

December 16, 1975

The Lutheran Ambassador

THE NATIVITY
by [unreadable]



MEDITATION MOMENTS

SUBJECTED YET FREE Luke 2

"A decree went out from Caesar Augustus." Even before the Christ was born He was subject to the will of the Father: to fulfill true prophecies and enter into what seemed the free flow of natural history. Thus it was He was born in Bethlehem subjected to poverty and humble circumstances. "Wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger." "But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7).

Subjected, yet freely revealed as Son of man and Son of God. Praise from heaven and earth could not be restrained. "The glory of the Lord shone around them (the shepherds); and they were terribly frightened." "Glory to God in the highest."

And the shepherds—made haste—and found—and saw, and made known about this Child. And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as had been told them."

Subjected to the ordinances of God's people, He was carried, but not unaccompanied by the Spirit, to be recognized by people accompanied by the same Spirit. Simeon recognized the Christ first, subjected to God, but set wonderfully free to praise and hold the Son. "Now Lord, Thou dost let thy bondservant depart, in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

"And a sword will pierce even your

own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Oh that men may see and know the bondage and fear in the natural state, and come to freedom in Christ.

"And there was—Anna in the temple—serving night and day with fasting and prayers." Subjected to God, yet so very free to praise, and prophesy, and look for the redemption of Jerusalem.

At 12 years of age Jesus was bound to attend Joseph and Mary to the temple in Jerusalem, but free to linger and speak of His Father's business.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart."

Under these conditions of obedience He continued to increase "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

He humbled Himself, born apart from all the stir and turmoil of the world in a humble stall, in a dark cavern, in a narrow street of an obscure mountain village. Therefore, it is that He lived for 30 years in the scheduled basin of the unknown, unconsecrated Nazareth. Born under the empire, there was in Jesus Christ nothing imperial, except the greatness of His birth. Born under the Roman sway, there was nothing in Him Roman except the world-wide dominion of His spirit. From Caesar Augustus came out a decree that all the world should be taxed, subdued, civilized, bending in right order and time to accomplish "the fulness of time."

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." From heaven and glory's side God poured forth; but His earth provided also: the mother, the bed, the cities, the labors, the governments, the multitudes, the individuals. Son of God and Son of man. On the earth grew a garden, on it was raised a cross; in it was hewn a tomb. In Himself, from the Father, the victory and the power and the glory forever. "Obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:8-9).

He learned obedience through suffering. Christ Jesus was subjected and obedient; so also were many of His followers. We know then that we, too, though subjected to all these, including the temptations of life, may gain the victory and be indeed free in the Son. "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His well-beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him... He Himself might come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:13-16, 18c).

—Lawrence C. Dynneson

The **Lutheran Ambassador** is published biweekly (except the second issue in August) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441. Rev. Raynard Huglen is the editor. Subscription price is \$3.50 per year in advance. Subscriptions should be sent to **The Lutheran Ambassador**, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441. Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minn. Volume 13, Number 24

Sweeter than Frankincense

by Susan M. Nordvall, Ross, Minn.

Cathy, 15, pushed her feet slowly through the thin, fresh layer of snow. Tomorrow was Christmas Eve and she was in a remote Indian village far from home. She had walked past the nurse's station where Mr. McIver, the Indian caretaker, was sweeping the walk and hanging a wreath on the front door, past the store with its decorated window, past the mission station and by the row of Indian houses on the edge of the settlement. Here a door opened and a woman with a baby in her arms called to her, "We're glad you're staying for Christmas, Miss Cathy," The fragrance of new bread drifted through the air.

Cathy tried to smile but tears stung her eyes as loneliness and regret surged within her. I could still go, she thought to herself. It would mean taking the snowmobile tomorrow and catching a flight rather than the train. It would cost a lot, all I've saved . . . but it's worth it. Yes, it's worth it, After all, what is Christmas if you can't be at home with your family?

Feeling happier, she walked faster, only to be startled by a snowball. She was well along the path now, beaten hard by dog sleds. She could see no one, only spruce trees in frosted glitter, all decked in golden cones. Puff! This time it hit her and she heard a familiar giggle.

"You can come out, Paul," she said. She didn't notice his hump back any more, so pleasant was his brown face. But it still surprised her how fast he moved even with that crippled leg.

"Are we late, Miss Cathy?" Paul asked.

Glancing at her watch, she said, "We'd better hurry."

"If you wore mutlocks like I do, you'd be faster," Paul teased. "Maybe . . . maybe you'll get a pair for Christmas," he said excitedly.

"For Christmas!" Cathy snapped. "All I want is to get out of here, I want to spend Christmas at home like



Illustration by the author.

always!" Quietly, she added, "That's tomorrow night. I'll take the snowmobile first thing in the morning to Beaver Portage and fly to Winnipeg from there. My brother will be glad to meet me there." She had a good plan, she thought, at least till she looked back at Paul. The pained look on his face cut into her. Oh, why does he have to take it so seriously, she thought unhappily.

"You don't want to be here for the Christmas program, Cathy?" he asked. "We had such fun this year practicing with you. I thought you liked it, too."

"You don't understand, Paul," Cathy tried to explain. "Of course, I like the practices and the program

but . . . well, you don't really need me. You have the missionary family and my sister. They are the ones responsible for you. I . . . well, look, Paul, you just can't know what it feels like to be away from home at Christmas time."

As his black eyes built a wall between them, Cathy knew it was useless to say more. He just couldn't understand. Silence followed and finally they reached the log chapel.

From inside came the children's singing under the leadership of the missionary, Mr. Nelson. Cathy and Paul entered and took their places.

Every week the past four months, Cathy had walked the three miles

[Continued on page 14]



O, LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem is a sleepy village in the hills of Judaea just south of Jerusalem. It is a town of shepherds and farmers whose life has remained basically the same through the centuries. On one day a year, however, it becomes the focus of world attention. That day is Christmas.

Tens of thousands of visitors flock to Bethlehem each Christmas to mark the anniversary of the birth of Christ. The Church of Nativity (center spire), built by the Emperor Constantine, contains within it a marble embedded silver star that marks the traditional site of the Nativity. The star, worn down by the touch of countless pilgrims, is the focus of Christmas celebrations.

RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE PHOTO

JESUS, SAVIOR, OF VIRGIN BORN

Jesus, Savior, of Virgin born,
Sent to rescue a world forlorn,
Joyfully we our voices raise
And with the angels sing Thy praise.
Hallelujah!

Son of God, though enthroned on high,
In a manger Thou here didst lie;
Thou hast assumed our flesh and
blood,
Who art in truth the greatest Good.
Hallelujah!

Thou whom heaven can not enclose
Didst in Mary's embrace repose;
Thou wert an infant weak and small,
Who by Thy pow'r upholdest all.
Hallelujah!

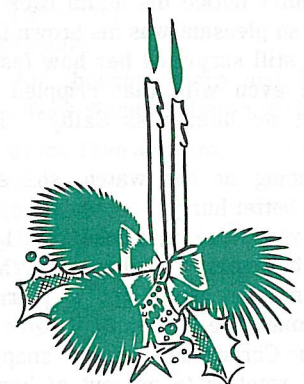
Light celestial, Thou dost illumine
Earth's dominions, engulfed in
gloom;
Thou dost dispel the dismal night,
And we are made the sons of light.
Hallelujah!

Very God, by angels blest,
In this world Thou art now a Guest:
Led by Thy hand while here below,
We to Thy heav'nly mansions go.
Hallelujah!

Here on earth Thou wert poor indeed.
Humbly sharing our ev'ry need,
That we in heaven rich may be,
From ev'ry earthly burden free
Hallelujah!

This, O Lord, Thy great love to seal,
Thou to us wouldest this day reveal;
Let then all Christians here rejoice,
Singing Thy praise with gladsome
voice.
Hallelujah!

Martin Luther
(Hymnal for Church and Home)



The Flight to Egypt

Far away in the eastern desert, many, many years ago, there grew a palm tree which was very old and enormously high. All who traveled through that desert found themselves stopping to look at it, because it was much larger than other palms and people used to say that it surely must be taller than the famous obelisks and pyramids.

As this tall tree stood there in its solitude, looking out across the desert, it saw something one day which made its mighty crown of leaves shake in astonishment atop its slender trunk. Out there on the edge of the desert two solitary men were wandering. They were still so far off that their camels looked like tiny ants, but there were obviously two men out there. Two aliens in the desert; for the palm tree knew the people of the desert. These were a man and a woman without guide or beast of burden, without tents or water bags.

"Indeed!" the palm said to itself, "these two have come here to die." Quickly, it glanced over the neighborhood.

"I'm surprised the lions haven't already made their prey out of them," the palm continued. "But I don't see a single lion moving anywhere, nor even any desert bandits. But they'll be coming."

"Sevenfold death is waiting for you," the palm tree thought further. "Lions will devour you, serpents will bite you; you'll die of thirst, a sandstorm will bury you, bandits will rob you, sunstroke will get you, or you'll die of fright." The palm tree tried to think of other things, but what would happen to these two people occupied its thoughts and made it very sad.

But throughout the length and width of the desert, as far as the palm could scan, the tree could find nothing that it had not already known about and observed for thousands of years. Nothing could distract its attention; the palm kept thinking, over and over, of these two wanderers.

"By the arid earth and the storms!"

it exclaimed, thereby invoking the names of the most dangerous enemies of life. "What is this woman carrying in her arms? I believe these idiots are carrying a little child along with them!"

And the palm tree, farsighted as all aged creatures are, had indeed seen correctly. The wife did have a child in her arms, its head nestled against her shoulder, sound asleep.

"The child isn't even adequately clothed," the palm said. "Look, its mother has taken off her outer robe and wrapped the child up in it. She must have yanked him out of bed in terrible haste and rushed away with him. Oh, now I understand! These two people are refugees."

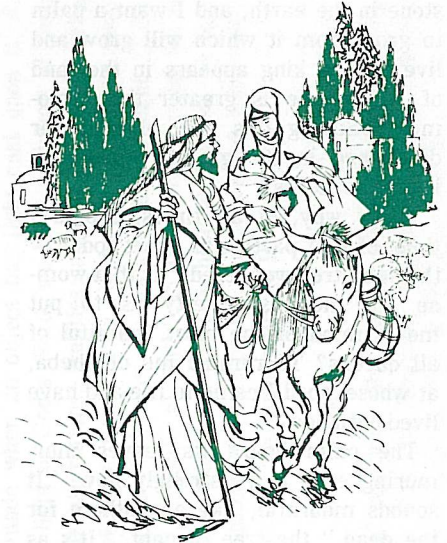
Still the palm kept thinking. "They're still idiots," it said. "If the angels hadn't protected them, their enemies would likely have done their worst to them instead of sending them out into the desert."

"I can imagine how it must have happened. He was at work; the child was asleep in its cradle; the mother went outside to fetch water. She got only two steps, maybe, from her front door when she saw the enemy come storming in. She rushed back inside, snatched up the child, shouted to her husband to follow her, and took off. Now they've been in flight for several days; they've surely had no rest. Yes, so it must have been; but I still say, if some angel weren't protecting them—

"They probably got such a shock they haven't been able to feel fatigue or any other pains. I can see, though, how that terrible thirst has hit them—I see it in their eyes. By now I ought to know the fact of a thirsty human."

And as the palm tree thought about thirst, it felt a convulsive jerk throughout its long trunk, and the innumerable tips of its long leaves curled up as though they had been placed over a fire.

"If I were a human," the tree thought, "I'd never venture out into the desert. Anyone has to be stout-hearted to come out here without hav-



ing roots to push down toward the unquenchable water table down below. It can be dangerous out here even for a palm tree. Yes, even for a palm tree like me.

"If I could give them some advice, it would be to turn back. Their enemies couldn't do anything to them as terrible as what the desert could. Maybe they think it'll be a snap living in the desert? Well, I know that even for me there have been times when it's been a struggle to stay alive. I know how once in my youth a sandstorm buried me under a whole mountain of sand. I just about choked to death! If I could have died, that would have been my last hour."

Now the palm was thinking out loud, the way old settlers often do:

"I hear a marvelous, melodious rustling through my crown. The tips of all my leaves must be vibrating and quaking. Whatever came over me when I caught sight of those poor refugees? But this poor wife—she's beautiful. She puts me in mind of the most marvelous things I've ever experienced."

And as the leaves kept on moving in their rustling harmony, the palm tree thought how once, a very long time ago, two shining personages were guests here in the oasis. They were the queen of Sheba and wise King Solomon. The beautiful queen wanted to return to her own country; the king had accompanied her out this far, and now they had to part.

"In remembrance of this hour," the queen had said, "I will plant a date-

stone in the earth, and I want a palm to grow from it which will grow and live until a king appears in the land of Judah who is greater than Solomon." Saying this, she planted her date-stone in the ground, sprinkling it with her tears.

"Now why, of all times, should I think of that particular event today?" the palm tree wondered. "Is that worn out there so pretty as to put me in mind of the most beautiful of all queens? To remind me of Sheba, at whose word I came to life and have lived until now?"

The palm heard its leaves murmuring ever more strongly now. "It sounds mournful, like an anthem for the dead," the tree thought. "It's as though someone had just prophesied that some person soon had to pass from this life. Well, I'm glad to know that that can't affect me! I can never die."

The palm had accepted that the rustling melody amid its leaves was for the dead, and that this pertained to those two wanderers out there. And certainly these two must also be thinking that they were approaching their last hour. That could be seen by the expressions on their faces when they passed by a camel skeleton which bordered their path. That could be seen by the glances they threw at a couple of vultures that flew by. It couldn't turn out otherwise; they were lost.

They had seen the palm and the oasis and hurried to it to find water. But when they finally reached the oasis they sank to the ground in despair, because the well was dry. The exhausted wife laid her child down and wept bitterly at the edge of the well. The man threw himself on the ground behind her, pounding the earth with his bare fists. The palm tree heard them tell one another that now they surely must die.

What the palm tree also overheard was that King Herod had ordered all babies two and three years of age killed, for fear that the great and expected King of the Jews might have been born.

"That melody amid my leaves is getting stronger," the palm tree thought. "For these poor refugees the last hour will soon toll."

The palm also sensed that these two were frightened out in the desert. The

man was saying that it would have been better to stay and fight the mercenaries of Herod than to flee. At least their death would have been much easier.

"God will stand by us," the wife said.

"We are all alone among robbers and serpents," the man said. "We've no food, no water—how is God supposed to stand by us here?"

He tore off his clothing in despair and buried his face in the ground. He was hopeless, like a man with a fatal wound in the heart.

The wife sat erect, her hands folded over her knees. Yet the glances she cast out across the desert spoke of a hopelessness without end.

And the palm heard the piteous rustling in its leafy crown growing still stronger. The wife must have heard it, too, for she looked up at the crown. At the same time she impulsively raised her arms. "Oh, dates!" she cried. "Dates!"

Her voice was so filled with longing that the old palm wished he were no higher than the broom bush, that his dates were as easy to reach as the haws on the briar bush. He knew that his crown was loaded with dates, but how could people of such small size ever reach up so high? The man already had seen how the dates hung up there, far beyond his reach. He didn't bother to lift his head; he only asked his wife not to start pining for the impossible.

Then the child heard his mother's outcry. He had started to toddle around the place, amusing himself with what grass and plants he could find.

It didn't occur to the child that his mother couldn't obtain anything she wanted. As soon as the word "dates" was out, he started looking at the tree. He frowned and started thinking how he could get some of those dates down. His forehead lay almost in furrows under his bright locks. Finally, a smile stole across his face. He'd found a way! He went up to the palm, struck it with his little hand, and said in his sweet child's voice: "Palm, bend! Palm, bend!"

And what, pray tell, was that? The palm leaves now were roaring as though a hurricane had hit them. The long tree trunk felt convulsion after

convulsion. The palm tree felt as though the little one had power over it. It could not withstand him.

And so the palm, high trunk and all, bowed before the child as men bow before princes. With a mighty flourish the palm sank to the earth, finally coming so low that the giant crown with the trembling leaves swept the sand of the desert like a giant broom.

The child seemed neither startled nor frightened at this, but came up with a shout of joy and picked fruit after fruit from the crown of the old palm tree. When he had taken enough and the tree still was lying on the earth, the child ran up to it again, caressed and embraced it, and with his bravest possible voice commanded: "Palm, arise! Palm, arise!"

And the giant tree silently and with reverence raised itself again with its pliant trunk, while its leaves played like harp strings.

"Now I know for whom the song of the dead was playing," it said. "Not for one of these." But the man and his wife were down on their knees giving thanks to God:

"Thou hast seen our terror and taken it from us. Thou art the Mighty One who bends the palm tree like a reed in the wind. Before what enemy shall we quake, if Thy strength uphold us?"

The next time a caravan passed through the desert, the travelers saw that the leafy crown of the giant tree had withered.

"How can that be?" he asked. "This palm will not die before it has seen a king who shall be greater than Solomon."

Another of the desert travelers replied: "Perhaps it has seen Him."

—Selma Lagerlof

(Translated from the German by Pastor Edward A. Johnson, Ohio, Nebr.) Reprinted by permission *Kirchliches Monatsblatt*, Philadelphia, Pa.



A Christmas Greeting from the President of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

a call to rejoice



The Christmas season does many things. For many, it awakens the most vivid memories. We can still see, hear, and in a sense, experience the Christmas services in the small but beautiful home church. The church was filled with friends and neighbors. The old pastor, and later a younger one, either before or after reading the Christmas Gospel text, would have the congregation arise and sing with him, "Oss er idag en Frelser fod." When English replaced Norwegian, the English rendition was:

Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn, A Savior unto us is born.
The Christ, the Lord of Glory; His lowly birth in Bethlehem
The angels from on high proclaim, And sing redemption's story.
My soul, extol God's great favor, Bless Him ever for salvation,
Give Him praise and adoration!

This anthem is very precious to us. Even today, a Christmas service does not seem complete unless the congregation sings it. It is a call to rejoice.

These are days that try thinking men's souls. Hearts are fainting in foreboding and fear. There is not much real joy. But in the midst of this decay, there is a great cause for rejoicing. A Savior has been given unto us. Not a savior that men might organize, elect, or call forth, but one given by God. Thus we know this Savior meets God's requirements, and is adequate.

God gave Him, not because mankind wanted Him, but because God knows we need saving. There is no other remedy. We have exhausted all other avenues and methods. We need to be saved, saved from our sins, our selves, our world, and the devil.

God gave this Savior because He loves us. He gave, not because He was tired of our stumbling and bumbling, or because He felt it was the thing to do, but because He loves us with a genuine, divine love and compassion. We who really love so few, cannot fathom a God Who loves all. But He does love us all. He loves enough to take our sin, guilt and eternal judgment and give us His righteousness and eternal life. He did this by giving Jesus to be our Savior.

When we have a Savior, we have peace, even in the midst of a sinful and warring world. We have peace because the Savior has saved us, and He is taking care of His own.

What a "story" the Christmas Gospel is to tell to the nations. This is the work all Christians should love best, and do most faithfully. This surely is the responsibility of every Christian congregation. It is the great task of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

Not all will believe the Gospel and receive the Savior. What a pity that there are those who are too proud to receive. They may enjoy Christmas giving, and it is fun, but will not receive the Savior Who is the main reason for Christmas.

Friend, have you grace enough to receive the best this Christmas? Remember, "as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). He saves those who receive, who believe. There there is joy.

Rejoice! We have a Savior! Fear not!

A blessed Christmas to our Association family and our multitude of friends and neighbors.

Pastor John P. Strand

O COME, LET US WORSHIP

by Mrs. Arnold McCarlson,
Eagle Butte, S. Dak.

Strains of "Come Hither, Ye Faithful, Triumphantly Sing" came from the stereo in the living room. Mrs. Smith, relaxing with a cup of coffee, was enjoying the Christmas hymn. How good it is that we can again "Come hither and worship the Lord.

Looking out the window, she could see her teenage daughter Mary and her best friend, Alice Evans, coming home from school. As usual they were in deep conversation and even when they came to the walk Alice was still talking and appeared very excited.

"Hi, Mom!" said Mary, in a shrill voice, when she finally came into the house. "Guess what? There's a devil worshiper in town... a real one!" Alice and her brother Danny have seen and talked to him.

She turned and caught the look of strange apprehension on her mother's face and heard her say quietly, "Oh, no, not my daughter." Just then through the quiet of the room came the strains of "O come ye, come hither to worship the Lord."

Mrs. Smith turned off the stereo and, taking Mary's hand in her's, said, "Mary, I saw that man today. He was wearing dirty clothes, sandals, a long black beard and a black arm band."

"Yes, yes," said Mary, "and he speaks with a foreign accent! But, Mother, that song you were listening to said, 'Worship the Lord.' This world is so mixed up... some worship the devil and some the Lord. That's what Alice and I were talking about. Remember about 300 years ago, when our country was new, witches were burned at the stake. Now, 200 years later, we are celebrating our Bicentennial and once again there are devil worshippers, fortune tellers, ouija boards, seances and all kinds of supernaturals. Why,

just yesterday, Alice's brother Danny, in junior high, was telling us how they played 'Mary Worth' at their Hallo-we'en party. Isn't it exciting?"

Mrs. Smith stared at her daughter in amazement and silently uttered a prayer for help to guide her daughter. Slowly the words came out, "'Mary Worth,' what is that?"

"Mary Worth was a secret worshiper of the devil," Mary replied. "One evening her husband discovered her in the midst of her Satan worship. She met death at the shock and anger of her husband. It is believed that Satan keeps her soul from rest. The game is to keep the surviving spirit of Mary Worth in the room. Then all close their eyes and chant in unison, 'I believe in Mary Worth.' This is repeated until they have the nerve to open their eyes in order to catch a glimpse of Mary who has supposedly risen up from the center of the mirror. And, you know what... one girl got so scared, she fainted!"

"Come, Mary, sit down for a minute. Would you like to have some cookies and milk? You have worked yourself up into a frenzy."

Mary sat down, but not until she was nibbling her second cookie did she relax and give her mother a shy smile.

"Now," said Mrs. Smith, "Witchcraft is not a thing of the past. Satan is not dead. He is very much alive and just as tricky as ever. He comes unawares. The Bible says, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Pet. 5:8).

"We are commanded to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7). If we don't resist, we will make an opening in our lives that Satan will be quick to enter. Satan uses one of his crowd to come in with an evil idea and immediately it becomes an obsession of the mind. Playing with

any form of the occult is definitely not resisting but assisting the devil.

"Yes, Mary, God considers this an extremely serious matter. Listen again to the warning of God through Moses: 'There shall not be found among you anyone... who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord' (Deut. 18:10-12, NASB).

Mary's face was sober now. The excitement was gone and she was herself again. Mrs. Smith turned on the stereo and the familiar "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" filled the room. "Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the new-born King."

"Mother?" "Yes," said Mrs. Smith. "What does worship mean, if it can be used for both our Lord and the devil?"

Mrs. Smith reached for the Bible with the concordance. "Let's see if we can find out. Our first reference says 'to render to God alone.' That means to put Him above all else. In Matthew 4:10, it says, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' This is repeated again in Luke, the 4th chapter, when Christ was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. And, in John 4:24: 'God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'"

Mary looked up at her mother with eyes beaming. "Yes, that's clear enough. I don't know why I got so excited about this strange man, because in our confirmation class we learned all these truths and I firmly believe in Christ as my Savior."

Mrs. Smith continued to study the Bible references. "There are so many ways to worship our Lord," she said. "But the best way is to go to worship services in the church and worship with fellow Christians. That's why it is important that we attend worship services regularly, not only in church, but privately worship Him in our hearts and homes.

"Let us remember in this Christmas season to let our thoughts go back to the manger in Bethlehem, when the shepherds came from the hills to pay

[Continued on page 16]

“JUST WHAT I NEEDED”

**by Rev. Wesley Langaas,
Hampden, N. Dak.**

“Thank you, Dear, it’s just what I needed.” These words have a familiar ring to them at this time of the year as multitudes of people exchange their Christmas gifts. Sometimes the words are spoken in sincerity; more often, however, they are uttered with a good deal of courage. Such words can take on a whole new meaning when we have received the most magnificent personal gift ever offered to this world—the Christ, the Son of God, Savior.

“And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Lk. 2:10, 11, NASB).

This is part of the familiar Christmas story. They are verses which have been read and expounded upon for centuries, ones which we never tire of hearing. At times one wonders what more can be said that has not been said already. But the announcement remains as fresh and new today as it was for the shepherds near Bethlehem, and it will continue to be so until that same Lord Jesus comes again. These verses reveal how God in His infinite grace prepared and presented to His people the gift that was meant especially for them. I would suggest some thoughts here on God’s gift according to the customs with which we are so familiar.

1. God’s gift had a purpose. We usually know what we want, and as far as possible, we make that known to whoever is in a position to give it to us. If we get what we want, then we think that is a good gift. But the really best gift is not always what is wanted, but what is needed, and for that another person’s unbiased judg-



Rev. Wesley Langaas

ment is usually necessary. God provides our basic needs, and thus we are admonished not to be anxious (Matt. 6:25), but to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and all the rest will be added (Matt. 6:33). “And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content” (I Tim 6:8).

But God had a greater purpose than to provide for the body. There is also the matter of righteousness. When Adam and Eve sinned, they created a new need which has plagued man ever since. They had sinned, and lest all be lost, they needed a Savior. Only God could provide that and He immediately promised to do something about it (Gen. 3:15). Thus there was a purpose for this gift which even today not all men are aware of, as through the one man sin entered into the world and all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). God’s gift to the shepherds and the rest of the world had the highest purpose possible, as expressed by the angel to Joseph (Matt. 1:21): “And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

The announcement to the shepherds

was that “there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” This was meant for them and was to meet a particular need—salvation. And they realized this as they returned from the manger glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. God knows what we need and sets about to provide it.

2. A time of preparation. Any gift we receive from a loved one is usually much appreciated. We know that they have spent long hours either making it or making just the right selection that would be best suited for us. Within the family, signs are evident that something unusual is going on as everyone tries to get clues that will help them in making that gift just right. Secrecy is a key ingredient if the final surprise is to be that much greater. God did not choose to keep us guessing, however, about what He was preparing. It was just that many of the clues had been ignored, or misunderstood, or forgotten. What had been first implied in the Garden of Eden became more and more explicit, and became reality in Bethlehem of Judea.

It would be possible to note any number of prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus which were fulfilled exactly as God intended. It is interesting to note one in particular, however, which shows how man sometimes misses even the most obvious clues. In Micah 5:2, a clue was given about the birthplace of the Savior, “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, . . . From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.” When the wise men from the East appeared to Herod, the priests and the scribes should have known what was taking place as they referred to this very prophecy. When Herod inquired of them where the Christ was to be born, they said “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet” (Matt. 2:5).

How sad when we fail to see even the most obvious signs or promptings of the Word of God. The gift is offered but we fail to receive because we have not understood the great need for it. All the preparation of heaven and earth will be of no value if the Christ is not received personally.

3. Until a gift is accepted it does

no good. This one was for the shepherds and for all who would hear the same announcement for centuries to come. God's gift is for every man, yet when He says "for you" it becomes personal. It is the same intimacy as when Christ spoke the words of institution at the Last Supper, that His blood was shed "for you and for many for the remission of sins." I can say that Jesus is my Savior, just as you should be able to say He is your Savior. I remember the years when God waited for me to receive, and the Spirit was working in many ways to make me realize the need, but everything seemed all right. After all, I knew all about Christ. God was offering me mercy and grace that was greater than my sin, but until I realized that and surrendered, it would do me no good. If someone has made a pair of warm woolen mittens for you as protection against the cold of winter, and you knew that they were inside that special package, you wouldn't just sit and look at the package. Knowing all about the mittens and how they were made and what they will do won't keep your hands warm. Only when the gift is received and accepted will the purpose of giving have been achieved. So it is with the Savior. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (Jn 1:12). Churches today are filled with people who have never touched or been touched by Jesus, but are too satisfied to just sit and look.

4. A spirit of thankfulness is essential. When someone says, "This is for you," we wonder, we anxiously look, and we see what has been so carefully and lovingly prepared. Its usefulness is recognized right away, and then we know that not only is it what we wanted, but more importantly, what we needed. A basic need has been dramatically provided. Someone's special love for us has been demonstrated in a visible and tangible way. We see that they love us and that their love has done something for us. "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. And yet for this reason I found

mercy, . . ." (I Tim. 1:15, 16). Praise God!

We easily become caught up in the excess of the worldly celebration of Christmas, and tend to lose sight of the timelessness of God's gift to us in the Savior of the world. We may continue to be mindful of Him, to hear all about Him, but fail once again to receive Him in our hearts. And if we don't let God be merciful to us in Christ, we can only expect Him to be just, and apart from Christ that will be a serious matter because the penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus was born for you, just as He died for you.

We must take time this Christmas, we must take time more often, to stop and reflect quietly on the gift that was given by One who loved us so much that He gave His only Son. Perhaps during a moment of meditation at home on Christmas Eve, or during the Christmas service, you might think again of how the loving hand of God reached out with the gift of His eternal love, how He provided salvation for you and me, sinners in need of grace. And if we are able to say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," we should be able to say, "Yes, Lord, I accept your gift of the righteousness of Christ, because now I know it was my greatest need, and your Word has revealed that to me." Only then can we utter the true prayer of thankfulness even as the shepherds did.

As the gifts are exchanged this Christmas, let us remember that they only represent the greatest gift ever given, and let us pause in the midst of a sin-sick world and give thanks for the gift of a Savior. Then may we by the grace of God be able to humbly say, "Thank you, dear heavenly Father; He is just what I needed."



"But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Galatians 4:4, 5

INVITED OVER FOR CHRISTMAS

So (in December) I thought it would be nice—it was only 11 families, mostly bachelors. So I talked with my husband about it, to make a Christmas tree and ask them all over Christmas Eve. Maybe they hadn't seen a Christmas tree as such since they were little. So we did that. We bought those red handkerchiefs that men use, everyday handkerchiefs, so they should each have one. We bought some nicer white ones for the ladies, so they could all have their names drawn for Christmas. We served them coffee and kind of a lunch. And they all came, every one. And I tell you that some of them cried when they saw the tree. It was lit and looked real pretty. We took these wild thorn bushes—the red berries. We picked all the berries we could get hold of and we strung them on a cord, you know, so we could move them here and there around the tree.

And then I made cookies—white, just as shiny and hard with frosting on one side and we had some way or other to hang them on. It looked beautiful. I can remember it now. My husband made candle holders. He took some tin boxes and cut them up and made room for a candle in each one and then the other end could be twisted around the branch. So that's the lights we had and they were nice. We had to light them with a match and we had to be careful 'cause they could take fire. It made me feel so good and all of us because they enjoyed it so much. And every one of them brought a present for me. They had lived there for a few years and had bached and bached, you know, to hold down their homesteads. Those were the days.

—from stories told by Mrs. Marie Hagen of pioneer days in northern Minnesota. Mrs. Hagen will be 101 years old on January 10. Mrs. Hagen and her husband Syver raised their large family near Paddock and later, Badger-Greenbush, all in Minnesota.



Australian Christmas

by Rev. J. Perkins
Townsville, Australia

Every Christmas my memory goes back to the last Christmas spent in North America. The picture of the gentle snow fall outside of Immanuel Church and the drive to our home floods my mind.

In the bleak mid-winter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid winter,
Long ago.

Yet, how unreal this image is 'down under.' Christmas marks the hottest part of the year in Australia. Much of the continent parches under the arc-lamp-like sun. Townsville in the Northeast experiences sauna bath conditions as we expect the beginning of the 'wet' with rain, floods, and perhaps a cyclone.

My memory goes back to that last Christmas Day in North America. It was still that morning, cold and clear. The snow glistened under the slanting rays of the sun. In the tropics Christmas Day is looked forward to with foreboding. Two major cyclones have hit Australia in the last five years, one in Townsville and one in Darwin, both on Christmas.

There is also the memory of the hot Christmas dinner: duck, dressing, cranberry sauce and all the trimmings. Here Christmas dinner will probably be salads, cold meat and iced tea. There will be fresh bananas, paw paw, and mangoes.

The memory of the full church Christmas Day is different from the half-filled one in Townsville. The summer school holidays have begun and many will be away. In Australia, the Lutherans are the only ones to put a Christmas tree in church for Christmas. The other churches, of British background, don't practice the custom. Many people don't bother to decorate their homes either, because it is too hot for a tree to last.

Christmas for the average Austral-

ian is a bottle of beer drunk under a beach umbrella, a trip home to see the family, or a party.

How different things are here in so many ways; not only in climate but in spiritual life. As the climate is hot, church life can be cold. Australia experienced no large-scale revivals as did the United States. Being part of the church isn't the usual thing for the Australian. Yes, babies are 'done' (Australian slang for baptism), and people marry in church, but less than one out of ten people are active in the church. Of these how many walk with Christ? Yet, many who seldom involve themselves in church life read the Bible and have a deep faith. Perhaps the formalism of much of Australian church life turns many away. Perhaps the isolation on the cattle stations (ranches) makes it difficult to go often and people lose the habit.

Yet there are always the 7,000. There are people who know the Lord and His mercy. There are people who hunger for the Word and the fellowship of other Christians. There are those who hold the name of Christ before the perishing world. And the faithful come together to worship on Christmas Day.

Our Christmas celebrations start in early December. At Townsville we have a children's program very much like the ones in the United States. And, of course, there is a cup of tea afterwards. The Sunday School will be in recess for the summer, so this will be the last function until school resumes in late January.

There are two outlying fellowship groups in our parish: one, 50 miles south, in sugar cane country, and one 70 miles west, in cattle country. It has been a good year for the cane farmers but the cattlemen are facing a financial crises. Christmas will be a time of hope for the cattlemen. They look forward to an early "wet" so the cattle that they can't sell will not die. Some have had no real income for two years and have just about

had to live on beef and damper (home-made bread). Yet, they share a deep faith and a trust in the Lord's goodness. "Jesus has always kept us and He won't let us down," they say. And He won't.

"Outback" services are generally held a few days before Christmas. The roads could easily be flooded, making it difficult to return to Townsville for the service on Christmas Day. Sometimes flooded creeks must be crossed. These have gone down just enough between the five-inch showers that come in the "wet" to allow crossing before the next heavy shower.

There will be just one service on Christmas at Townsville. Afterwards, the people who have no families come together for a dinner: the Romanians and Latvians who fled the Communists, the old German without a family. So we become a family.

Yes, Christmas is different here. But we are the same family of God, redeemed in Christ, with the same loving Father. And we know God is good.

JESUS LOVES ME

Jesus came to save me when He was just a baby.

He was born among the lowly in a stable cold, yet holy,
And He grew in strength and favor,
did His Father's will only.

He walked this earth among us, so that in Him we would trust
And His ministry of love will take us with Him above.

Now I see the cross before me, and the weary, broken body.

I see the blood flow freely and I hear His small, deep sighing.

I see the nails so big that they could pierce my heart's deep crying;
His arms outstretched in suffering,
and a crown of thorns adorning.

His face is bent in anguish, and his head is weighed down in sorrow.

Yes, I know my Jesus loves me.
That's why He suffered for me
And the blood which flowed so freely
Will cleanse me, as white as snow.

Barbara Parsons
St. Paul, Minn.

AN OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS

by Mrs. Max Christensen, Dannebrog, Nebraska

With all the interest in antiques and things of yesteryear it's small wonder that our thoughts should turn to an old-time observance of Christmas in the home and church in our Danish community. We are pleased that Mrs. Helga Faaborg has shared her memories with us . . .

"Christmas was the most important holiday of the year and families lived in great anticipation of it. Since nearly everything we had was available only through do-it-yourself projects, it was necessary to begin preparations long before the holiday. Early in the month of December a beef and a pig were butchered and these provided a variety of delicacies—including frikadeller, leverposteg, finger, dried beef, rullepølse, summer sausage, cured hams, and bacon. A couple of weeks before Christmas Mother made all sorts of goodies such as fruit cakes, pebernodder, kringler, and Christmas cookies; and we made taffy and popcorn balls. By Christmas the larder was usually quite full.

"December 23rd was 'Little Christmas Eve' and the animals were given special attention with extra portions of food, for they, too, must share the celebration of Christ's birth. On this evening the young people of the community made Christmas decorations and decorated the tree at the Danish Folk School. The tree was placed in the auditorium and it was large and had to be supported with extra wires which were also decorated with evergreen branches and candles. Other than this activity for the young people, Little Christmas Eve wasn't a big event in the home.

"There was a great deal of hustle and bustle on the 24th. We tried to do as much work as possible so as to have more free time during the holidays, which lasted from December 24th to January 6th. Our evening meal and farm chores had to be well scheduled to allow the family to go to church for services in the afternoon. The fire was banked in the cookstove at home to keep the meal simmering while we gathered with our

relatives, neighbors and friends to hear the Christmas Story and sing carols.

"We were never alone for Christmas Eve and always had aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and, sometimes, neighbors to share. During lean years families were probably even more aware of how rich our lives really were—being warm and comfortable in our homes, having parents who could work magic with meager provisions to make children happy, and knowing the joy of sharing this wonderful holiday with loved ones.

"After everyone had joined in singing our table grace it was time to partake of the luscious foods we'd been smelling all day. Our first course was rice served with milk, cream, cinnamon and sugar, and the one who found an almond hidden in his or her dish of rice had a special treat of an extra gift from the 'Jule Nis.' No one ever really knew who provided this gift, but it had to be Mother, who could manage all the little extras the rest of us took for granted. Our meal consisted of roast goose or duck with apple and prune dressing, red cabbage (specially prepared with a pat of butter, vinegar, sugar and jelly), and vegetables according to what had been raised and preserved the summer before. Dessert was always applecake with whipped cream and dots of bright red jelly for eye appeal.

"We children could hardly wait for the meal to be finished and the dishes to be washed. But the time finally came when we were allowed to go into the parlor and the Christmas tree, with homemade decorations, the lighted candles and gifts was a wonderful sight to behold! Everyone was seated and Father read from the family Bible: 'Now it came to pass in those days . . .' As he read, we children became restless—under the tree were the neatly wrapped packages and we were longing for new things.

"When the Christmas Story had been read, we joined hands and formed a circle around the tree and sang: 'Nu har Vi Jul Igen,' which,



translated, means, 'Now we have Christmas again . . . and Christmas lasts till Easter.' This was great fun and sometimes we became rather noisy. Finally, we had our gifts and many times these packages contained clothing we needed or homemade toys—dolls as precious as any a girl ever had. The candles on the tree had to be watched closely and when they had burned low and were put out, we settled down for the evening. We had coffee, fruitcake and cookies later on and it was often late before the party broke up.

"Christmas Day was, of course, an important church holiday, and again we hurried with the farm chores and household duties so the family could go to the morning worship services. This was pretty much as any Sunday service, except on that day the pastor was given a special offering which was placed on the altar. Our noon meal was usually leftovers from the evening before and in the afternoon we either had company or went visiting.

"December 26th was the 'Second Christmas' observed with another worship service at the church, and the remainder of the day was spent with more visiting. People didn't wait to be invited to each other's homes—it was a time of sharing and guests were always welcome.

"On the third day (December 27th) we had the special evening festivities with the Christmas tree, gifts and treats at the Folk School. The candles on the tree were lighted; our pastor read the Christmas Story; and then

[Continued on page 15]

editorials

THERE'S GOOD NEWS TONIGHT!

A news commentator in radio's more golden days used to begin each broadcast with the words, "There's good news tonight!" And each day he would tell of some happy or hopeful happening even though much of the other news which followed consisted of stories of the war and various human suffering.

So also at this Christmas season it is possible to recite almost endless tales of woe about the human situation and man's inhumanity to man. Any daily newspaper relates incidents of tragedy and heartache. The daily fare of violence and intrigue offered by our TV sets is well known to us all.

Nevertheless, it is also possible, and in this we rejoice, to announce to you, "There's good news tonight! God is with us!" All is not hopeless. All is not lost. There is meaning after all.

Our job, our task, is to get the good news out to the world. Like the lepers who found the camp of the be-seiging Syrians mysteriously deserted and decided, "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace," we must sound forth this good news which is too good to keep to ourselves.

Again this Christmas season we hear the familiar story of God's love through His Son Jesus. How it warms our hearts and lives. Sometimes we wish we were hearing it for the very first time, that we might thrill to its newness. Then again, we take delight in the very familiarity of the words and can respond over and over again to them with no loss of feeling. They are something with which one has grown up and which is a very part of life.

On the morning when this is written we have read some thoughts of Dr. Ole Hallesby on the incarnation, God taking human form upon Himself. The great Norwegian theologian first describes God's creation and preservation of the universe. For this God could remain upon His throne in the heavens. Then Hallesby proceeds: "But when He was to save the fallen race, then He could not sit upon His throne. Then He had to descend. He had to come down from heaven. God had to become man, yes, had to humble Himself and become obedient unto death" (**God's Word for Today**).

God has come down to us. A Savior has been born. This is the good news tonight and which makes all the difference in the world to those who will open their hearts to it. Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, yea, perhaps even millions of people today can live out their lives in a spirit of joy, hope and optimism because they believe in this Christ and know His liberating and energizing power.

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come" is reality to them, to us. God help us, if we know the Jesus of Christmas personally, to re-dedicate ourselves to the work at hand, the sharing of the Good News of which He is the center.

There's good news tonight! God is with us!

YULETIDE GREETINGS

It is a pleasure each year in the yuletide season to send our readers best wishes. All year there is that feeling of good-will toward all who make up the **Ambassador** family, but, alas, it is too often unexpressed.

However, at Christmas, accept our prayers and good wishes for a blessed holiday and a good new year, filled with all that God deems best for you and yours. Assured that God has visited His people, may you take new heart in the re-hearing of the story which never grows old.

May Christmas at your house be the best ever as you are made glad by the presence of family members and friends. God bless the yuletide season in your congregation, too, as the various activities focus on the Child of Bethlehem.

It is our hope that this special issue of **The Lutheran Ambassador** will add some blessing to your life in this Christmas season. While we trust that every part of this magazine will bring good to you, perhaps some article, some poem, will prove a particular inspiration or help to you. May it be so.

And so, from **The Lutheran Ambassador**, a blessed and joyous Christmas to all of you.

"For to us a Child is born,
to us a son is given;
And the government will be upon
His shoulder,
and His name will be called
'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of
Peace.'"

Isaiah 9:6

[Continued from page 3]

from Matamick to Sagitawak to teach her class of fourth-graders. Today was a special practice for the program.

Cathy had come to Matamick with her sister Jane in the fall when the school year began. She was the teacher and helped Cathy with her correspondence studies. Usually they walked to Sagitawak together but today Jane had finish-up work to do at school. She knew that Cathy was very able to take her place at the practice and hoped that this added responsibility would help her sister see how important she was to the Sunday School and to these Cree boys and girls.

Somehow the practice was more confused than it should have been. Several times Cathy was afraid Mr. Nelson was going to talk to her. She tried to avoid him. Paul showed none of his usual enthusiasm and Cathy was relieved when it was over.

"We're all so pleased you didn't take the snowmobile out today," Jane said when Cathy returned home.

"Well, I've changed my mind," Cathy blurted. "I'm going home after all. I'm leaving first thing in the morning. I'll fly!"

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed her sister.

"Why not?" Cathy retorted. "I'm using my own money. Name one good reason why I shouldn't. I did you a favor today, maybe you can do me one. Just quit pestering me!"

"Don't you see there's more to it, Cathy, than you're facing up to?" Jane asked. "It's more than the program itself. Mr. Nelson says you're the first white teenager ever to be so well accepted and so trusted by the young Crees. You can't just break that trust, Cathy! Look how much you'd undo!"

"You talk as though I'm the missionary here! As though they are my responsibility! Remember, I only came up here to keep you company," Cathy cried, "and now even teaching a class regularly isn't good enough any more!" She fled to her room.

The next morning, Christmas Eve day, Cathy was at the Hudson's Bay Post ready to leave. Jane and the Nelsons saw her off. In three hours she'd be at Beaver Portage, boarding the

small aircraft for home.

Cathy seated herself with the other passengers, among them a little girl she knew. Above the roar of the old snowmobile, it was hard to hear anything. Suddenly Cathy caught sight of Paul sprinting towards them. He thrust a bulky brown package into Cathy's lap. His eagerness and sadness caught at her heart.

The heavily-loaded vehicle creaked and shuddered as it sped away, jostling its occupants back and forth. An hour passed and still their trail was flanked by dense spruce woods. What a wonderful world of Christmas trees, Cathy thought. They'll be decorating one at home today, too. Oh, it will be good to be home! Her thoughts switched to the road ahead. Seventy miles of it was across a frozen lake. She wished she'd taken the more reliable snowmobile the day before. She'd be home by now, but no, she'd had to help with that program!

Through an opening in the trees Cathy saw the wide lake stretching away before them. Rays of sunshine turned it into a brilliant world of crystals.

As they thundered into the opening, Cathy was suddenly pitched forward. Flying splinters cracked against the windshield. The roaring engine stopped and Cathy's head buzzed.

Trying to pick herself up, pain shot through her left leg and side. The little Cree girl had been thrown on top of her. The mother was soothing the child and then helped Cathy up.

Had they broken through the ice? They couldn't have! Cathy managed to get out to where the two men were looking over the problem. "Won't we be able to get any farther?" was the first thing she could say.

The men didn't answer. Her alarm grew.

"Well, what are we going to do?" she cried.

"We hit a stump," Alex said. "But the ski isn't completely ruined. We could try to go on. It will be slow, though."

"Will we make it to Beaver Portage in time to catch the plane?"

"Can't say," Alex replied, shaking his head.

"We've just got to!" Cathy sobbed.

"Hey, Alex," the other man called, "the gas tank has been jarred loose

and the lid is gone. Even if we could move there isn't enough gas left to get there."

Cathy's heart sank.

There was no place to get help. Miles and miles of wilderness inhabited by wolves and moose stretched around them. The quietness rang around them dizzily, as they looked at each other in silence.

Only the child huddled against her mother seemed secure.

"Everyone get back inside," called Alex. "We'll have shelter from the wind."

And this is Christmas Eve, Cathy thought bitterly. She wanted to cry. She'd never felt more forsaken. Even the sun was trying to hide behind some clouds as though the days weren't short enough already. Why did this have to happen? What will happen to us? Her thoughts whirled on till she felt numb. She didn't know how long they'd sat there, when she spotted the package Paul had given her, flung under the far seat.

"It is Christmas Eve, so I may as well open it," Cathy said. She struggled to keep from crying. She gasped as she tore away the brown wrapping and saw the beautiful mutlocks inside. "They're just perfect!" she exclaimed, holding them against her right foot and leg. "They come nearly to my knees. How cozy they'll be!" She ran her hand into one of them and found a folded note, to her surprise. Quickly she read it:

Dear Miss Cathy,

I do know how you feel. Last year when the nurse thought I'd get T.B., they sent me away to the hospital on Christmas Eve. I was sad but I got well again and came home. Now I think it's the best Christmas I ever had.

I hope you like the mutlocks my mother and I made for you.

Love, Paul

Cathy's eyes were full of tears. I don't deserve my Cree friends, she thought, I don't deserve these boots. She felt the leg part made of rich purple corduroy, trimmed with rabbit fur. The beadwork on the moosehide foot was brilliantly colored and even. She twirled the long laces around her fingers, as she thought how much he

must have loved her to make these for her.

"Ane I let him down," she whispered.

Cathy had been so busy with her own thoughts, she hadn't noticed the others. Alex had a bright fire going near by and now everyone was talking excitedly. Then she heard it, too. Another snowmobile!

Shortly it roared up to them and stopped.

It was Alex' brother.

"Mark," he shouted. "I was beginning to wonder if you'd make it home this year!"

"Christmas Eve, you know," Mark answered. "Couldn't stay away any longer. Looks like you're in trouble."

In no time, Mark arranged to take the passengers on to Beaver Portage and Alex would turn his snowmobile back home. He had enough gas for that counting the little he got from Mark.

Cathy couldn't believe how good things were turning out.

"I'll be able to go!" she squealed. With that, she helped the little child and mother into the vehicle. "Here, buy yourself a treat when you get to Beaver," she said. Then she ran off and hopped into Alex's snowmobile "You'd better take the other one if you're going to fly out today," he grinned.

But Cathy settled herself for the ride back to Matamick. Suddenly she was feeling all excited and shy. "I guess I've changed my mind," she began. "You know, Christmas is even more than family isn't it? It's like finding a dwelling for Jesus all over again, wherever you are, in your heart. And now I have another chance to show Jesus' love by spending Christmas with my sister who must have wanted to go home, too, and with Paul and my other Cree friends."

Darkness had settled everywhere as they returned. Quickly Cathy slipped on the new mutlocks Paul had given her. She could hear the carollers and she ran to join them. The peace in her heart was sweeter than frankincense and more treasured than myrrh.



About Our Cover Picture

THE NATIVITY

BY GUSTAVE DORE

To the company of shepherds watching their flocks by night, the announcement is made by the "Angel of the Lord" of the birth of Jesus. In these sultry lands, where the flocks are fed by night and housed by day, the shepherds have the lonely night-watches for undisturbed thought, and to devout and earnest men it is a time that impresses itself profoundly upon the character. It was therefore appropriate that the "Shepherd of our Souls" should thus have been announced to these simple and undoubtedly earnest-hearted men. Their "glorifying and praising God" shows the spirit of their mind, and it is this visit of the shepherds that the artist has depicted. The infant Saviour, lovely in His helplessness—the future Lord of all, the Redeemer—lying on His mother's knees, is a representation that appeals unerringly to the deepest chords of the human heart, for it has also another and sweetest signification—all power in utter weakness—and endears the sacred character of woman and mother, as protectress of the infant Christ, as nothing else can. The picture is very charming.

—The Fine Art Publishing Company

[Continued from page 12]

the children (numbering between 50 and 75) formed three rings around the Christmas tree and sang carols. Gifts for all the children were hung on the tree and these, apples and nuts, were purchased with donations from the families—usually 25¢ was given for each child in the family. Someone had to be on guard with a wet swab on a long pole to extinguish any candle burning too low, lest a flaming tree should change this happy occasion to a tragedy. No gathering could be complete without refreshments and once again we had coffee and lunch before departing for our homes.

"New Year's Eve was observed with another family gathering and evening meal and some of the ad-

venturesome young people in the community went out playing pranks similar to those on Hallowe'en. We had 'aebleskiver' later in the evening and if any of the pranksters could be 'caught' and coaxed in they were served this Danish treat.

"There was another worship service on New Year's Day and anyone who had the time and energy continued to visit during the rest of the week.

"It must be difficult for children of our times to understand how little the pioneer children had in the way of material things. Parents were either too poor or too frugal to buy luxuries. But ours is a rich heritage and many of our happiest memories are those of early Christmases. Probably not many people would relish a dish of rice on Christmas Eve in these times but in our family the 'Jule Nis' still favors the one who finds the almond in the mashed potatoes . . .

"May each of you readers have a Christmas as blessed and happy as ours!"

CHRISTMAS TIME

The blessed time is come again
When Christian hearts do sing,
The day our Father sent His Son
To be our Savior King.
Oh, that the world would welcome
Him,
The Babe in Bethlehem's stall,
Who came in poverty and shame
To heal man's deadly fall.

But when He came in lowly birth
So few did seem to care;
Like as today, not many come
In worship and in prayer.
Oh, may we be among that flock
Who reverently bow
Before the holy manger Child,
Who reigns in heaven now.

E. I. Mork
Carbury, N. Dak.



[Continued from page 8]

homage and worship the new-born King."

"Oh, Mother," said Mary. "Now, I know what real Christmas spirit is all about. It's a time for us to 'Come hither and worship the Lord.' May I go over to Alice's house and tell her the good news?"

"Yes, I'm sure she'd like to have you come," said Mrs. Smith. Again she said a silent prayer of gratitude for the guidance she had received. She thought of something she had read that morning, "Each morning as we awaken to the new day which God has given to us, we need to put on our armor and take our seat with Christ. We need to remind ourselves that we have victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil through the work of Christ on our behalf."

THERE WAS NO SNOW

There was no snow in Bethlehem,
There was no fragrant pine,
There was no glistening holly wreath
In that first Christmas time.

There was a dusty, weary road,
A cave that served as byre;
But all God's glory rested there
And all of earth's desire.

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa

SECOND MISSION FIELD TOUR PLANNED

Take this opportunity to visit four countries in South America and our AFLC mission field in Brazil. New Departure Tours, Inc., Mr. Henri Pol, Jr., president, has set up, together with Missionary John Abel, an interesting tour that will include La-Paz, Bolivia; Asuncion, Paraguay; a week on our mission field in and near Campo Mourao, Parana; Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and Manaus (on the Amazon River), all in Brazil; and Bogota, Colombia, in the Andes.

The dates of the tour are February 23 to March 15 (21 days). The last tour, two years ago, was a great

blessing, both to the missionaries on the field and to all who went along. The missionaries are anxious that many more of you brethren should have the opportunity of seeing South America and the mission work there first hand. We must have your application, or letter of interest, by the end of December. The tour cost is being finalized and a folder and information letter will be sent to anyone who writes. The cost at this time is estimated to be about the same as the previous tour, or in the neighborhood of \$1100.

Please write soon to Mr. Henri Pol, 3444 Girard Ave. So., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408, or Pastor John H. Abel, Country Manor No. 36, Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56537.

J. H. A.



THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

In Bethlehem at Christmas time,
While stars were shining bright,
The dearest, sweetest little Babe
Was born that Holy Night;
His cradle was a manger low,
And on a bed of hay
This dearest, sweetest little Babe
Among the cattle lay.

This little Babe was Jesus Christ,
Who came from Heaven to earth
To save us all from sin and shame,—
We glory in His birth!
To Him our heartfelt praise we sing,
Because to us He came,
With heart and voice we love to sing:
All glory to His name!

"Peace to the earth, good-will to men!"

The angels first did sing;
Tonight we sing it o'er again,
To Him our hearts we bring.
O dearest Jesus, Babe divine,
Thee would we dearly love:
O take us, make us ever Thine
To dwell with Thee above!

C. K. Solberg

"COME, LORD JESUS"

With Christmas music in the air; Christmas bells ringing from church towers; your homes filled with the Christmas gleam which should symbolize Christ as "the Light of the World"; with the Savior knocking at the door of your heart and the portals of your home, accept Christ now! Say, "Come, Lord Jesus," we have room for Thee, blessed Child of the cradle, in the sanctuary of our hearts! Come and be born in us today!"

—Walter A. Maier

THE GREATEST GIFT

They came to you, Lord,
so long ago
guided by a star,
questioning—
"In a stable?"
Where they heard the bray of donkeys?
The mooing of cows?
The King of Israel born in a stable?
Yet, when they saw You, Jesus,
they could no longer doubt,
only worship
and rejoice,
for their long awaited Messiah had come.
That which they gave You were
paltry gifts
compared with what You came to
offer them.
The love of Your Father was in Your
eyes
and Your light was that of life eternal.
I come to you now, Lord Jesus,
knowing the love that shone in Your
eyes,
knowing the forgiveness You came to
give,
guided by Your eternal light.
I have nothing to give You
on this, Your birthday—
for all I have
was given of You;
but I offer myself to You, Lord,
to reflect Your glory,
to be consecrated to Your service,
and to share the love that You gave,
even from before that first night
when You came to us
as the Holy Babe.

Dorothy Seaman
Kirkland, Wash.

HOW WE OBSERVE CHRISTMAS IN ECUADOR

by Mrs. Richard Erickson, Minneapolis, Minn.

Spring has arrived. Evidences of it are all around. Many more birds have arrived from the north and the sweet smell of fruit trees in blossom fills the air. Yet something else is in the air as well. It's early December and one senses the stir among the townspeople of Cuenca as the shopkeepers decorate for their busy Christmas season ahead. Many of these people have a good education and have traveled within their own country as well as to others. They have picked up the Christmas customs of the Western world with decorations, lights and customer credit. Christmas trees are becoming a more popular decoration in the homes of the rich and rapidly-developing middle class. Toys are imported and a price tag of two to six times the original cost is attached. This type of Christmas has been labeled by some as the festival for the rich. It all sounds familiar to us but in Ecuador it is out of reach of the majority of those who pass by its tinsel splendor.

Ecuador is a poor country in that common laborers and farm people earn between 20 to 80 dollars a month. They are a hard working people, strongly Catholic, and mostly Indian by ancestry. Although they are not rich in this world's goods, they have dignity and a rich network of relationships with family and friends. Christmas is a meaningful time of year, for they sense the excitement of Christmas through their own customs. Again, around the beginning of December, the Indians from the countryside bring into town chunks of sod, weeds, grasses, cactus, sticks and other ornaments from nature to sell in the market place. All along the curbs across from the market square, they sell their "yerbas." Oftentimes the street is blocked off because of the number of their customers. These ornamental grasses are bought by the town people who each year create a manger scene in their homes. The manger scene of Jesus' birth can be for a table, corner or a whole room display. Those who spend a lot of time

in the arranging of the manger with the figures of the holy family may wish to enter a contest which offers a prize for the best scene.

As Christmas approaches, stands are set up near the main cathedral and are open for business both day and night to sell plastic toys, balls and decorations which are within the financial reach of most Ecuadorians. On Christmas Eve Day the family does its shopping. Preparation for the midnight Christmas celebration is made in the evening. Mass is held at midnight and on returning home family and friends partake in their special Christmas supper. As the children go to bed, they put out a shoe in the window or at the foot of their bed with hopes that Father Noel will fill it with candy and toys. Christmas Day is uneventful and spent quietly or in visiting.

Within the mission, we come in contact with both the poor and the rich. Christmas activities are a part of the ministry of the mission school, mission bookstore and the Ecuadorian Lutheran churches. We, as evangelicals, as we are called by the people, are accused of not "believing" in the Virgin Mary. Christmas gives us a good opportunity to share the significant part that Mary played in God's taking on the form of man. We believe Mary was a virgin, that she indeed was the handmaid of the Lord, but the real miracle is with Jesus, God in human form. Why did Jesus take on our form of flesh? Well, because God loved us so much. What a marvelous message to declare and what a wonderful opportunity each year to make it known.

The school and bookstore is our outreach into the community. The bookstore last year displayed the traditional manger scene on several tiers of mossy sod, with lights, and then the creche with a Christmas tree behind the "Monte." It was the creative delight of our Ecuadorian manager. In the window throughout the year is the large open Bible which en-

courages many a passer-by to read God's Word. Then with music on the record player, many find their way into the bookstore at Christmas time.

The school, in its early years, had Christmas programs that set the tone for the Christian atmosphere of the school. During those early years the Christmas program left deep impressions on seeking hearts. Within the past four years the school has grown in the number of students and Ecuadorian personnel so rapidly that the mission has had all it can do to deep up the strength of that original spiritual influence in the school. Special Christmas material has been incorporated into the Bible classes in addition to a yearly Christmas program. The school is a tremendous opportunity to work closely with the Ecuadorian people; however, we need more mission staff with this vision. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out more laborers to that end.

The Ecuadorian Lutheran Christians in Cuenca plan their own programs and services and it's our joy as missionaries to participate in the Christmas festivities with our Ecuadorian brothers. From year to year their planning varies. One year there is a midnight service and supper. Another year there is the children's program on Christmas Eve, with bags of candy and cookies. Each family shares Christmas greetings, "abrazos" and kisses. It is a time of warmth and fellowship among the Christian brothers.

The most wonderful experience of Christmas in Ecuador has been within our family circle. Seeing Christmas in another culture has made us re-evaluate Christmas in our own lives. So much of what we do year after year becomes so much a part of us that to think of changing our traditions is to somehow take a chunk right out of us. The festival of the rich, with so many poor around us, made us review our festival. We came to see that when all the external is taken away Christmas is reduced to the birth of Jesus, the simple foundation of Christmas. Built upon this our most significant preparation should be in our hearts. With this premise, we began to celebrate in a way that all who entered our home, rich or poor, could feel at home.

As a family we set up Christmas around the Bible and songbook. With the Advent calendar and Advent wreath as aids we embarked on a Christmas experience that still lingers sweetly in our memories. It was a time of family participation. The children cut out pictures from magazines to pin up on our calendar. After each day's selected Bible reading, a series of questions were asked about what was read. This was a springboard to many wonderful times of sharing. Some days we acted out the Christmas story. Singing was an especially fine experience as we gathered together each day. We chose a new song each week as our theme song. To explore the realm of unfamiliar Christmas songs was a delightful adventure for all of us.

We soon found Christmas was not just in our hearts but in our actions. After the cookies were baked we made cookie plates for each family in the national churches. Visiting each home as a family broadened our scope of giving. To give to others without expecting in return is the purest form of giving. The ways in which we give ourselves and of our blessings to others should be a way of life for us as Christians. Every time we bake a batch of cookies we should ask the Lord whom He would like us to share them with. Every time we receive something we should seek to channel it for God's use to others. Why? Because it will make us feel better? Because it will gain us favor in God's sight? No, because instead they will see our good works and glorify our

Father (Matthew 5:16).

"Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all" (II Cor. 9:13).

As Christians we have been given so much and much will be required of us. In some Bible versions, the fruit of the Spirit, goodness, is synonymous with generosity. By giving we get involved in the lives of others and the world around us is aching for someone who cares. Now isn't that the message of Christmas... God so loved the world that He gave His best; He gave himself? He wants to make this message incarnate through us at this Christmas season and throughout the years to come.



An Advent Log

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

dealt with (a) The serpent (3:14-15), (b) Eve (3:16), (c) Adam (3:17). Adam and Eve saw the terrible fruit of sin in their own family (Gen. 4:1-6). What anguish the memory of their fall must have brought them!

Promise

God's grace is evident even in the midst of punishment. Gen. 3:15 is the first direct promise of a Savior. 1. Whom was the Lord referring to when He spoke of the serpent's seed? _____ 2. Of the woman's seed? _____ Satan would be permitted to afflict Christ, but Christ's stroke against Satan would be fatal. With Calvary behind us, it is in Christ that the seed of the woman crushes the serpent. Christ is victor over Satan, sin, and death.

The historical record of Eve after the fall is sparse. If she believed in God and looked for redemption in His promised salvation, it was reckoned to her as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). References we do have indicate she did not forget the Lord. Note her comments at the birth of her sons. (4:1; 4:25-26. No doubt she remembered God's promise of a Savior and waited for its fulfillment even in her lifetime.

Eve's profile has been a warning to us. We have seen the subtle, cunning deceit of Satan destroy perfect fellowship with God. Let us take heed to the warnings of Prov. 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction" . . . and Matt. 26:41: "Watch and pray . . ."

—Eula Mae Swenson

(The WMF Bible Studies this year are a reprint of the ones used in 1965, with minor revisions.)

WMF REMINDERS

December was General Fund month. This fund needs our full support. It covers such a wide area, such as the subsidy to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, expenses for the WMF Newsletter, printing, paper, postage, travel, guest speakers, and assists other projects not reaching their goals.

Church Extension is our project for January. Through this fund money is loaned to new congregations and those which need to expand their facilities. As the loans are repaid, the money is re-loaned. Let us all do our share in the furtherance of God's Kingdom here in our own United States.

There is a special need for more funds for our Honorary Membership And In Memoriam project. We are still approximately \$800 short of reaching our goal. This project helps supply housing for our missionaries home on furlough.

Mrs. Robert Dietsche



WMF Bible Study

Lesson 1

PROFILES OF FAITH

January, 1976

Introduction: The WMF Bible study for the new year will be a biographical approach as we look for evidences of a living faith in the lives of Bible women. A vivid profile is made when an object has light cast upon it. As we see these women in the light of God's Word, we have a picture of their life. We will recognize their aspirations, frailties, and limitations as being similar to ours. Through their life we shall be challenged to greater devotion in our own life. If we as Christians are walking in the light (I Jn. 1:7), we also are making a "profile of faith" to the world around us. If we are faithful, God's Word promises we will see these profiles in the faith face to face in eternity. Together we will praise and serve our Lord (Heb. 12:1-2). As we look to Jesus, let us claim His promise in II Cor. 3:18.

EVE

We view Eve with mixed emotions. She knew a life without sin and experienced perfect fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Yet, she who had so much, chose to rebel against God and His Word. Have you ever wondered

—How? Why? How could she? Let us review the life of Eve in A. Paradise; B. Pride and its Consequences; C. Punishment; D. Promise.

Paradise (Read Gen. 1:26-31; 2:15-24)

1. Why were Adam and Eve different from the rest of creation? 1:26-27-2:7 _____

2. What authority was delegated to Adam and Eve? 1:28-30 _____

3. What privileges were theirs? 2:8, 9, 15; 2:23, 24; 3:8a; _____

4. What restrictions did God place on them? 2:17 _____

Unlike other creatures, man is able to say "yes" or "no" to God. He can choose to obey or disobey His Maker. S. deDietrich has written in God's **Unfolding Purpose**, "The stars in the sky follow their prescribed orbits, the animals of the field obey their instincts, but man has this unique and frightening ability . . . he can refuse to be obedient to his Creator. For God does not want slaves, but sons."

Discussion: We are told "good and evil" in Hebrew means to "know all things." Why would God have that withheld?

Pride and Its Consequences (Gen. 3)

1. Who tempted Eve to disobey God? Gen. 3:1-5; 1 Jn. 3:8 _____

Compare Eve's temptation with Jesus' temptation in Matt. 4:1-11 as to (a) source, (b) opportune time, (c) approach, (d) use of God's Word, (e) promises given, (f) reaction of person being tempted. Pause and compare Eve's temptation with your own experiences.

2. II Cor. 11:14 speaks of Satan disguising himself as an angel of light. How is this deceitful approach used in Gen. 3:4-5? _____

3. Jn. 8:44 tells us Satan is a liar and the father of lies. What basic truth does Satan deny in Gen. 3:4? (Note Rom. 6:23) _____

What false promise does he give in Gen. 3:5? _____

4. What did the serpent question in Gen. 3:1? _____

5. As Eve argued with the serpent, he became bolder in his assertions. By now his subtle questioning had already had its influence on Eve.

(a) "Did God say? . . ." (Gen. 3:1) What was Satan attempting to do?

(Try repeating this question three times, emphasizing a different word each time.)

(b) "God said . . . 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree . . .'" (Gen. 3:2-3). Instead of concentrating on God, what was Eve thinking about?

(c) "The woman saw that the tree was good for food . . ." (Gen. 3:6). Newman has written, "Our great security against sin consists in being shocked at it. Eve gazed and reflected when she should have fled." Discussion:

Why is it dangerous for us to look at and contemplate on forbidden fruit? (d) ". . . it was a delight to her eyes . . ." (Gen. 3:6). How does Eve's experience bear out the authenticity on Jas. 1:13-15? _____

What could Eve have done, even at this point? Jas. 4:7-8 _____

(e) ". . . she took of its fruit and ate . . ." (Gen. 3:6). At that moment what irrevocable choice had Eve made? _____
Whose word had she accepted as truth? _____

(f) "She also gave some to her husband, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6). Why do you suppose she wanted to share the forbidden fruit with her husband?

Discussion: How can these six downward steps be repeated today? What does Satan still appeal to? I Jn. 2:16. How can Christians best counteract the subtle work of Satan? I Jn. 2:14b.

6. What were the first reactions of the fallen couple? Gen. 3:7 _____
Gen. 3:8b _____

7. Adam and Eve knew they had done wrong. They knew that God was aware of their disobedience. How did Eve try to justify herself? 3:13 _____

How did Adam excuse himself? _____
Whom, then, did they dare

to blame for their transgression? _____

Discussion: Is this a typical reaction when we have erred? How do we do it today?

8. Adam and Eve had grieved the heart of God with willful disobedience. But God still loved them. He had already begun His long-range plan to redeem fallen man. How do the following references bring this out?

(a) Gen. 3:21 _____

This first reference to the sacrifice of animals for covering points us to Jesus, our perfect Substitute. What redemption plan did God have for fallen man? Heb. 9:11-14; 9:22.

(b) Gen. 3:22-24 _____ Will this tree of life ever again be a part of man's habitation? Rev. 22:2, 14, 19.

9. What was the first question asked in the Bible? Gen. 3:9 _____

How do this question and the one in Gen. 4:9 summarize what God is asking His children in the Christian Church today? _____

Punishment

God is just and holy. He cannot tolerate sin. What was the greatest punishment of our forefather's sin? Isaiah 59:2; Rom. 5:12 _____

Only eternity will restore that perfect fellowship with God that Adam and Eve experienced in Paradise. 2. However, as

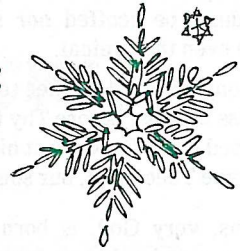
forgiven sinners, what is our blessed privilege? Rom. 5:1-2 _____

3. Discuss God's punishment of sin as He _____

THE POET OF CHRISTMAS:

Hans Adolph Brorson

by Donald Rodvold, Minneapolis, Minn.



Den store, hvite flokk vi se
Som tusen berge full av sne
Med skog omkring av palmesving,
For tronen hvem er de?
Det er den helteskare som
Av hin den store trengsel kom;
Og har seg todd I lammets blod
Til himlens helligdom.
Der hølde de ny kirkegang
I hoye Kor hvor Gud han bor
Blant alle englers sang.

No Scandinavian hymn except "How Great Thou Art" has attained such popularity in American circles as "Behold A Host." This sublime glory song was first given to the world after its author had gone to join the "host, arrayed in white" singing "before the throne of light."

Brorson, the son of a Lutheran pastor whose three sons all entered the service of the Church, was called to his rest and reward a year before this hymn and 69 others were published in a collection called **Hans Adolph Brorson's Swan-Song**. It is appropriate to peruse this hymn even at Christmas:

Behold, a host arrayed in white,
Like countless snow-clad mountains bright,
With palms they stand; who are this band
Before the throne of light?

Lo, these are they who overcame
Great tribulation in His name,
And with His blood the Lamb of God
Hath washed away their shame.

They now rejoice His face to see
And join in heaven's jubilee,
Where angels sing before the King
Their joyful symphony.

All 70 hymns in this swan-song were written in the last year of his life and are marked by their piety, spiritual concern and anticipation of the blessed life hereafter. Piety was the trademark of Brorson (The Poet of Christmas) in contrast to the more lofty, cerebral (and famous) Kingo (The Poet of Easter).

Consider the contrast:

Brorson

O seek the Lord today!
Today He hath salvation;
Turn from thy sinful way
In earnest supplication.
Repent and seek His grace,

His call to thee doth sound;
O turn to Him thy face
While yet He may be found.

Kingo

The sun arises now
In light and glory
And gilds the rugged brow
Of mountains hoary;
Be glad, my soul, and lift
Thy voice in singing
To God from earth below,
Thy heart with joy aglow,
And praises ringing.

One reason Brorson's hymns are included so frequently in the **Concordia** (10) is the subjective concern for salvation of souls. Many contain solemn warnings of the uncertainty of life and the need for salvation:

Death walks beside me everywhere;
Its shadows oft appall me.
I know not when the hour is here
When God from earth shall call me.

and

O seek the Lord today!
Today He hath salvation.
Approach Him while He may
Still hear thy supplication

But what of The Poet of Christmas? Brorson earned this reputation as a young pastor serving his second parish on Tonder, Denmark. He was sharing the work side by side with Johann Herman Schrader, a German pastor of the Pietist school in Halle, in a parish about half German and half Danish. Brorson was the preacher and he preached in Danish but most of their printed material, such as hymnbooks, came from the Continent so they sang in German! To remedy this Brorson wrote a number of his famous Christmas hymns:

Thy little ones, dear Lord, are we,
And come Thy lowly bed to see;
Enlighten every soul and mind,
That we the way to Thee may find.

This hymn we learn in our youth we'll retain a lifetime because it is childlike without being childish; it may be on our lips at life's end as well as its beginning. The poetry is without fault, unoffending to anyone. It is mature without being sophisticated and simple without being ba-

nal. "Enlighten every soul and mind, that we the way to Thee may find" is an example of excellent evangelism which cannot be scoffed nor scorned; its rendering can penetrate even the cynical.

With songs we hasten Thee to greet,
And kiss the dust before Thy feet;
O blessed hour, O sweetest night,
That gave Thee birth, our soul's delight.

If Jesus, very God, is born in a stable, who then are we? We can only demonstrate our lowliness by kissing the ground at His feet. What a fine expression of humility, and Brorson maintains this attitude and posture throughout this song and all his work.

O draw us wholly to Thee, Lord,
Do Thou to us Thy grace accord,
True faith and love to us impart,
That we may hold Thee in our heart.

Brorson based his text on Matthew 21:16: "... Have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABES THOU HAST PREPARED PRAISE FOR THYSELF?'"

This hymn is a splendid marriage of text and music. It has already demonstrated its permanence by serving every Scandinavian generation for 200 years. It will continue to penetrate crusty hearts and call to remembrance the peace and joys of other Christmases.

"Behold a Host" and "Thy Little Ones" provide an interesting example in contrast and similarity. The former is profound in its language and content and challenges one's mind and imagination in contemplation of the Christian's future. There is no generalization; it is pointed and distinct and explicit without being dogmatic.

"Thy Little Ones" is likewise dignified in content but its words are more common, its thoughts are more easily comprehended, its spirit childlike.

Both are blessed with a good marriage.

Probably without Edvard Grieg, Norway's greatest musician, "Den Store Hvite Flok" would be largely unknown. Grieg's setting, employing very distinctive Norwegian melody, harmony and rhythm, deserves credit for providing the vehicle by which the hymn was transported to the world.

Johann Abraham Peter Schulz composed the music for "Thy Little Ones." Born and schooled in Germany, he transplanted to Denmark and became aware of Brorson's poetry.

The music of each is very different. Schulz's music is Continental with a Danish flavor; however, the German influence is clear.

But Norway is too far removed to attract any of the German masters (a few ventured north of Copenhagen to Stockholm) and Grieg, although educated on the Continent and profoundly influenced by Mendelssohn, returned totally, in body, mind and spirit, to Norway. From there he reflected to the world the unique Norwegian music by employing folk-fragments and their peculiar musical devices. And Norwegian music remained indigenous.

(A related note of interest: There is ample evidence that polyphony—music with more than one part—originated in Norway. A recent history of Norwegian music by O. M. Sandvik, Gerhard Sjelderup and others presents the startling thesis which is substantiated by English and Welsh records from the 11th century.)

My preferences notwithstanding, the masterpiece award goes to neither "Behold A Host" nor "Thy Little Ones." That honor belongs to this gem:

I have found the fairest of roses,
'Mongst briars it sweetly reposes;
'Tis Jesus, my soul's dearest treasure,
Of sinners a friend beyond measure.

All men should with gladness forever
Give praises to God for His favor.
But many have not comprehended
The Rose to the world has descended.

E'er since the sad day when frail mortals
Were thrust from fair Eden's bright portals,
The world has been dark, full of terror,
And man, dead in sin, lost in error.

The world may of all things bereave me,
Its thorns may annoy and aggrieve me,
The foe may afflictions engender,
My Rose I will never surrender.

The song overwhelms in an ancient setting selected and arranged by F. M. Christiansen and it stands in our memories as a venerable patriarch which has served the church for generations.

Woes beset the Poet of Christmas in his latter life causing anguish and despair. Parted from his rewarded wife he returned to his birthplace, his hometown and his first pastorate, the surroundings he often sought when he had to do some clear thinking. His thoughts wafted toward heaven and "Behold A Host" was inspired.

But his duty was still on earth:

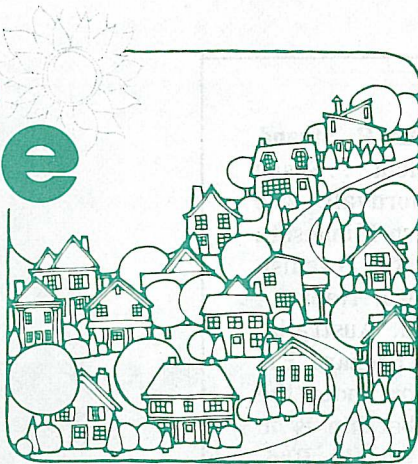
Behold the vineyard Thou hast tilled
With thorns and thistles filled.
'Tis true Thy plants are there;
But, oh, how weak and rare.

Come, Jesus, come and contemplate
The vineyard's sad estate:
Baptized are millions in Thy name,
But where is faith's pure flame?

But his anxiety drew his thoughts more and more toward heaven as in, "I See Thee Standing, Lamb of God":

Twelve times twelve thousand Thee acclaim,
Each with his harp in hand,
Upon their brow Thy Father's name
Makes known that happy band.
As voice of many waters rise
Their rapt'rous symphony;
To Thee who won us paradise
Eternal praises be.

Life on the Edge of Town



MEMORIES OF CHRISTMASES PAST

As adults, do we ever recapture the spirit of wonder and excitement we experienced as children, or does it all come under what Paul said, "When I was a child... I thought like a child"?

But I remember even now the magic of visits to two small-town hardware stores, in different towns and in different years, before Christmas, and looking with awe and desire at the display of toys. Some of those wondrous objects might become mine at Christmas, but which ones?

Do children today feel the same excitement as they wander by displays so much larger and more extravagant than those some of us knew? I suppose they do, but certainly no more than we did in a simpler day.

The times were hard in my childhood but Mother and Dad saw to it that we children each received some toy or some object of enjoyment beyond the ordinary at Christmas. As I look back, I wonder how they managed to do so and it must have meant some sacrifice for them some place because there was little to do with in those Depression years and after the Depression, when Mother was alone.

I remember the excitement of

Christmas Eve. It is still there, but again, not with a child's excitement. The day was always an extremely busy one around our home. No matter how much preparation had been made before, the hustle and bustle was tremendous.

The Christmas tree was never trimmed until that afternoon. Quite different from today when the trees begin appearing in homes any time after Dec. 1. I am old enough to remember the time when real candles were used instead of electric lights on trees, as Mrs. Faaborg describes in her recollections of Christmas in a Danish home elsewhere in this issue. How anyone dared to use them seems strange now, but we didn't have any mishap.

A Christmas Eve supper was like none other and that is still the case. Our family was very traditional as to the food eaten and the use of the heirloom candleholders, with their candles, for illumination. The evening's fare consisted of lutefisk with drawn butter, meatballs, boiled but unmashed potatoes, fruit soup, lefse and fattigmand, with a berry sauce for dessert. For one meal in the year, there was no other vegetable served.

Before the meal the Christmas Gospel from Luke 2 was read and prayer offered by Father or Mother. Christmas must always be remembered as

the birthday of Jesus.

Following the meal there was the opening of the gifts we exchanged with one another. What word to use beside "excitement" here, too. As parents watch their children today, they re-live their own childhood enthusiasm at Christmas.

Children not only receive at Christmas, but give as well. I recall a Christmas when my brother, who is younger, and I went uptown to Miller's Hardware Store and bought a set consisting of a nutcracker and six picks for one dollar as our gift to Mother. It seems a small thing now, but for us then it seemed quite a fine gift and I'm sure that she felt the same way.

And Christmas meant Sunday School programs and festival services. The program rehearsals weren't always an unmixed delight for the teachers, I'm sure. Not all the children were fully co-operative or put their hearts into the matter at hand. Sometimes parts had not been well-learned even by the last rehearsal.

Yet, when the time of the program came, all went reasonably well. We gained some measure of confidence from the subdued lighting in which the programs were always presented. Although I can't remember, I'm sure the smallest children drew the most smiles then, too, as I've seen in every program since. Somehow, through childish lips and the awkward self-consciousness of older children the message of the true meaning of Christmas came through to those who would listen.

And what child hasn't been made happy through the treats passed out after the program? Bags filled with peanuts, mixed nuts and candy, and a Delicious apple. Then there were the presents distributed by the older children. I remember the first present I received from a Sunday School teacher, a book about comedian Ed Wynn. Not a very suitable gift for a teacher to give, but that's what it was. (By the way, I did not go to Sunday School as early as most children, even though my father was a pastor. He served multiple rural parishes and this made it impossible to attend, but we were given good Bible instruction in our home.)

—Raynard Huglen

OUR WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

Lawrence C. Dynneson, Wesley Langaas and John P. Strand are pastors in the AFLC, the latter being the president . . . Susan M. Nordvall is the wife of Lay Pastor Gustav Nordvall, who serves Badger Creek and Oiland Churches in northern Minnesota . . . Edward A. Johnson, translator of the article by the Swedish author, Selma Lagerlof, is an LCA pastor at Ohiowa, Nebr . . . J. Perkins, a Lutheran pastor in North Queensland, Australia, is a former subscriber to the Ambassador . . . Mrs. Richard Erickson and her husband are missionaries to Ecuador under the World Mission Prayer League. Their church membership is in Westaker Lutheran Church, Newfolden, Minn. . . Donald Rodvold is the director of music at Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Minneapolis, Minn. . . Mrs. Max Christensen is a housewife whose husband is the chairman of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Dannebrog, Nebr. . . Of the living poets in this issue, Marlene Moline and Barbara Parsons are housewives and Dorothy Seaman attends AFLBS. Mr. E. I. Mork resides at Carbury, N. Dak. Mrs. Arnold McCarlson is a housewife and teacher in Eagle Butte, S. Dak. Some Christmas material was crowded out and will be published in the December 30 issue.

THE POEM OF THE WISE MEN

Across the blackened sky we watch
 The stars move into place.
 We know that God has called to us
 To cross the desert waste.
 Our ancient scrolls, they do not lie,
 We see His message in the sky
 And we must go in haste.
 We leave our pleasant palaces,
 We leave our loved ones all.
 We leave without a backward glance
 To answer to His call,
 To seek a tiny Child, a King;

Gold, frankincense and myrrh we
 bring
 Unto a manger stall.
 The world may deem us foolish men;
 We are wiser by far
 Than all the sages' arguments—
 We follow God's own star.
 More precious than earth's richest
 gold,
 It is God's kingdom that we hold,
 It is God's that we are.
 Marlene Moline
 Lansing, Iowa