn't notice the softness of the carpet, the silver Christmas tree, or even the circulating warmth of the house. No tired form here, no heavy burden, no dirt and disease. And yet—

She flung her coat on the bed and sat down before the unfinished theme on her desk. It read, in part: "There is no purpose in life today. We are born only to destroy and be destroyed. Then why am I here? I have no wish to be destroyed—I want to live! Is there an answer in all this universe? No, only death and destruction and then—nothingness." As she took up her pen to continue, someone in the house put a record of Christmas music on the stereo and the words came to her clearly:

"Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world hath suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have
rolled

Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears
not

The love song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing."

Child of this age, don't you know that this is a day of hope? Has no one in your enlightened land told you there is more than

[Continued on next page]

Come - Let Us Visit Bethlehem



by Elias Newman

*"O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light,
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."*

Every time I have visited Bethlehem the words of this lovely old carol would come ringing in my ears, but never so strikingly as on one Christmas Eve when with Dr. W. M. Christie, Scottish missionary from Tiberias, Rev. S. B. Rohold of Haifa and a party of friends, I journeyed to the birthplace of our Savior.

Just before entering Bethlehem we passed the tomb of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, and beside a narrow path, the so-called "Well of David." When Bethlehem was in the possession of the Philistines and David was hiding in the Cave of Adullam with four hundred men, he said, "Oh, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate."

We now entered Bethlehem, first known in the Scriptures as Ephratha, which means "fruitful." This was indeed a fruitful town, for here the Messiah was born, who, through His life and ministry, has made it possible for one who abides in Him to "bear much fruit." Bethlehem means in Hebrew "House of Bread," and in Arabic, "House of Meat."

A small group of 120 Bethlehemites returned to their city after the Babylonian Captivity. But its greatest event was foretold by the prophet Micah who, 750 years before the birth of Jesus, wrote: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little among the thousands of

Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be the ruler of Israel."

After supper, we gathered outside in the Shepherd's Field around a huge fire. As the evening sun was sinking over the nearby mountains of Jerusalem, reflecting its shadows on the eastern hills, we sang various Christmas carols. It is impossible for me to attempt to describe the sacred feeling that thrilled my being as we burst forth singing on these fields over which the voices of angels were once heard! It was a holy privilege. It seemed as if "an angel of the Lord stood by us," and the "glory of the Lord shone round about." "Suddenly . . . a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." God was in our midst, speaking with intense reality of the meaning of this unprecedented event.

Evening stole quietly on. Night threw its heavy mantle of darkness about us. The stillness which permeated the pastoral scene gave us an opportunity to speak. One by one the stars came out. The lights in the Bethlehem houses began flickering. A holy quietness and hush fell upon all of us, as gazing on the town we listened to the singing of the many Christian hymns dealing with the events of the Nativity. We all took up the words and sang them with heart and gusto. It took on a new meaning as its message rang out and it brought a fresh blessing to our hearts. Scriptures were read and many of us gave short messages on the birth of our Savior. And to climax the dramatic scene, several hundred voices pierced the quiet of the evening with the stirring hymn of worship:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

We all felt the mighty power of His name that night. The inspiration of the Scriptures read had filled our hearts and in the words of Scripture we reiterated the words of the shepherds who "said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem." Back we all went across the fields, through the narrow winding streets of Beit Sahur, and then to the open square before the Church of the Nativity, where in the grotto beneath, it is said, Jesus was born.

We Hear Thy Voice

[Continued from page 5]

nothingness beyond the grave? That life is a gift, and that eternal life is a free gift of God through His Son, Jesus Christ? You know the meaning of peace, for your land is not torn with war. You know love, for you have been nurtured in a protective culture. Your road is not weary. Still you do not know the love song of our God—that He came to seek and to save you, to give purpose and meaning to your life now. You were born to live, not die. To live eternally with your God. You will not find the answer in the universe, but in the Word of God. Look to it, use it, while there is still time. For the days are hastening on.

Lay down your pen, and hear the angels' song.

Si Melby of Augsburg

by Dr. Bernhard Christensen
Minneapolis, Minnesota

His name was John Sigurd Melby. His family called him "Sig," but at Augsburg, both as a student and as a professor, he was known as "Si." Even his own students would often address him thus. It was more than a nickname; it was an expression of special affection for one whom they both respected and loved.

I met him first in the fall of 1920 when I came back to Augsburg to enter college. His office was on the first floor of old North Hall. There he worked at an elevated desk, so that he could stand as he studied or graded students' papers. His fields were Bible and History, but that first year he was also teaching English in the Academy. Usually there were piles of themes cluttered over his desk and chairs.

Melby was a big man—some years later he weighed over 250 pounds. His hair was a blond straw color, worn usually in a short "pompadour." His clothes, except on special occasions, lacked pressing. He walked with a slight limp, the after-effect of a childhood malady. His hands were large, chubby; his eyes steel-blue, with the left lid drooping. When he took your hand and looked into your face, smiling, it was a warming experience.

Early Years

What was the background of this unconventional and unique-appearing professor? He was born February 20, 1887, in Stoughton, Wisconsin. His parents, Anton J. and Oline Melby, were Norwegians. He grew up in a Norwegian Lutheran community. As a young man

he worked on a farm and, for a time, as a blacksmith. Honesty, openness, and vigor were characteristic traits from youth.

One day in an informal Christian meeting he heard a man testify to the power of Christ in his life. Sig Melby said to himself, "If this is true, I want it." He did find it. Soon afterward, in 1907, he set out for Augsburg in Minneapolis, to seek an education.

He was a good student—A's and B's, says the record. He was graduated from the college in 1911, and from the seminary in 1914. There are echoes indicating that he had his struggles with theological problems. "I almost didn't get my diploma from Augsburg Seminary because of that doctrine," he told us once.

After graduation he taught for some years in church colleges in the state of Washington, and dur-

ing World War I, he worked in a shipyard. He did graduate work, chiefly in History, in several universities. He spent a year of special study at the Presbyterian Seminary in Chicago, and earlier he spent a year at the Biblical Seminary in New York. He never completed an advanced degree; and he was never ordained as a minister. In 1920 he returned to Augsburg where he taught—chiefly in the college, but also to some extent in the Seminary—until his death in 1944.

In 1923 Professor Melby was married to Miss Nina Quinn of Alabama, who had been the secretary to the President at the Biblical Seminary. A lovely and gracious lady, Mrs. Melby soon endeared herself to her husband's friends and students. But, tragically, she was stricken with a dread illness, and died less than two years after their marriage.

Throughout the years Professor Melby was the friend and trusted counsellor of the students. "If I were in spiritual trouble," one of them was heard to say, "Si Melby would be the one I would want to talk to." Men and women students alike respected and had confidence in him.

One of the good memories that I have from my years at Augsburg was hearing about how Melby had led to personal faith in Christ a young couple who came to him, in preparation for marriage, to talk over their religious differences. Theirs was only one of many homes where the name of Si Melby was honored.

When I became a member of the Augsburg faculty in 1930, Professor Melby was one of the strong



J. S. (Si) Melby

and influential members of that group. During the intervening years he had gone through some stormy periods, notably the controversy occasioned by Professor Lars Qualben's leading a premature movement in favor of church merger. Melby wrote a vigorous pamphlet against the "errors" of Dr. Qualben's "Blue Book." His views prevailed. The issue was settled, for the time being, at the 1928 Annual Conference of the Lutheran Free Church, and Dr. Qualben left Augsburg to teach at St. Olaf.

Teacher, Coach and Dean

In the late twenties and early thirties, for a few years, Melby carried a triple load at the college, which even depression times could scarcely justify. He was head of the Christianity Department, Dean of Men and Coach of basketball. Though he often mentioned the difficulties of this situation, his work seemed to make its mark in all three areas. What he liked best was teaching the Bible. In this field he has had few peers in our church colleges. His marked-up Bible bears witness to his own close study of its pages, and he had developed a method of teaching which was both captivating and illuminating. His blackboard outlines were far famed, and when he turned from the board to look sharply at his hearers and ask a pointed question, the challenge was inescapable. Not seldom, too, there were touches of humor. Si Melby did not believe that Christianity should be either dull or gloomy. His keen analysis of chapters like Romans 7 or Acts 16, or his portrayal of the "spokes" in the Christian wheel in Galatians 5, will be long remembered. His Bible teaching was not confined to college classrooms. At times there were evening classes for the public, and he often taught at church gatherings and at summer Bible camps.⁹

As a coach, Melby often confessed, "I'm a hard loser." He lamented the fact that in basketball "every recitation has to be carried

on in public." Every loss—one might say, every misplay—pained him. Even when he wore his old grey sweater, which had become a kind of symbol of victory, he would sometimes rise from the bench and walk to and fro. We felt for him.¹⁰

Melby had but one championship basketball team (1926-27) during his coaching years, but he, nevertheless, put Augsburg "on the athletic map." After his day there were years of doldrums before the Augsburg teams again took a strong place among the Minnesota colleges.¹¹

Controversial Editor

After giving up coaching, Professor Melby served for a time as Editor of *The Lutheran Messenger*, the official church paper. There he was his characteristic self—forthright, forceful, often blunt—above all a lover and advocate of the Gospel, and specifically of programs of the Lutheran Free Church. He could be controversial on other topics as well.

Once Governor Elmer Benson summoned him to his office because of something political he had written, Melby did not change his opinion. On another occasion Rev. C. J. Nestvold, himself not soft-spoken, wrote to Melby about his editing of an article, "Melby, you would be no good as a doctor, but you are excellent as a butcher."¹²

It is not strange that such a strong, forthright man should have strong friends. Melby had—and some enemies. George Sverdrup, T. O. Burntvedt, Olaf Rogne—these were of the manly type that Melby admired and whose friend he became. And these were but a few among many.

Christian Faith and the Church

The great over-arching fact about Si Melby was his whole-souled Christian faith and life. He was a Christian through and through. He had met God in his youth and walked with Him through the years. To study and teach the Bible was his meat and

drink. He believed its message without question. Perhaps at times some of us envied him his great boldness of faith. He seemed to be troubled by no doubts, to be undaunted by the storms of unbelieving raging about us. Once I asked him if he was not afraid that his faith would be shaken by some of his learned, unbelieving teachers.

"No, not really," was his emphatic reply. "I've learned that as soon as they get out of their own field they know no more than anybody else."

During his years of teaching in the West, Melby had another spiritual experience which was very influential in his life. He spoke of it as a new coming of the Holy Spirit into his life, "an experience as clear and definite as his conversion." Rev. L. B. Sateren, his good friend, recalls that this renewal came to Melby, not through contact with another person, but through reading certain books. It was a great reality in his life, of which he often spoke—though we were often puzzled as to just what he meant. Today much is spoken and written about the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I ask myself: was Si Melby a forerunner?

Melby loved the Lutheran Free Church. It was his spiritual home, and he was fully convinced that its principles were rooted in the New Testament. He gloried in the fact that its organization was not as efficient as some. "It's so inefficient," he said, "that it won't work unless the Spirit of God is there in it. If you have strong church machinery, you hardly need the Spirit of God."

He opposed church union in 1928. He was convinced that the Lutheran Free Church still had work to do. He loved God's men wherever he found them, but he was suspicious of church organization and of any authority above the local congregation.¹³

For him the congregation was of major importance. And in the congregation he wanted a clear and strong evangelical emphasis. Yet his beliefs about the work

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The Lutheran Ambassador

MEET the Churches OF OUR FELLOWSHIP



MEET THE CHURCHES OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

Today: The Faith-Eagle
Butte (S. Dak.) Parish

Bethel Lutheran Church

Shortly after the beginning of his pastorate at Faith in 1964, the Rev. A. L. Hokonson wrote a poem entitled "South Dakota: Land of God." It dealt with the wide open spaces of the western part of that state, where there is room to move. A copy of the poem was later sent to the Governor at his request.

Even though it is not the farthest west, the Faith-Eagle Butte parish is the most "western" in atmosphere in the Association. Some church members drive great distances to come to church and the pastor must cover those same miles if he is to make calls in their homes. Ranchers pasture their cattle not on hundreds but on thousands of acres.

Bethel Lutheran, in the town of Faith, was organized in August, 1917, at the Flint Rock Schoolhouse in Perkins County. Early services were also held in the homes. Later the congregation centered her activities in Faith and the name "Bethel" was taken in 1924. It was in that year, too, that the church affiliated with the Lutheran Free Church. In 1963, Bethel's membership shifted to the AFLC. The present church building was dedicated in 1926.

Rev. A. M. Arntzen served Bethel from 1917-18. He was followed by Rev. O. K. Jorgenson. Morris Eggen was pastor from 1924-30. H. O. Johnson was next, staying until 1936. Others who have been in the parish are a Mr. Tollefson, J. B. Kilness, Peter Fluvaag, Student Hamar Benson, Layman Ed Johnson, Students Arnold Jergenson, Gordon Berntson and Marius

Haakenstad. Jay G. Erickson served the parish from 1956-64. Prior to that he had been an evangelist for the Hague Lutheran Innermission Federation. He was ordained in 1963 at Bethel. Present pastor is A. L. Hokonson.

During a series of special meetings by Evangelist Joseph Erickson, during the tenure of his son Jay, a revival took place in the congregation.

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Located in the town of Eagle Butte which serves as the agency headquarters for the Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Emmanuel is one of the Association's youngest congregations, being organized on May 19, 1957. At first, services were conducted in a hall in town, but in July, 1958, the Zion Lutheran Church at Nisland was purchased and moved on a lot donated by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Johnson. The first services in the church were held on Easter Sunday, 1959. A water system was installed this fall.

The dedication took place on June 28, 1959, with Rev. J. T. Quanbeck, executive secretary of Home Missions in the Lutheran Free

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Bethel Lutheran Church



Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Manger Scene



Credit: Luoma Photos

Si Melby of Augsburg

[Continued from page 8]

of the Holy Spirit, confirmed by his own experiences, kept him from any shallow evangelism.

At the same time he was no perfectionist. He could indict sin as few could. And he knew that he himself was a sinner. But, justified by faith, he walked with God. To hear Si Melby's simple, direct prayers, in pulpit or prayer-meeting, was to be led into the very presence of God.

The Memory of the Righteous

Death came to him with little warning, when he was only fifty-

six. He was stricken at Christmas-New Year's time in 1943-44. He underwent surgery but it was unavailing. After only a couple of weeks at the Deaconess Hospital he fell asleep in Christ on Sunday, January 23, 1944.²

Si Melby was ready to go. The very brevity of his last illness seemed appropriate. "The soldier fell forward as befits the man."

In accordance with one of his last requests, his body was taken to Madison, Wisconsin, and laid to rest beside his parents in the family plot. Three sisters and one brother survived him: Mrs. Olin Bowers, Mrs. Frances Brewster, Frida Melby and Ralph Melby.²

In the archives of Augsburg College, in addition to Melby's notes and papers two well-worn articles from among his few material possessions speak with symbolic eloquence of the great teacher and coach who left them behind:

1. His work-scarred study Bible, its binding falling apart, its pages loose and tattered, hundreds of passages underlined, marginal notes throughout. Melby's hearers often wondered how he could still keep the volume together.

2. His tattered old grey sweater, worn at so many games, symbol of Melby the fighter, the strong leader, at once the unsparing coach and the kindly friend. It hangs in the archives like the battered armor of a knight of long ago. It betokens Augsburg athletics at its best.

But there is another, finer memorial to Si Melby, a memorial that speaks not of the finished works of yesterday, but of the unfinished work of today and tomorrow at the Augsburg that Si loved. Melby Hall was built in 1960, and named in his honor. Beautiful, spacious, well-planned, it is a worthy memorial.²

While Si Melby's body was still at the mortuary, an anonymous wreath was delivered there. Later, an inquiry was made of the florist, but he could only say that the one who had ordered the flowers left no name. On the card accompanying the wreath this reference was written: II Timothy 4:7a, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." No better summary of the life of Si Melby could be given.

² Indicates a deletion follows from a longer article which the writer will publish later.



God Has Spoken

God's people had waited a long time. They waited for God to speak to them, to reveal Himself to them. He had done it in various ways in the past, but for years now there had been silence. Some people were doubting and denying because, they said, God was no longer working with men as in times past.

Then God spoke. At the right time He spoke. In a most wonderful manner, He spoke. In the fulness of time, and through His only begotten Son, He spoke. He spoke by the One who is the heir of all things. What wealth! He spoke by One whose glory is the same as the Father's. What glory! He spoke by One who was and is perfect and sinless in nature and life. What purity! He spoke by One who upholds the entire universe by His word of power. What power! He spoke by One who purifies and cleanses and takes away sin. What grace! He spoke by One who is now, His ministry of redemption completed, seated at the right hand of God. What wisdom and concern! Yes, God spoke in the most wonderful manner when Jesus came that first Christmas.

Christmas, 1968, is upon us. The main part of that festival is what God did some 2000 years ago. There will be no newer message, more glorious message, than the one given that first Christmas. Every Christmas should be a deeper awareness of, joy in, and submission to, the message given on that first Christmas.

The world today is looking for something new. People are looking for something exciting. Society is looking for something to hope in, to cling to. All nations are looking for leaders, or a leader, who will put balm on the sores of men and nations. False "messiahs" will come. False remedies are aplenty. Many "exciting" fads present themselves. People are bewildered as sheep without a shepherd. Will not God, if there is one, speak? Will not He be merciful and help in these days of unmeasured need?

God is speaking today, but unbelieving man will not hear. The message is the message of all ages, "Unto you is born a Savior."

A savior is what we need, a savior who is far above and beyond human standards. We need a savior who knows and understands the whole world and universe, and has power to cope with the universal needs. We need a savior who is above reproach, sinless and perfect. We need a savior who can deal with sin, and the sins of ALL men. We need a savior who has an impregnable place from which he can operate.

We do have a Savior like the one needed, in Jesus. Read Hebrews 1:1-4. Thank God for how He spoke to us!

May God bless you this Christmas. May you hear clearly God's message to you as given to all men that first Christmas. Our tremendous needs are as nothing in comparison with the Savior's strength and mercy. Give Him a chance to do for you what He alone can do. Be busy telling the world of Jesus. Pray that the world will listen to God's message of hope and peace.

Thank you for your fellowship in Kingdom work. All the institutions of the Association greet you and wish for you a joyous holiday season.

*Pastor John P. Strand, President
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*

WOMEN for Christ

CHRISTMAS: "GIVING" AND "GETTING"

by Mrs. Robert Lee
Tioga, North Dakota

Although Webster defines Christmas as "the yearly celebration, December 25, of the birth of Jesus Christ," it is perhaps more accurate in current times that it be defined as "the yearly celebration, December 25, of 'giving' and 'getting.'"

The first of December this year marks the beginning of the Advent season. This pre-Christmas season is meant to be a time when we reflect upon the coming of Christmas, which in fact commemorates the coming of Christ. But, all too often the Advent season degenerates into a season of rushing, planning and worrying about that half of Christmas known as "giving." Whom to give to, what to give, and when to find time to deliver the chosen gift to the recipient are foremost in our minds. This, along with plans for baking and entertaining, constitute our pre-Christmas meditation.

Our "giving" consists of a variety of things: toys, clothes, candy, appliances, sports equipment, household furnishings. These temporal things may be a part of today's Christmas, but will they, for the most part, be here in the years to come? God's "giving" on the first Christmas was matchless and everlasting. You may receive duplicate gifts from your family and

friends, but of God's "gift" there is only one, His Son, Jesus Christ.

If at Christmas you were required to give away as a gift a loved one, would you be so quick to "give"? Not many parents would willingly give into the hands of another the care and training of an infant child. And yet, God in His love has done this very thing for us: "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the BABE lying in a manger" (Luke 2:16). True, Mary was the child's mother, but He was still the Son of God.

As a parent it is all too easy to suffer with your child the "growing pains" of life. We would spare the child all the problems and sorrows of life, if possible. How difficult it must have been for God to witness the agonies and sufferings of Christ without intervening. But He knew that the salvation of the multitudes (this includes you and me) rested on Jesus Christ and His ability to carry the burden of centuries of sin on His own shoulders to the grave in order to defeat Satan and claim triumph over death.

The other half of Christmas as the world knows it is "getting." After all the days and weeks of preparation to "give," we now come to the awaited Holiday only to be taken up with thoughts of what we receive for gifts. As people greet one another or speak on the telephone, the question is asked repeatedly, "What did you

get for Christmas?" Perhaps you received the zig-zag sewing machine you admired for so long, or the freezer you dreamed of owning is now yours. If on Christmas morning you responded to the question, "What did you get for Christmas?" with the answer, "God's love in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ," wouldn't this gift far outweigh all others that could be mentioned?

When we receive this one "gift" of Jesus Christ, we receive all the blessings that God intended on that first Christmas. When we believe and trust in Christ, God grants to us other "gifts" as recorded in His Word: comfort, forgiveness, assurance, grace, instruction for living, victory over temptation—all in all, a new life.

It is not the spirit of the world, but the Holy Spirit of God that assures a true Christmas "spirit." God's Holy Spirit working through us can make this Christmas a blessing to each of us, and make each of us a blessing to those with whom we share the joy of this Holiday season.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15).

IN THIS ISSUE

Bjarne Nordtveit, a cousin of the Editor, operates a boat-building and repair shop in Norway with a brother . . . Miss Ramona Vaxvick was dean of women at Association Lutheran Bible School last year and is now doing secretarial work in her native Canada . . . the late Elias Newman directed the work of the Minneapolis Friends of Israel, a work now carried on by his wife . . . Dr. Bernhard Christensen is a former president of Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota . . . Mrs. Robert Lee is an AFLC pastor's wife in Tioga, N. Dak. . . . Dr. Iver Olson is a teacher at the Association schools in Minneapolis . . . Dale Stone attended Free Lutheran Seminary and with his wife is working with Campus Crusade for Christ . . . Mrs. Eunice Heizer is a homemaker at Blackwell, Oklahoma . . . Rev. R. W. Oundersen, an AFLC pastor, is serving as a missionary in Bolivia under the World Mission Prayer League . . . Mrs. Marlene Maline, Lonsing, Iowa, and Miss Ellen Nielsen, Sisseton, South Dakota, are homemakers . . . Ernest Langness is the AFLC pastor in McVillie and Binford, North Dakota.



EDITORIALS



MEGATON OR MANGER?

A few years ago when the word "megaton" was new to us, some of us pastors preached Christmas sermons entitled "Megaton or Manger?" It was a catchy, modern title. The sermons, understandably, brought out the importance of the power of the Manger as over against thermonuclear force.

Thermonuclear power is considerable. A megaton is the explosive force of one million tons of TNT. As an illustration of the power coralled by man, the Soviets exploded a thermonuclear blast on October 30, 1961, which was said to be in the 50-plus megaton range, making it 2500 times greater than the atomic blasts which rocked Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Or, to put it another way, the blast by the Russians was equal to that which could be detonated by a line of boxcars loaded with TNT and stretching from New York to Los Angeles.

One writer said of the occasion, "On October 30 Soviet Communism so loved the world that it presented us with the greatest demonstration of power ever put on by man."

And America no doubt possesses thermonuclear power every bit as great and likely in excess of what has been mentioned thus far.

So, on the one hand, there is power like that. Very impressive and awesome. The power of man to destroy and lay waste, even to rent this planet asunder.

Then there is the manger of Bethlehem. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The manger was made of wood or stone. It is significant because it cradled for a while the Christ Child. It was there that the shepherds found Him. And the birth of the child Jesus was important because He came from God, yes, was God.

Megatons deal with temporal power. That will pass away. The manger is representative of spiritual power, of things that won't pass away. God gave His Son so that a world under condemnation, under the shadow even of atomic power, might be saved. He gave His Son in order that people could go on with Him forever, after megatons and atomic energy and TNT are finished. The soul of man lives on and God desires that it be with Him, not in the agonies of hell.

The other part of the Christmas story is written by us. God has given His gift and He gave it to us. It is up to us to receive it. In life we know that a gift is really only meaningful to us and fulfilled for us if it is accepted. And so it is that it is in the receiving of God's gift of love, Jesus Christ, that the salvation and deliverance of John 3:16 is known. It is the prayer of *The Lutheran Ambassador* that every reader might know the true Christmas joy through the power emanating from the manger and the Cross.

Megaton or Manger? Choose this day which one you will stake your life on. May we borrow and paraphrase those confident words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will choose the Manger." For the manger speaks of new life and a blessed hope.

The Lutheran Ambassador takes this means to wish you, dear reader, your best Christmas yet through the Lord Jesus Christ Who came that first Christmas night.

Factum Est

by Dr. Iver Olson
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Factum est. That is how Luke 2:1 starts out in Latin; in English the phrase is normally rendered "it came to pass." The meaning is that something has become a fact; it is over with; it has been done. It could also mean "the fact is," for it is a fact. The phrase is repeated in verse 6; here the fact is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. So we have here two facts recorded by Luke—the temporal and historical fact of the census, and the eternal fact of the Incarnation.

There are many legends associated with Christmas. Most of these are laudable, and we continue to carry them along even today. The Christmas tree belongs among these. In the western world of the northern hemisphere we can scarcely imagine a Christmas without a Christmas tree. We have even chosen the evergreen tree as the most suitable one for the purpose. We have woven legends about the tree. It is to symbolize life, the life Jesus came to bring. The tree is green, not only in summer, but also in the dead of winter. It is a symbol of Christ; as Christ died to bring us life, so the Christmas tree dies to heighten our happiness at Christmas. Yet the great fact of Christmas is that Christ became a man to dwell among us for a time. *Factum est.*

We sing many songs at Christmas. Some of these are about the beautiful snow which covers the earth at this time of the year. People who live east of the Rockies in our land can scarcely think of Christmas without snow. The earth has dressed itself in its holiday best. To us it seems so fitting that the world should wear its purest white to welcome the Savior. The

joys of Christmas are associated with snow and the pleasures it makes possible—skates and sleds and sleighbells. So let it be; but Christ is still the center of Christmas. *Factum est.*

One of the delightful customs of the season is to give and receive gifts. As for children, this aspect of the season is possibly the one which fills them with the greatest anticipation as the days draw nearer—one by one, and ever so slowly. It cannot be denied that adults share in their enthusiasm and become as children; remembrances of Christmas from the days of childhood rise to the surface again. We believe we have good models in the Old Testament for the custom of giving gifts; one of the festivals which God's people had in the days after the Babylonian exile was the feast of Purim. It lasted for two days, and was held in commemoration of the deliverance of the people from certain death at the hands of the enemies in the days of Queen Esther. A part of the observance of this festival was to give gifts to one another in a spirit of rejoicing. We say that the gifts are to remind us of the greatest gift man has received: God gave His only Son to the world. Perhaps Christmas would lose much of its charm for us if the practice of giving gifts were to be discontinued; and we have no intention of advocating such a step. Rather, we believe that anything within reason and modesty in this practice which can enhance the joys of Christmas is all to the good. But in all our giving we want to remember that Christ is the gift of Christmas. *Factum est.*

The Fact of History

The birth of Christ is a historical fact, one which has influenced the

history of the last two millenniums more than any other single fact. Yet the world of His day did not notice that He came. He lived for thirty years, concerning which we have only a modicum of information in the Bible. He was born at Bethlehem; His parents fled with Him for safety to Egypt; while He was still a child they returned to their home in Nazareth. One single episode we have, of a visit to the temple when He was twelve years of age. At thirty He launched upon what promised to be a glorious career of teaching, preaching and performing miracles. Then came the end; all was over then as far as history is concerned. Outside of Palestine He was not seen, and there are only a couple of references to Him in the annals of His time—secular and religious.

Yet He came to dominate history since His day. His witnesses spread to all parts of the Mediterranean world. They spoke of Him in humble huts and princely palaces. By waves of persecution the leaders of the land sought to stifle the intrepid believers into silence; the result was more and more believers, and the influence of these people was all to the good. After three and one half centuries Christianity became the official religion of the Roman world. The Empire fell, but the message of a living Christ passed on to people who previously had been but roving hordes. Christ became the core of a new culture; even today we count these countries as Christian nations. Wherever Christ has become known the peoples have benefited thereby. We even number our years after the birth of Christ. *Factum est.*

The Fact of the Incarnation

Greater than the historical fact of Christ's being born on earth is the eternal fact of God's becoming man in Jesus Christ. This belongs to eternity. Now God is united with man in a fashion different from what had been the case previously. God created our first parents in

His own image; yet they remained creatures, though the crown of all creation. They were not His children. No person is a child of God simply because he has been created by God. His quality is simply that of creatureliness. After four thousand years God himself entered, through Jesus Christ, into this creaturely world; He became one with man. This one fact is the greatest fact of all time. John exults in saying, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Jesus became our brother, and we through Him are children of God. This union was not a temporary one that was to be dissolved when He returned to heaven. He ascended to heaven with His body, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. *Factum est.*

The meaning of all this is that we can now be children of God here on earth; we do not have to wait until we reach heaven. Through faith in Jesus we become brothers of Christ and children of God. This is the central and most meaningful aspect of a lifetime of experiences here on earth. Nothing equals it. As Christmas tends to be the highlight of the seasons of the year, the experience of becoming a child of God stands out above all of life's experiences. Life after this experience is in a sense a perpetual Christmas here on earth. People from all walks of life have been witness to it. *Factum est.*

The Fact of Eternity

The Christian life on earth is not a way of life; it is a way out of life. At best, life in a sinful world is cumbersome. Life's most certain fact is that it shall not go on forever. So dreadful is this prospect that we tend to push it off into the unforeseeable future, and try to live as though we might go on forever here. But the stinging edge of this dreaded fact has been tempered for the Christian; he shall go on forever. Christ came to earth at Christmas; but it was not His intention to take up a permanent residence here. Upon the

[Continued on next page]

Oh, How Shall I Receive Thee?

by Dale Stone

One thousand, nine hundred and sixty-eight years ago, a Virgin lay on the mildewed straw on the floor of a stable in Bethlehem. The calloused hands of a concerned carpenter caressed the dark curls of his wife. Her new Son was wrapped in hand-woven swaddling clothes, and slept peacefully in a manger. A freshly washed sheet was drying by the door.

This was the most important thing that ever happened! Because Christ came I must ask myself, "How shall I receive Thee?" So must you. I shall try to fit the sacred Christmas piece of the puzzle of Jesus Christ into the whole context of His life among us.

As the story opens, the angel has just driven Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. Christ and the Father are looking down at this tragedy of tragedies. Christ speaks:

GOD'S PLAN

"The angel cast them from the place, they're now out midst the thorns. They've left the orchards, scorned Your face. But, Father, You're so forlorn."

"It is true, Son, Satan has again ruptured my careful plan. For Adam once was like to God, and now he's like to man. My Son, it's hard to say. I must! Son, Adam charged a debt. He chose his will instead of mine. 'Twill cost his life . . . and yet I'll give this man and wife some days, a trial period. And they can choose to twist their ways, or cleanse them in Your blood." "My Father, did you say, 'my blood?'" "Indeed, Son, it's a must. Or else those two, their fruit and path, will turn back into dust. But if you grant Your blood for them, they'll have a second chance. Again, they may despise our gifts, and trip on Satan's trance. But You will suffer, Son, and bleed, within first, then without." Then listening angels chorded harps and gave triumphant shout. They sang, "The Son of God in heaven will leave us, and go out."

THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR

They cried, "What mystery is this?" And soon our God stepped down The golden staircase from the heavens, and there in David's town He laid a bundle on earth's step. And inside was His Son.

Then Joseph moaned the stable foul. His heart had weighed a ton,
For here his wife would have a child...he loved her more than this.
"Well, if this is God's Son," thought he, "His life will not be bliss."
But Eve's pangs came, and tears and tares, and angels guarded doors.
And donkey's sniffed and cows gazed wide, to see God on their floors.
Then Jesus kicked and breathed some air. The big brown cow said, "Moo."
And Mary sighed, then chuckled softly. God was happy, too.
God's Son was there, unsoiled, yet flesh, eternal, entered time.
Soon, one night Joseph fought with God. "He's too young to change
clime."

But next day Joseph's ass bore two, and Egypt loomed ahead.
God's sealed orders said, "Depart." And Rome strewed infants dead.

NO WEAKLING HE

To suffer, that was why He came. To squeeze last drop of pain,
He left all roses in the sky, for stems of thorn and fame.
He subdued glory, banished ease, and "Suffering" was His name.
Soon Satan had Him all alone, and it's not true, you see,
When painters paint Him spindly weak, scarce able to sip tea.
He wandered forty days and nights, without a roof or food.
And that takes strength! Those artists err. He's muscled, with red blood.
Imagine if you'd been there, friend, 'mid chilling gales and wolves.
And in the night wind, Satan came, to pommel you with hoofs.
To tempt you, when you'd had no food, no rest on cushioned bed.
I'd sure enough do all I could, to leave, or lose my head.
But God's Son stood there, gripped His staff, begged Satan say his piece.
"Make these stones bread. Don't hoard your might, do this and live
in ease.

Then do a trick and entertain, float down to gasps of all,
And worship me, then I will give you all lost in the Fall."
Christ lifted words from prophets old, and though in weakened state,
The wicked angel glanced at sun and murmured, "I am late."
So time went past. Christ beckoned twelve, unschooled, and rough, and
hard.

To trace His steps, and know His heart, of course, to chew His words.
And to the youngest of the twelve (I think his name was John),
The leader, lean, and hard to pace, with muscled thigh and arm,
Went almost overboard to search for rougher rows to hoe.
He hated sleeping under roofs, loved rest where cold streams flow.
"Oh, well," thought John, as he took note of strength in his new form,
"I'm learning how to march with Him, to think His thoughts, to warm
The hearts of young folks. How they throng, to hear His pungent wit.
Why, just the other day, a youth said, 'John, I'm better fit
To date my girl, and do my job, because Christ suffers, too.'
He isn't like the plush-robed priests, outlaid in purple hew,
Who say, 'Be good!' and leave us then, to try to chop a few
Big sins and bad thoughts from our lives. He gives us life anew,
And offers cleansing deep within, bestows faith, cleans our hearts.
My moral resolution failed. I'll take what He imparts."

completion of His work here He returned to His real home. Work remained for Him there; preparations had to be made for those who would become members of His family. "I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again to receive you to myself that where I am you may be also."

This is it; this is what we are living for; this is the goal of life. We are assured by the Lord of history and eternity that we really belong there. He has assumed responsibility of seeing that we get there, and that a place shall be ready for us when we arrive. There we shall meet the saints of all ages and be seated with them at banqueting tables which will make all of our Christmas dinners here seem like left-overs from a miser's table. What a Christmas that will be! *Factum est.*

CHRISTMAS SONG

Why do bells for Christmas ring?
Why do little children sing?

Once a lovely, shining star,
Seen by shepherds from afar,
Gently moved until its light
Made a manger-cradle bright.

There a darling baby lay
Pillowed soft upon the hay
And His mother sang and smiled,
"This is Christ, the holy child."

So the bells for Christmas ring,
So the little children sing.

—Lydia Cooley Ward

Little John and Christmas

[Continued from page 4]

question, "How long is it since you heard from your son John?" But apparently she regretted that she had asked, for his weatherbeaten face twitched. He looked down and great tears forced themselves out. They fell on the Bible with a distinct and soft *plish!* "Nineteen years and seven days," he said quietly.

I stood over to the side, hanging on to the edge of the table, thinking how sad everything seemed. That Little John cried on my birthday, I could accept that, but that

he should cry on Jesus' birthday—on Christmas Eve itself—when there was starlight and angel music in the heavens and joy on earth, when everybody should be happy, this struck me as being entirely beyond understanding. I reached down in my pocket and found my fig, placed it on the Bible alongside of his glasses and waited to see what would happen, but Little John sat just as he had done before, not moving at all. He evidently didn't see my present.

Then suddenly he passed his gnarled fingers over his face, fumbled around for the hearing trumpet in his pocket, put the "claw" in his ear and turned to me, "Takk!"

I thought, it's now or never, so I yelled with all my might into the hearing ear—"Glede jul, Little John!" Then I saw something I had never seen before. Little John could smile!

He became a cheerful man. The two of us played Christmas games while Mother straightened things up in the kitchen and the rest of the hut. She put flowers—a little "Christmas joy"—on the table. And everything became so cozy and festive.

While we were walking home from Little John's house, I asked Mother, "How can such an old man be so happy just for a fig?"

"You see," said Mother, "Little John saw that you really wanted him to be happy."

"Yes, but just for a fig," I persisted.

"You must realize, my boy, that it is not the size of the gift that matters, but why and how you give it."

The snow began to fall again. The air was full of myriads of swirling, white snowflakes.

Suddenly the whole scene was blended with a wonderful sound. I listened—what was it? And where did it come from? Over there? Everywhere. It was the echo from the mountains of the church bells in the distance ringing Christmas in.

(Translated from the Norwegian by Mrs. Irene Huglen Strommen.)

MY MEAT, THE WILL OF GOD

And as John looked up, just ahead, Christ burst out with a song. And though they'd skipped both meal and bed, the twelve men sang along. It wasn't frothy joy put on, but song from inner peace. They marched along the rocky road, in confidence, not ease. They saw a well, just round the bend, and left Christ there to wait. While they took meager funds to get a meal long-since late. A woman came up to the well, and Christ asked her for a drink. Because He was a Jew, not Greek, the lady turned bright pink. For she knew well the law that said the Jews were set apart. The Jews, not Greeks, held a prime place in God's discerning heart. But walking days, and praying nights, had dusted Christ's throat dry. Besides, He was not bound by law, and chose to pass it by. We know the conversation, how Christ told her of her past. But we see human implication, He got water fast. The point here is not mammoth, nor uniquely rich, profound. Christ was a man like you, my friend, He suffered, walked on ground. Christ felt pangs that we know not of, for in Mark, chapter three, We read of churchmen's opposition, how they stared with glee. For this tanned man with sunbleached hair, who stole their crowds and book,

Was now about to break their law. And they'd accuse. But look! The crowd excitedly spoke low, as Christ called clear, "Come forth." And ladies wept to see his hands, one normal, one a dwarf. "Can man do good today?" He asked, and all there heard Him well. But inwardly Christ suffered, grieved; they'd choose their law, and hell. So though it tore Him underneath, to see thick, hardened souls, He healed the hand, and watched them leave, to make His death their goal.

GOD LOOKS UPON THE HEARTS

Did Christ feel only happiness, the bliss of things unknown? He suffered more than we can tell, for when we see a man, We only know part of his life, miss ninety things, get ten. But this man Jesus, He knows all, were He to look at you. He'd see not just your ironed clothes, indeed, He'd look right through. He'd see a wrinkle on your brow—and know why it was there. Perhaps a grey hair's on your temple. He grasps why and where. When Christ looked out across a crowd, and blessed all those who mourn, He wept with them, He felt their load, and by their grief was torn. Have you once heard that God is up in heaven away, away. More accurate this word instead, "He's in my life today." And as I share these words with you, I fling wide modesty, To shout and strain Christ's rending pain once saw a vast city. A golden town she was out there, where David once did reign— God hoped the Jews would rule the earth, and pass salvation's strain Out to the world. But men said, "God, we'll kill you first!" In fact, that is what they did! "O God, the world." "Oh, how shall I receive Thee?"

by Eunice E. Heizer
Blackwell, Okla.

It was Christmas Eve, and the big, old passenger bus was loaded. It had been raining all day and now in the early darkness the rain was mixed with sleet.

I had been with my sick brother, and had stayed longer than I should so I'd had to grab a few gifts, and dash for my bus. Now I was rushing home to make Christmas for my teen-age children.

In the rush, I felt cross and just hadn't been able to get the Christmas spirit.

My mood seemed to be a common one. Most persons on the bus were wet and weary, loaded with packages, and in a terrible hurry. Even college girls crowded into the back seat looked tense. The whole bus was not of gaiety. Everyone dwelled on his own problems, forgetting friendliness and even courtesy.

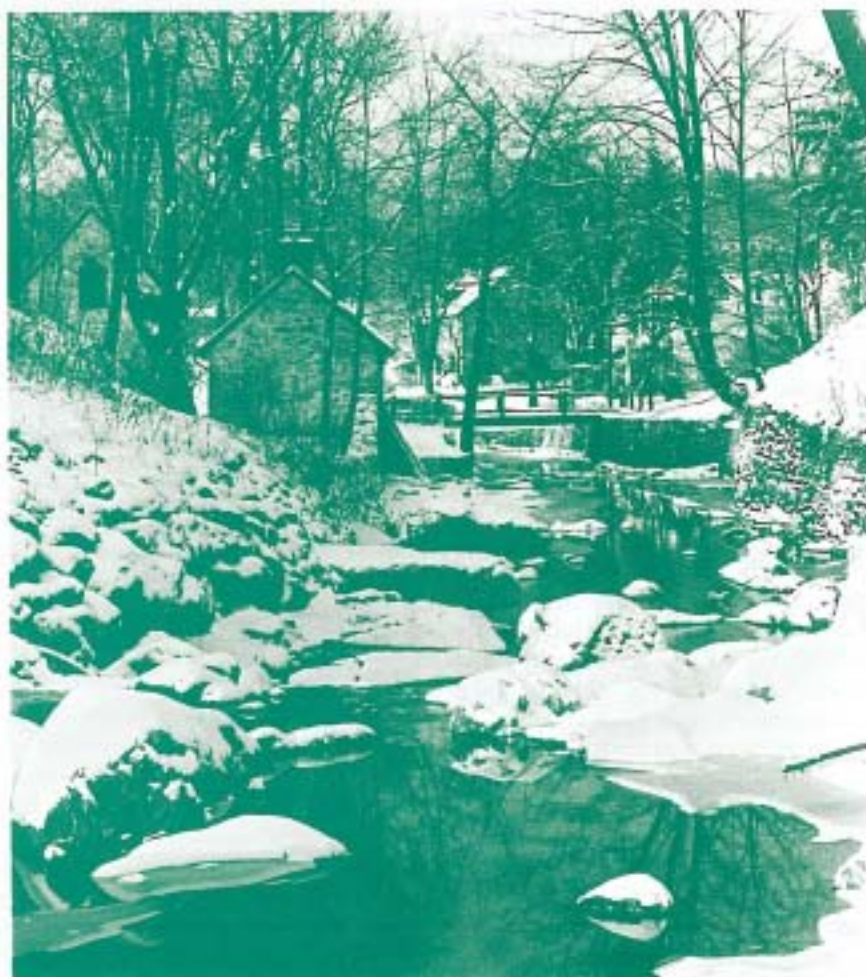
Anxieties heightened when the bus lights suddenly flicked. The driver slowed, and when the lights went off again, we came to a grinding stop. No darkness was ever blacker. The driver inspected with a flashlight, then announced, "We'll have a delay of possibly an hour."

A ripple of sighs, groans and complaints spread from one end of the bus to the other. "I've just got to get home before the stores close," said one woman whose voice sounded full of tears. "Mother is 87, and all of us kids were supposed to be home for dinner tomorrow. Now, I can't make it."

"This means a long, tiresome wait for me in Dallas," a man behind us growled.

"Me too," another said. "You know what an hour means. It probably means all night!"

Finally, the discontented murmuring dwindled into silence with half a hundred persons huddled close together in the dark listening



—RNS Photo

to sleet beating against the bus windows.

After a few minutes of intense stillness, there came a faint rustling from the back seat, and a sweet feminine voice began to sing: "Silent night, holy night, all is calm. All is bright." She was joined by her companions, and then by persons all over the bus.

Those who would have been too shy to sing in public, under cover of darkness, opened up. I never heard such singing.

After several carols, we paused to rest. One man in a clear, kindly voice told the Christmas story as recorded by Luke. In utter darkness and complete silence, the story was touching and sacred; and we could well vision the angels praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth

peace, good will toward men."

For a long moment, there must have been a lot of silent prayers, and then we all burst out singing, "Joy to the World," finishing just as the lights came on.

The woman beside me smiled and spoke. "I'm glad," she said, "that the lights went off. It was just what we needed to make us see that the things we think are important are not so very important after all."

The man who would have a long wait in Dallas, his face fairly beaming, said, "It did even more than that. Our delay made us realize the despair that darkness brings, and gave us inspiration to reverence the Christ-child who was born to be the light of the world."

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The Birth of Jesus (read Luke 2:1-20)

14. Who was Caesar Augustus?

What authority did he have over King Herod?

15. What law was passed at this time, causing Mary and Joseph to take a trip to Bethlehem?

16. Where did Joseph and Mary live?

17. Why was Jesus born in a stable?

18. To whom did the angels bring the news?

19. Why did the angels call Jesus a "Savior"?

20. What did the shepherds do after they left the stable?

21. What responsibility do we have toward the news that a Savior was born on earth?

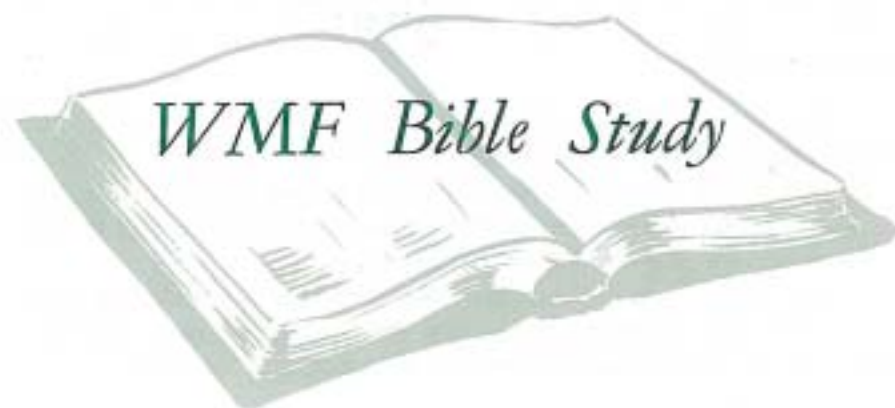
22. Do we have as much reason for rejoicing as did the shepherds?

It is comforting to know that Jesus was born in a lowly place like a manger. We now know that we dare approach Him. If He had been born in an elaborate palace, we might wonder if He really cared for us, and if He would welcome us when we come to Him.

CONCLUSION

The life of Jesus is told to us in four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The writers of these four Gospels are as four witnesses who report on Jesus' life on this earth. These four Gospels differ enough to assure us that the writers could not have agreed upon a story (a lie) and then have written it to deceive man. At the same time the four Gospels are enough alike to assure us that they are all speaking of the same person, namely Jesus Christ. Neither do the writers contradict each other.

NOTE: The questions in the WMF lessons for 1969 are selected portions taken from the author's Bible Study Questions on the New Testament. If you should wish to go deeper into this study, you may order the complete set of Bible Study Questions (also answer key) from the author: Rev. Gerald F. Mundfrom, Pukwana, South Dakota 57370.



January 1969

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE HISTORY QUESTIONS

Lesson One

The Births of John (the Forerunner) and Jesus

INTRODUCTION

The Bible study this year will be on the life of Christ.

In the Old Testament we saw man's attempt to save himself. We saw how God's chosen people took upon themselves a complicated religious order with many priests, much ritual, the building of a great temple, and the giving of many animals in sacrifice in order to atone for sin and in order to become pleasing to God.

But even after all of this, these people were still in their sins. And though they tried so hard, yet they did not please God.

Now it is true that God commanded and willed that all of this should be done. But God's purpose in making these commands was to prove to man that he could not save himself. Even being religious would not save man.

Nevertheless, God had a plan which He foretold in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament. After trying for centuries to save himself, man was still lost. He was completely dependent upon God for salvation.

The New Testament is the climax of the whole Bible. After man had failed to save himself, God now comes to the rescue.

God would offer a sacrifice—a sacrifice that would do the job, a sacrifice that would once and for all solve man's sin problem. God would sacrifice His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Sad to say, man still has not learned the lesson which God wills he should learn. Religion and sacrifice (on the part of man) could not save man in Old Testament times, and it cannot save him now.

We still have many groups that tend to copy or pattern their religion after the religion of the Old Testament. We can be ever so religious and pious in an outward way. We can build beautiful, elaborate churches and sit through a beautiful, well-planned and elaborate church service. We can pray the Lord's Prayer a thousand times—all of this will be for naught, if we know not Christ. He, and He alone, can save.

Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-23)

1. Who was Zechariah?

What was his wife's name?

2. Why did they lack what they did?

3. Who in the study of the Old Testament had the same problem?

4. Name two or three facts about their son.

5. What was embarrassing about Zechariah's not being able to talk at this time?

6. What did Elizabeth mean when she spoke of God taking away her reproach among men?

Zechariah was a priest and a man who knew God. He had a knowledge of what God was like. He should not have doubted God. If he had been a heathen or unbeliever who knew not God, it would have

been impossible for him to believe and trust in God. But God expects His own to trust Him and to have faith in Him.

Mary and the Angel (Luke 1:24-56)

7. What news did the angel bring to Mary?

8. Name three characteristics that this Son of Mary was to have.

9. Why did the babe leap in Elizabeth's womb when she met Mary?

10. How did Elizabeth and Mary feel about all this?

John in his ministry gives Jesus credit for baptizing with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). In a strange, miraculous way, the Holy Spirit was imparted to John even before his birth. John experienced a blessing by coming into the presence of Jesus even as we experience a spiritual blessing by coming to Jesus. This took place when both John and Jesus were still in their mothers' wombs. We can see by this that one is never too young to come to Jesus or to receive a spiritual blessing from Him.

The Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-80)

11. What happened to Zechariah after he wrote what his son's name was to be?

12. How did this affect his neighbors?

13. Where was John until the day of his manifestation?

What is meant by his "manifestation"?

Indeed it would have been an honor for Zechariah to have had a son named after him. But it was more important that God be honored. Zechariah in a humble, meek way was willing to remain in the background, so that God might receive the honor. God in turn (not man) then honored Zechariah for so doing, by giving him the ability to speak again. It is always much better to wait on God and be honored by Him than to seek the honor of men.

Meet the Churches

[Continued from page 9]

Church, officiating. Other pastors present were Wm. F. Jung, E. S. Vik and Morris Eggen, besides the local pastor. Mrs. Nora Crouch, widow of Rev. Charles, was honored guest. The building fund had been a memorial to her husband.

Only two men have served the congregation—Jay G. Erickson, to 1964, and the present pastor, A. L. Hokanson. Again, at Emmanuel, the ministry of evangelism by Ev. Joseph Erickson was fruitful in souls, among the young people.

Emmanuel Church conducts an active release-time religious instruction program during the school year for her students on Mondays.

The Parish

The Faith-Eagle Butte parish was formed in 1957, with the organization of Emmanuel Church. Pastors of Bethel have served various preaching places over the years, including Dupree. For a while the pastor lived in Red Elm. Most recent preaching place was at Opal, a community west of Faith.



Rev. A. L. Hokanson, pastor of the Faith-Eagle Butte parish, is a graduate of Augsburg Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Minn., having also studied at Augustana Seminary in Rock Island, Ill. A native of Illinois, he began his ministry at Pukwana, S. Dak. Then, after West Coast pastorates at Silverton, Ore., Spokane and Everett, Wash., he returned to South Dakota in 1964. Pastor Hokanson and his wife Elvera have one son, Stephen, a pre-seminary student at Washington State in Pullman.



This lovely modern parsonage was built in 1962. Located on Main Street, just north of the church in Faith, it is connected by a tunnel to the church. Some Sunday school classes are held in the parsonage basement. The old parsonage was situated on Highway 212 on the north edge of town.



Christmas Greetings From Bolivia



by Missionary R. W. Gunderson

As new missionaries facing the Christmas Season and the New Year, we find ourselves now speaking out of experience for the first time here in Bolivia. Having spent one year as missionaries on the field, yet not actually performing the various missionary tasks, we have felt an incompleteness. Language training, an absolutely necessary part of our preparation, has left us in the frustrating state of being within the country where we are to work yet separated from fellow-workers and the actual

work. Around the 13th of January, all of this shall come to an end as we plunge into the work that has been assigned to us at the Bible Institute on Coaba Farm.

We feel that our experience is somewhat like the swimmer who races down onto the shoreline and into the lake in one great motion. Prior to this he stands along side the lake, viewing the beauty and expressing the desire to go swimming, and decides to rush into the lake rather than to enter in step by step. The cause for our sudden responsibility is the perennial prob-

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The men in the Gunderson family with some of the believers at the church in Cheji, the village above Coaba Farm

Oh Hurry, Little Donkey



At the door of my dwelling
Stands an angel child.
The news that he is telling
Is of Jesus mild.

Chorus:
Oh, hurry, little donkey,
Little donkey grey,
We must go to Bethlehem,
For 'tis Christmas Day.

On the road to Bethlehem
Following His star,
On camels swift come wise men,
Three Kings from afar.

Sweet incense brings Melchoir;
Royal gold, Caspar;
Myrrh for glory evermore,
Carries Balthasar.

Angel choruses above,
Wing down from the skies,
Resplendent with holy love
Sing Him lullabys.

Round the walls of Bethlehem
Bloom the flowers sweet.
Let us pick a few for Him,
To lay at His feet.

Shepherds come from up the hill,
Little lambs bringing,
Even though their lips be still,
Their hearts are singing.

Just without the gate there stands,
A lamb black as night.
"Come, little lamb," the Child
commands,
"Your fleece shall be white."

In the stable's holy light,
Young Joseph I see,
And within a halo bright,
Christ on Mary's knee.

There is no fire to warm Him,
No soft cradle bed.
I have no gold to give Him,
But my heart instead.

Gather 'round, little children,
Beasts, and birdies small;
Peace on earth, goodwill to men,
Christ is King of all.

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa





Outside our door in Cochamba, during Carnival time. The cars are decorated in the tradition of pleasing the gods and the items on the cars are household items, dolls, etc., representing the things hoped for in the coming year.

Christmas Greetings from Bolivia

[Continued from page 21]

lem of missions—lack of personnel. We must say that our attitude is very typical—we're happy to be out of language school and excited about the prospects of getting settled into the work.

Prior to the opening of the Bible Institute, we will have been settled in our home, and will have spent Christmas and the New Year season with our children. As mentioned above, this will be our second Christmas in Bolivia and I believe that this season will always have special meaning to us as it was during the Holiday Season that we arrived in Bolivia. Being used to the commercializing of Christmas there in the States, with the stores being full of things for Christmas buying, and also being decorated so early (right after Thanksgiving, wasn't it?), we couldn't help but notice that everything seemed as usual in the stores until just a day or so before the 25th. Then the whole city was so crowded with people one would think he was in Dayton's basement! The streets were lined solid with vendors selling everything imaginable and for the most part only one lane of traffic could get through, and many streets were actually blocked off altogether to permit the setting up of portable stalls.

The familiar sight we did see was the Christmas tree lot, although they weren't really trees, but rather branches. This is because at this altitude there just aren't trees available. These branches are placed on end to appear like a tree. We were fortunate at the mission house because there was a large three in the back yard that needed cutting down and for the holidays one of the fellows simply cut the top from it and we had a beautiful tree. Our missionary in charge of the mission home told us it was the first one she had seen in the mission home.

Thinking of the church itself, we noted the lack of emphasis on the Advent season. We also found this to be true at Easter time—no emphasis in the churches for the entire Lenten Season. We have to remind ourselves that we are in another country, living in another culture and can't expect things to be the same as what we are used to, and that there is reason for all of these things. Christmas Eve the churches were full of people. As we walked to our church the streets were full. But it was another story the next morning. The church held few people and the streets were comparatively empty.

As with many families there in the States, there is the tradition here of each family making the rounds to their close friends and

relatives on Christmas Day. I'm sure that there is special food, etc., that is served at this time and we will no doubt become more acquainted with this custom as we spend more Christmas seasons here. But even at the mission home in LaPaz many of the believers came to the house on Christmas Day and gave their wishes for a blessed holiday season. This coming winter will be spent in the country and we will become more aware of the customs of the Amayra culture. But no matter where we are, the need is the same—all of mankind needs a Savior.

Reading and listening to the news reports from the States reveals that in spite of our affluent society, what America needs is to hear and respond to the Star of Bethlehem and the announcement of the angel: "...there is born unto you this day... a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." Before there will be a change in the world there must be a change in the hearts of people. This is what we have been sent to do here in Bolivia—to announce that there is a Savior who, if permitted, will change people in such a wonderful way that heaven and earth shall be affected. While the culture may affect various peripheral matters as to how we live during Christmas or Easter or other times of the year, the need of man remains the same and the Gospel of Jesus Christ meets that need. The message for mankind remains the same—Jesus is the Way, and that Gospel needs to be preached. The basic premise for working this out remains the same: God's Holy Message placed in the hands of His people to bring it to others, and we today must not shirk this responsibility. How right it seems to me that Christmas and the New Year follow one another so closely, for when a man has Christ he truly has a new beginning and every day lived as a child of God is a new beginning.

While the miles separate us may we always stand together to carry out this work. Be assured in this, that we as a family have fervently

[Continued on page 24]



Thoughts of Christmas

It was Christmas in the kitchen, in the house upon the hill;
It was Christmas at the neighbor's, and a box of gifts to fill.

*This neighbor was a dear old man, and he lived all alone;
It was up to us to bring some cheer and gladness to his home.*

We couldn't visit Grandpa—Sweden was too far away;
So we hoped that some kind person would bring joy to him this day.

*The box was filled with goodies of the usual Christmas treats;
Everything for Christmas Eve, and, of course, a lot of sweets.*

The box was then securely tied upon our little sled;
While one of us would push the rear, the one trudged on ahead.

*We reached our destination, our old friend was at the door.
His face glowed and he chuckled, as he'd always done before.*

Little did we realize then, the joy we might have brought
To this old man who lived alone, the kind that most forgot.

*We must hurry, it was winter, and the sun would set too soon;
To us children 'twas a frightening thought, to walk home by light of moon,*

But it seems we always made it, and then the fun began;
We might have walked going over, but all way home we ran.

*And then we had to trim the tree, the most thrilling job of all;
And lights of burning candles made strange pictures on the wall.*

We'd even brought our kittens in to share our Christmas feast;
For childish minds this day was made for all, both man and beast.

*At last the family feast was on, lucky the table strong;
There was hardly room for all the things we'd been fixing all day long.*

Lutefisk and Swedish meat balls, cinnamon and bowls of rice;
I have seen some lovely tables, but none ever looked so nice.

*Christmas table cloth and trimmings, polished brass, red candles glow;
Burning brightly as reminders of three wise men long ago.*

Christmas chatter, Christmas singing of the songs we all love so;
We can hear them, if we listen, just as they were long ago.

*Mary, Jesus, manger, shepherds, angels, starlight, Bethlehem;
"God so loved the world" and "peace on earth, good-will toward men."*

Now we watch the children's faces, smiling, sparkling, eyes aglow;
Simple, child-like ecstasy, that only they can know.

*If we could only capture their magic just one day;
The joy, the hope, abiding faith, they carry along their way:*

It would give us strength and courage, as we face the fleeting hours;
For this day, we'll all be children, and the blessings of peace be ours.

—Ellen Nielsen
Sisseton, S. Dak.

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Christmas Greetings from Bolivia

[Continued from page 23]

prayed for the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The separation in this sense has been good for us in that we have come to a new understanding and appreciation of intercessory prayer. Leaving home as we did a year ago and moving into a totally new experience, jarred loose from the mundaneness of our prayer lives and the phrase "remember us in prayer" is not an empty phrase. Warmest Christmas greetings to each one of you as congregations and individually. We pray that the Lord will again in this new year reveal great things and that He shall grant the faith that we might follow.