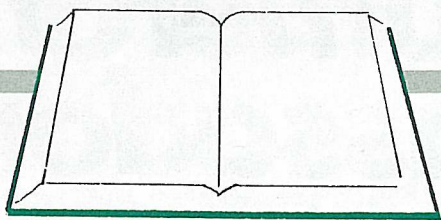


December 5, 1972

The Lutheran Ambassador



Christmas Choir
RNS Photo



According to the Word

THE KING CAME TO SUFFER FOR HIS PEOPLE

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

When, by the Spirit’s leading, Philip seated himself beside the Ethiopian eunuch and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”, the eunuch asked Philip, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?” The next verse tells us Philip’s answer: “And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.” The Scripture he was reading was the portion of Isaiah 53 which speaks of the Servant of God who was to voluntarily suffer and die as a sacrifice for the sins of His people. Isaiah speaks of Him in several other passages as well. I suggest you read the following: Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-4. You will see that He suffers shameful abuse, terrible suffering and death. The mission for which He was born and which He accomplished is to make His truth known to the world. Through patient obedience despite cruel mistreatment, suffering and hardship, He fulfills His mission. In this way He triumphs over His enemies and in the end is exalted and lifted up.

Philip could preach Jesus to the eunuch because the One Isaiah spoke of had been born and had gone on

to fulfill His mission. Christmas therefore is the one birthday whose importance cannot be rivalled in all the calendar of human history. Man of all the ages had been awaiting the coming of a Savior ever since God, within hearing of Adam and Eve, promised the tempter that the descendant of the woman would crush his head (Genesis 3:15).

That Savior has come! He came on that day the Gospels tell us about when, in fulfillment of prophecy, a virgin conceived by the power of God the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. Because of what we might call the paradox of divine love, Jesus, the almighty King, gave up divine glory and came to earth to suffer abuse, shame and a criminal’s death at the hands of sinful men. He is God, yet He came as a man to live the perfect life God’s holiness required of mankind. Then, though perfectly innocent of any wrongdoing, He took upon Himself all of mankind’s sin and suffered the penalty for sin God’s holy wrath had imposed on all who violated His will. Pastor Trygve F. Dahle, Sr. has expressed it so well in his song, “**Christmas Comes Each Year**”: ‘Verses two and three)

“Unto us a Child was born / On that early Christmas morn; / Unto us a Son was giv’n, / God, Himself come down from heav’n.

“God so loved the world, He gave / Jesus Christ, the lost to save; / Thus

He came, He lived, He died, / Now our God is satisfied.”

Each year that passes brings a deeper appreciation of God’s unspeakable gift.

In the Beatitude we are centering our meditation on today, the King promises the blessings of His kingdom to all His loyal subjects who suffer because they are heirs of God’s righteousness through Him. Jesus said (Luke 6:40), “A pupil (disciple) is not above his teacher . . .”, and (John 15:18), “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” If we follow Him we will encounter the same enemy He encountered. Everyone who hates Him will hate us. We should expect that. But the words of Jesus, as well as other Scriptures, offer encouragement and many promises to those who face persecution for His sake.

“Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12). See also I Peter 3:14, 17; 4:16, 19; 2:19; Romans 8:16-18; II Timothy 2:12; 3:12.

The kingdom Jesus came to establish **WILL** be opposed; so will His ambassadors. Let us rejoice in this, for He will be glorified!

—Howard M. Kjos
(All Scripture is from the NASB.)

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The Light in the Prison Window

It was Christmas eve in the year of Our Lord 1805. In a dark cell in the jail in Christiania (now Oslo, Norway), a prisoner sat with folded hands and looked wistfully into the dim light that fell through a little window looking out upon "Town Hall Street" (Raadhusgaden). He turned a pale, but exquisitely tender face towards the door, as he heard the key being inserted; then the door creaked open, and in the doorway stood the jailer, sword by his side and a lantern in his left hand.

"You must come with me," said the jailer. "The Chief of Police wants to talk with you."

The prisoner arose and followed, as he breathed a deep sigh.

They went the whole length of the corridor, when the jailer opened the door of the court room, and the prisoner faced the Chief of Police and an Assistant Judge (Assessor), both sitting at a table.

"Come nearer," said the Chief of Police in a mild voice, and slowly the prisoner moved from the darkness near the door into the daylight of Christmas Eve which came in through the large window.

The Assistant Judge scrutinized the prisoner closely. He saw standing before him a man of about thirty-four years, well-built, broad-shouldered, not quite five and a half feet tall, with rather long, auburn hair, a pale face, but with large, tired, greyish-blue eyes, out of which a peculiar mildness of soul seemed to shine.

"So you are Hauge," said the Judge in a dry voice, though some of its wonted aristocratic harshness seemed to give way before the calm look of the prisoner.

"Yes, I am he," answered the prisoner in his warm, rich voice.

After a moment of silence, the Chief of Police told Hans Nielsen Hauge—for he it was, this prisoner in chains who on this Christmas Eve was taken before these two men—that Mr. Collett, the Assistant Judge, was to take the place of Mr. Wulfsberg, the Chief of Police, as a member of the Commission that should investigate the case of "Hauge vs. the Government of Denmark and Norway."

"Your case is a very intricate one," said the judge. "It will assume large proportions."

"Yes," answered Hauge calmly, "it is a big case, and it will grow ever bigger and bigger."

Mr. Collett looked sharply at Hauge. "That is just what we fear," he said.

Hans Neilsen Hauge made a step forward.

"That the Word of God takes hold of the people, is nothing to be afraid of," he said. "If it had taken hold of the people all through Norway, I should gladly die right here."

Hauge said this in a firm, but calm voice.

The two functionaries exchanged glances.

They began to experience a peculiar sensation. It dawned upon them that

they were in the presence of a spirit stronger than their own.

"I understand that you have faith in your cause," said Mr. Collett.

"Indeed I have," said Hauge.

"And you are not afraid of the result."

Hauge smiled. "No," he said, "I have too good a defender to fear anything."

The Judge looked at the Chief of Police.

"What defender?" he said, as he turned to Hauge.

A wonderful light came into the prisoner's eyes.

"Your Honor certainly knows that," he said.

"No," the Judge retorted sharply, "I do not know who is to defend you."

Hauge looked at the judge.

"That's too bad," Hauge said. "God is my defender and helper, Your Honor." There was a peculiar charm in Hauge's voice as he said this.

"Oh, well," said the Judge, "anyone may say that."

"No," Hauge answered, "everybody cannot say that. Would to God it were so!"

Mr. Wulfsberg looked at the floor. The Judge was silenced.

After a pause, Mr. Collett again spoke.

"I suppose you think we make rather slow progress with your case," he said.

"Yes," Hauge admitted, "time is long when you have nothing to do. But," he added sorrowfully, "it is

worse for those who are waiting for me. There are so many who need a little help."

The eyes of the Judge looked fiercely at Hauge.

"So you think you are the only one who can preach the Word of God in Norway?"

Hauge shook his head sadly.

"I am not as conceited as all that," he answered. "But it may be that I am one of a few that know how to speak to the common man. I, myself, am but a common man, only a common farmer. I know the condition of the people, and they understand my language."

"Perhaps," said the Judge, "you did more good (sic) if you worked as a farmer, and left the preaching of the Word of God to the ministers!"

An expression of deep sorrow clouded Hauge's face as he answered mildly: "Yes, that is the way it ought to be; but too many of the ministers preach only a dead knowledge. For that reason there are so many empty churches throughout the land, while the dance halls and other indecent places are filled with our young people."

As the Judge did not answer, the chief of police looked at Hauge and said: "The ministers are busy in a rightful calling. So ought you to be."

Hauge looked him full in the eye as he said: "The apostles of Christ were neither scribes nor pharisees, but just ordinary fishermen; yet Christ called them to preach the Gospel."

Mr. Collett's face reddened.

"So you consider yourself an equal of the apostles," he said sharply.

Hauge met his eye, in his peculiar gentle way, as he answered, "I should like so much to be a disciple of Christ and obey His commandment."

The two functionaries were completely silenced. Where did this man get his confidence, his calmness, his self-possession, his almost spell-binding power?

Finally the Judge promised Hauge that his case would be investigated with all possible speed, for which Hauge thanked him, and as he was leaving the room to return to his cell he said to Mr. Wulfsberg and to Mr. Collett: "May God bless you and give you a joyful Christmas."

Passing through the corridor, he noticed two men whom he knew. They were just coming up the stairs. He wanted to stop, but the jailer urged him on.

Hauge breathed a deep sigh.

"God bless them for that," he said softly to himself. Soon after, Hauge was again in his cold, barren, dismal cell, the door was locked, and a tallow candle burned on the table where stood some coarse prison-fare.

It was Christmas Eve.

Shortly after, as the Chief of Police in company with the Judge passed out of the town-hall, they met two strangers at the gate. The strangers looked questioningly at the two functionaries.

"What do you wish?" said Mr. Wulfsberg.

One of them, Ole Roersveen, whose back had become bent from carrying Hauge's books over the mountains, removed his hat, and asked softly whether it would be possible to speak to Hans Nielsen Hauge.

The Chief of Police looked straight at him.

"No," he said, "that wouldn't do."

The little man with a bent back stood hat in hand before the Chief of Police and said in a pleading voice, "Only a couple of words."

"No, no," said the Chief of Police. "By the way, where are you from?"

"From Bergen," said the one with the bent back.

"Do you come by sea?"

"No, sir, we have footed it across the mountains."

"And for what purpose?"

"Just to meet Hans Nielsen Hauge."

The Chief of Police had difficulty in controlling his voice. Something rose in his throat. He turned his eyes away for a moment. Then suddenly recovering his wonted calmness he said, "Sorry, but it is against the law."

The little man with a bent back stood a while, then he slowly put on his hat and looked at his companion, Samson Traae, also from Bergen, — a long, hopeless look. Then they turned and left.

But Mr. Wulfsberg felt suddenly that something was wrong with his necktie, it seemed somehow too tight.

"This is touching," he said to Mr.

Collett, as they walked away.

People who were out Christmas shopping met the two officials, as they proceeded up Town Hall street and swung into Church street (Kirkegaden).

"I wish you a joyful Christmas, Mr. Wulfsberg," said the Judge.

"May I wish you the same, Your Honor," said Mr. Wulfsberg.

They parted.

Hans Nielsen Hauge sat with his head bent. He had not touched his food. The little candle burned steadily.

This night, the night of the Savior, the great festival of mercy, how terribly lonely he felt! How bitter was this confinement within prison walls while all the world sang out its joy because a Savior had been born, and all the bells sent their beautiful chimes through the snow-filled air!

Was it God's purpose to leave him here all the rest of his days?

"I am the Light and the Life," it answered deep down in his soul.

"Yes, yes," he whispered, "Thy will be done."

Then he remembered the faces of his two friends. They had walked the long way across the mountains, from Bergen to Christiania, in the middle of winter, just to speak a few words with him. But the prison door was shut.

And all the thousands who needed him were unable to see him, while he had to sit idly in his cell, alone, in darkness—never to see the sun any more, never to look into happy faces any more! "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" he said in his bitter grief.

He would not be permitted to fulfill his work. Nor would he ever bow his head in death and be able to say, "Lord, it is finished!"

Hans Nielsen Hauge, the strong, mild, God-fearing man, burst into tears. Presently his soul trembled in prayer. Like a child he prayed for light in the darkness, for salvation from sin and temptation, for comfort in his deep sorrow.

Then he heard the far-off chimes of Christmas bells, first one, then another, then more and more, till the air seemed filled with music.

Hauge fell on his knees. A wonderful

(Continued on page 22)



A Christmas Bonus

by Mrs. Wm. Farrier
Minneapolis, Minn.

"Just my luck—it doesn't even look like snow for Christmas!" Maria walked slowly toward Jefferson Street. The wind pushed small clouds of dirt around in circles (dried smog, Henry Olson had called it in school one day) and piled up old newspapers, candy wrappers and dead weeds against any handy fence. Maria was thankful for the bulky, home-knit stockings which her mother had insisted she wear, even though there had been some quizzical stares at school and also at the store where she had been working a few hours a week to get money for Christmas.

Maria thought about her "big talk" of getting presents for all her family this year. She wished she hadn't been so **mouthy** about it. And this would have been the first year she had ever had any money of her own to get gifts for her family. Other years—Maria stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, remembering. She remembered back—over two years ago now—to times in another country, another world, where Christmases came and went without gifts, without hope, with nothing but Father's saying, "Our gifts to each other this Christmas will be each other. We will thank God that we are still together as a family. And we will give each other a bit of the Lord today."

Maria crossed the street that was only one block from home. Father would understand why she had to take the money she had saved out of that old beaded purse in the bottom drawer of her dresser—\$13.59 in all. Funny how plans sort of explode—or fall apart. She had a list all made out. Two dollars for that lovely, lovely pin for Mother; \$3.98 for a pair of warm gloves for Father; \$1.98 for a set of those plastic blocks for baby

Paul; and \$3.00 for the special paint brush Juris wanted. Maria sighed. It would have been fun!

But then there would have been no one to help Jane. Maria got a warm feeling remembering how nice Jane had looked in the skirt and sweater—those lovely browns and soft oranges against Jane's soft brown skin. Maria had been reminded of that beautiful brown moth she had seen at the lake.

She kicked at a twig in her path. Eleven dollars. That was quite a lot of money to spend on the skirt and sweater. And it left just enough money to get baby Paul those blocks, with a little change left over.

Maria turned in at the gate which stood opened before a neat white house in which lights were lit, although it was only 4:30 in the afternoon. Stupid weather for Christmas Eve—windy, cold, dirty.

Out loud she called, "Hello, Mother," as she opened the door.

"Oh, Maria! I'm glad you're a little early. There seems to be quite a lot of things to do just now. I'd like to have supper about 5:30 so we can have a nice relaxed time to exchange gifts before the services at church."

Mrs. Eikens was a small dark woman. In her brown eyes, soft yet direct, could be read knowledge of suffering, but also a sweet calm that was reflected in her quiet way of speaking.

"Anyone home?" The big voice of Father filled the small house.

"We're here!" Mrs. Eikens came out of the kitchen looking warm and tired, but content. "My, the time does go by quickly. Supper is nearly ready. We will eat soon."

Father Eikens kissed his small wife and flicked a speck of flour off her nose. They smiled at each other, a smile that excluded all the world.

"My, you seem to be gay this evening. What has happened?"

"Isn't Christmas Eve the time to be gay? If something has happened, you will hear in due time—in due time."

"Such mystery!" Mother laughed. "But, I suppose Christmas Eve is the time for mystery, too. Well, here is Juris. Just finishing your Christmas shopping today?"

A tall, slender, young reproduction of Father Eikens had come in, carrying a single package.

"Oh, hello, you two. Ah—yes—just finishing shopping."

"Well, it does look interesting," Mother teased, as Juris hung his coat in the closet. He did not answer his mother, but made his way to his room with the package wedged firmly between arm and body.

It was a good supper. It was a supper which became a bridge of memory, a bridge to other years in another land—memory of privation and heartache, of hunger and fear; memory of broken people, broken in spirit and in body and mind.

"I can see that memory crowds close behind your eyes, Mother," Father spoke slowly. "God has been good to us. We have not deserved what He has provided. Let us use it wisely, always remembering."

When supper was cleared away the Eikens family moved into the living room, where the Christmas tree stood tall and beautiful.

"It seems it is time for us each to bring forth the gifts which have until this moment been so very cleverly hidden." Father smiled, making no move to get up.

"Yes, I guess so," Juris said, hesitantly, not moving either.

"Well—let's go," Mother started toward the front closet. "I have mine in here." Maria was puzzled. She had certainly not seen any pile of gifts in that closet. She rather slowly went to get baby Paul's blocks. "Dear Lord, You know I love them and everything—help me to make them understand," she prayed silently, as she brought her offering back to the tree.

Juris was just coming from his room carrying a gift. Maria looked at him questioningly. Mother was already back seated by the tree, and she had one package on her lap.

Father had not moved, but was taking a very small package from his pocket.

"Is this—ah—all?" Father Eikens looked from one to the other of his family. Each looked at someone else. Mother obviously had a wonderful secret. Juris was embarrassed. Maria was puzzled. Baby Paul was the only one who seemed to be his natural self, sitting on the floor in the circle of the family.

Father looked at his wife. "Shall we begin with you?"

Mother sat up straight in her chair. "When I first began working part-time at the church, I had a heart full of plans of wonderful Christmas gifts for my family. You would have loved them!" She paused, holding up the gayly wrapped package. "I even began my shopping—with this. Then, when the pastor asked me to continue on, I thought—good, then I would have some extra money each month. But then it seemed sort of selfish to use that money for extra things when there are so many orphans in the world who have such desperate needs. So, I agreed to send some money each month to care for one of those orphans, and they call it a sort of 'adoption.' This has taken quite a bit out of my planned treasury, and when they had that terrible flood in Japan, I felt that I should help somehow. The only way I could help was with money, so I sent the rest of what I had saved there."

Mother reached into a pocket and took out a snapshot. "So-o, my gift to all of you this Christmas is a new brother! This is his picture. This package is for baby Paul. He happened to be first on my list." She placed the box by the little boy on the floor.

"That is a lovely gift, Mother!" exclaimed Maria.

Juris grinned, "Thanks, Mom."

"Well, I should think you would consult me if we are to have an addition to our family." Everyone laughed at Father.

When things quieted down, Father looked at Juris.

"Uh—you see—there was this guy who came into Jack's Grocery when I was working. He came in every day and bought just a little of something—like one weiner and two carrots and one potato. After a while

I got to talking with him. He's from India and so he's pretty lonely, and glad to talk to someone. He attends the U, but he was afraid he would have to drop out because he didn't have enough money. So I—I kinda—well, I gave him most of the money I made at the store. He didn't want to take it at first, but then I said he could consider it a loan if that would make him feel better." Juris brought out the package he had brought with him home that evening. "I seem to have a present for baby Paul, too."

Maria gave Juris a hug. "Thanks, Brother, for that Christmas present of caring. Actually, my story is much the same." And Maria told about the beautiful sweater and skirt which took most of the money she had been saving to buy presents. Then she put her package for baby Paul down on the floor beside him, and Father beamed.

"I would have to say that you have all given me the nicest presents I have ever received on any Christmas Eve," He said quietly. "God has blessed me with a generous, sensitive family, and I am grateful. And your giving this year has certainly reflected the Christ of Bethlehem, for He said, 'As you have done it unto the least... you have done it unto Me.'"

"It doesn't really seem all that great," Juris said.

"Oh, but it isn't the greatness, or the muchness of the gift that counts with God. It is the spirit—that spirit of sweetness and generosity and open-handedness that Christ looks for—and loves." Father was untying the string that bound the small package he had taken from his coat pocket.

"Now, here is my Christmas gift to you all. And I will have to say that it does not match in any way what you have all given me this day."

Father Eikens took from the small package a folded paper. "The department heads at work decided that certain personnel should share a bonus this Christmas time. My share of that bonus is this check which I want to give to all of you for Christmas."

Later, as the Eikens joined with others in singing the carols of Christmas at the church, Maria leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Hasn't this been the nicest Christmas?" Mother, with tears shining in her

quiet brown eyes, whispered back, "The very nicest!"

And as they filed out of the church, the strains of "Joy to the World" echoing in hearts and minds, they were suddenly aware of a new sharpness and moistness in the Christmas air.

Maria said in a loud whisper, "Isn't it great?—it's snowing!"

Father said softly, "It is really great, Maria. God is cleaning up our city for the birthday of His Son—like He cleans up our hearts for His birthday in us."

Maria hugged her warm coat around her as she stepped out into Christmas Day—clean and sparkly cold outside; warm and secure within.

A CHRISTMAS WELCOME

We welcome you, people,
We're glad that you're here;
We hope that our program
Will bring Christmas cheer;
Cheer that will last for a year and
a day—
We certainly hope that it may.

Even though there're packages under
the tree,
That's not all Christmas is, you see,
For in Bethlehem's lowly manger
The Christ Child lay,
And every year at Christmas
We worship Him and pray.

Last of all, there is one thing for you
to hear:

"Have a Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year!"

Nancy Moe
Grafton, N. Dak.



SILENT NIGHT

JOSEPH MOHR

FRANZ GRUBER

Who Wrote Our Christmas Carols?

by Barbara Overton Christie

Every family has its special Christmas traditions, but throughout the Christian world there is one aspect of the holiday that binds all people together. This is the heritage of Christmas hymns, or carols, which we in America share with those in many other lands.

Some of our carols are so familiar it seems we must have been born knowing them. Did you ever stop to wonder just where some of them originated, how old they are, how they came to be part of our modern celebration?

Until the early part of the 16th century the only music in church services was performed by a priest or special choirs. The congregation took no part in the singing, and the common people understood little of the service, which was all in Latin.

In the year 1483 a son was born to the wife of a poor miner in Eisleben, Germany. From earliest youth

this boy, Martin Luther, showed musical talent, and he loved to sing as well as play the flute and lute. As he grew older, Luther became interested in religious music, and he believed that if people could sing hymns in their everyday language. God's Word would be brought home to them with greater meaning.

Luther was ordained a priest of the Catholic Church in 1507 and began his work as a religious reformer about 10 years afterwards. While in later years he was known chiefly as the leader of the great Protestant movement which broke with the Church of Rome, he is also known as "the father of congregational singing." Some like to say that he did as much for religion through his hymn writing as through his translating and preaching of the Bible in the common language of the people. The first Protestant hymnal was published in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1524, and of the eight hymns in the collection,

four were by Luther himself. Within the next 20 years hymns became so popular that 117 collections of them were published, most of them composed by Luther and his associates.

In 1522 Luther married Catharine von Bora, a former nun. With six children of their own, the Luthers also cared for several nieces and nephews and a number of poor students. His love of children shines forth in many of Luther's hymns, especially in the familiar "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come," written for his own children for the Christmas festival of 1534, words and tune being composed by Luther himself.

After Luther's death a portion of the Protestant Church became very strict, and the hymns which had become so popular, especially the happy hymns, or carols, were frowned on by the church leaders. At the beginning of the 18th century the only songs allowed in worship services were rhymed versions of the Psalms.



Wise Men from the East Came to Worship Him
Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

One line at a time was read out by a clerk. The people would sing that line, then wait for the clerk to read the next.

Then, nearly 200 years after Luther, another man took up the cause of hymns for the common people. Isaac Watts, born in England in 1674, showed his talent for verse writing at an early age. Once during family prayers he was rebuked for laughing out loud. He explained that he had seen a mouse run up a rope by the fireplace, and these words came into his mind:

“A mouse for want of better stairs
Ran up a rope to say his prayers.”

Not long afterwards young Isaac composed his first hymn, entitled “Behold the Glories of the Lamb.” This was welcomed so eagerly by the people in his church, who were weary of the old Psalms, that Watts felt encouraged to write others. In 1707 the first hymnal in the English language, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, was published, and nearly all 210 hymns in the volume were by

Watts. His songs spread across the Atlantic Ocean and came to the attention of Benjamin Franklin in America. The first book from Franklin’s printing press was *Watt’s Psalms and Hymns*, in 1741.

Although Watts never married, he (like Luther) loved children and wrote many hymns especially for them. His song “Hush, My Dear, Lie Still and Slumber” is one of the best-loved lullabies of all time and is sung at Christmas around the world.

In 1719 Watts wrote another Christmas hymn of a different type: “Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come!” This was set to music by another great German, George Frederick Handel, the composer of the famous oratorio *The Messiah*, with its immortal “Hallelujah Chorus.” Handel was the son of a barber who heartily disliked music and was determined that young George should be a lawyer. Luckily for our religious and musical heritage, the boy persisted in his musical study in secret, and by the age of 11 could play four instruments

and had already finished several original compositions.

In 1707 another child was born in England who was destined to carry on the writing of hymns for the Protestant Church. Charles Wesley, who “took up the harp of Watts,” was ordained a minister in the Church of England in 1735. He experienced a religious conversion 3 years later, and with his brother John began traveling all over England, preaching and singing. With the Wesley brothers the modern Methodist Church found its beginning. Church of England services had for years been too formal and stately to appeal to the farmers, laborers, miners, and shopkeepers. Charles Wesley’s hymns reached the hearts of these people, and today they are sung not only in Methodist churches but in Christian churches of all denominations.

In 1739 Wesley first wrote his beautiful “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing.” Revised in 1743, this has become not only one of the most famous of all

(Continued on page 23)



Christmas Memories from Boyhood Days

by A. O. Lee
Devils Lake, N. Dak.

I wish to tell about how we got ready for Christmas when I was a country school boy on my parents' farm near the present town of Newfolden, Minnesota, in the northwestern part of the state. My father filed on a homestead in this community in 1882 and for many years kept an inland store and post office called Humboldt. The coming of the Soo Line Railway into Newfolden in 1904 brought on many changes but it did not change the spirit of thrift, hospitality and friendliness of the people. Those who pioneered here were mostly immigrants from Norway and Sweden. They showed an early concern about the welfare of their children and soon built schools and churches. They had learned to know the true meaning of Christmas from early childhood and wanted to share the Christmas spirit with others, as given in the Angel's message to the Judaeen shepherds that first Christmas Eve, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

As I look back to my boyhood days now I can better understand why my

parents and others in our rural community were extra busy for weeks before Christmas. Many wished to take trips to the larger towns for their Christmas shopping, which meant a long journey in those "horse and buggy days." Then there was hay, feed and wood to haul before the more severe winter weather set in.

I well remember how Mother and my sister Margit were busy with a number of things in getting ready for the holidays. It called for the processing of meat products on the farm, baking required time and skill, house-cleaning was of great importance, and there was a certain amount of decorating done in the living rooms, etc. Some of the meat was processed into products such as headcheese, pork sausage, blood sausage, pickled pigs' feet, dried beef, "sylte" and "rulle pølse." A sizeable portion of the meat was well salted and stored in large earthen crocks.

I remember that Mother wanted only the very best wood when she was busy baking lefse and flat bread on top of the large kitchen range. I enjoyed being around the kitchen when this baking was going on as it gave me a better chance to get in on the good eats. She made fattigman, krumkake and many other Christmas cookies, pies, doughnuts, puddings and breads.

My mother learned the art of cheese making when a milk-maid at the Høllø saeter in Nes, Hallingdal, Norway. She generally had about two or more dozen large blue cheeses stored in our cellar for Christmas and winter consumption. There was pult-ost, prim-ost, gammel-ost and cottage cheese. It has been said that "cleanliness is next to Godliness," and my parents followed the good Norwegian custom that required a thorough housecleaning before Christmas. The floors, chairs, etc., received extra scrubbing. The carpets, cupboards, lanterns, hanging and other lamps, kitchen hardware, etc., had to be washed. Furniture had to be polished and all dress apparel had to be cleaned and pressed. Some of the colorful Christmas decorating included many red and white Christmas bells hanging from the ceiling. Large white and red candles were placed on stands in the two large rooms.

As I recall it, our Christmas tree was brought home about two or three days before Christmas Eve. I remember seeing the tree as it was hauled on top of some heavy logs. I was curious about it and watched Dad with alertness as he made a beautiful stand for it. It was indeed well selected from the spruce forest. Then it was to trim the tree. My sister Margit and my brother Sam did excellent work in trimming the tree. Beautiful shining ornaments in many colors were hung on the branches. Shining tinsels in gold and silver were spread throughout the branches. A shining silver star was placed at the top. Many pictures of angels, the three Wise Men, the Manger Scene and others were on the tree. Strings of popcorn balls, strings of cranberries, and colored links as of a chain were strung around the tree. Candle holders were fastened throughout the branches with colored candles added. After lighting the candles we were highly pleased over having set up a most colorful tree.

On the following day my mother and sister Margit were busy wrapping up gift packages to be left near the



The Ole Lee family. Back row, left to right, Inga, Olaf, Adolph, Sam, George and Margit. Front row, Mother, Othelia and Father.

tree. The wrapping paper was green, white, red, or blue and a card was fastened to each package and listed the name of the giver and the receiver. I became very curious about the contents of each package.

The following day we enjoyed a Christmas tree program in our one-room country school in the late afternoon. We had a merry time, sang the usual Christmas carols, had readings and plays. I took part in a dialog which I enjoyed immensely. We were treated to a large paper sack of candies and nuts and about two apples each. Christmas gifts were distributed. We all had a very good time and really got into the Christmas spirit.

It was in the mid-forenoon of the day of Christmas Eve that we expected our two brothers, George and Olaf, and sister, Inga, to arrive. Brother Sam was to meet them at the nearby station of Holt, Minn. Olaf came from Bismarck, N. Dak., where he worked for the Northern Pacific R.R., and Inga and George were attending school in Thief River Falls, Minn. I can still see my brother take off in an open sleigh and driving our fastest horses, Prince and Daisy. We were all on the lookout for his return. I remember hearing the sleigh bells and seeing the folks as they neared our home. Mother and Dad and the rest of us were there to bid a big welcome to our three family members who had been absent. It meant so much to share the Christmas festivities together.

Christmas Eve was of special interest to all of us. Everyone was eager to help with the work. The barn chores were done earlier than usual. I brought in my wood from the woodshed ahead of schedule. My oldest sister and Mother planned an early dinner and they had prepared a menu of traditionally Norwegian Christmas food.

When everyone in the family had performed their tasks and were well dressed for the Christmas Eve dinner, we sensed that there would be extra activity in the kitchen. Mother and my three sisters, Inga, Margit, and Othelia, didn't waste much time in getting the dishes and food on the table. All the men were in the living room when mother came to tell us

that dinner was ready to be served. In a very short time we were all seated by the attractive dinner table. Here we found the best linens and dishes in use. A beautiful chandelier hanging lamp was lighted and hanging above the table. Large white candles were lighted and on the table. Father was seated at the head of the table and led us in devotions. He read from the Gospel of Luke the beautiful Christmas story about the birth of Jesus. We were all most attentive as we listened to the greatest of all stories. He closed the reading with a prayer, after which in unison we read the table prayer—"I Jesu Navn Gaar Vi Til Bords," (In Jesus' Name We Sit at Meat).

Again I was convinced that lutefisk served with melted butter and lefse is very tasty. Flatbread, herring, "rulle pølse," blue cheese and many other good foods made our dinner a banquet feast. Our conversation was of a cheerful nature and Father told us a good deal about how they celebrated Christmas in Norway. Much was also said about our relatives in Norway and in the United States. We often wished we could visit the land of the Midnight Sun. Mother told about Christmas in the early Eighties when the first settlers came to Folden township, and also told about the true meaning of Christmas.

After a delicious meal the ladies got busy cleaning off the table and then had the dishes washed. The men went to the living room where they pondered on many things, mostly about the Christmas activities that had been planned. We were now waiting to hear that the ladies were through with the kitchen work for the evening. I was a happy boy when Mother came to tell us that we were now all ready to go on with our Christmas tree exercises. I knew this meant that the presents would soon be distributed. We joined hands and marched around the tree singing Norwegian carols, "Her Kommer Dine Arme Smaa" (Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We), and others. My sister Othelia and I gave the Christmas readings we had learned in the public school and in Sunday School. Sister Margit gave a talk on what Christmas meant to her. My sisters Inga and Margit now distributed the gifts.

After the distribution we took our turns to find out what the contents were. This was really exciting for me. I got a pair of skates, Othelia got a play set of dishes, a doll, a picture puzzle and dominoes. Mother got a knitted hood. I got a top, trumpet, and a pair of red mittens. Yes, everyone was well awarded and remembered.

The next morning we rode in an open sleigh to Folden Church where we met many of our neighbors and friends. It inspired me to see so many in church and to be greeted with "A Merry Christmas" or "Gladelig Jul." The Christmas setting impressed me and the Christmas tree was most beautiful.

The morning worship began with a prelude played by my sister Margit, who was the church organist. This was followed by a hymn sing by the congregation. The Folden choir under the leadership of Rev. Martin Bjornson, local pastor, now sang. Everyone was most attentive as Rev. Bjornson gave his sermon on "God's Love to Man," when He sent His Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior. After this Joy to the World message we enjoyed a hymn-sing by the congregation that was followed by the Pastor giving the benediction.

During the rest of the holidays we enjoyed many visits back and forth among our neighbors. Everyone was most hospitable and the best meals were served.

On the following Sunday afternoon we had our congregational Christmas tree program where many of the children and young people participated. The fellowship was wonderful. Everyone shared good eats, such as candy, nuts, apples and popped corn.

We are most thankful to our parents and the early pioneers who gave us a Christian heritage and may we not forget to pass it on to the generations ahead.

* * *

"Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world, stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—and that the blessed life that began nineteen hundred years ago in Bethlehem is the image and brightness of eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas."

—Henry Van Dyke



The Visited Planet

by Pastor Francis W. Monseth
Brentwood, Missouri

Luke 1:68-79

As you read this, the world is witnessing another visit to the moon by American astronauts, the final one in the current series of space trips. The nearly half-million mile round trip is treated almost indifferently by a world which has become accustomed to the feat of men walking on the moon.

Not only is the moon now a "visited place." This earth also has been visited. That visit took place less than 2,000 years ago by our wonderful Savior. His miraculous arrival on planet earth is in central focus again this Christmas as Christians throughout the world celebrate His birth.

PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT

The press prepared the American public for the current moon visit by announcing the plans and participants beforehand. God, by His Holy Spirit, sought to prepare His people by giving many details concerning the promised visit by His Son through the prophets of the Old Testament. The first announcement was made to Adam and Eve just after the Fall and is recorded by Moses in Genesis 3:15. Jesus, the "seed of the woman," was to come and "bruise the head of the serpent"—to deal Satan a mortal blow—which He did at the cross.

Through Micah (5:2) the exact place of the visit's beginning was foretold. The "everlasting ruler in Israel" who was to be born in Bethlehem was Jesus. The manner of the visit's beginning was prophesied by Isaiah (7:14). The Messiah, Jesus Christ, was to be born of a virgin and He was to be called Immanuel—"God with us." Many other events con-

cerning the first coming of Jesus were predicted hundreds of years before Christ was born, and all have been fulfilled to the letter. These specific prophecies and their literal fulfillment attest to the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

An announcement was made just prior to the birth of the Savior by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and is recorded in the text before us. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people" . . . "the dayspring from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:68, 78). The results of that first visit of the Son of God have been preached about, written about, debated and discussed more than any other single event in history.

This is our message this Christmas. God has visited this planet in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. But has He visited your life through His wonderful salvation? Has your life been wonderfully altered because Christ has not only visited but has been permitted to abide as Master of your life?

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

The stated purpose of American moon visits has been to learn more about the moon through gathering samples of the surface, and performing a variety of scientific experiments. Much has been added to man's knowledge of the moon—the moon which "thou (God) hast ordained" (Psalm 8:3).

God visited this earth in the Person of His Son with the express purpose of redeeming His people, Zacharias said (Luke 1:68). Jesus came to "buy back," to restore, to make reconciliation between holy God and sinful man. The price of that redemption was the blood of Christ shed on the cross for

you and for me.

Christ came to raise up "an horn of salvation for us" (Luke 1:69). The "horn" speaks of power and reminds us of the mighty salvation of Christ. He is able to deliver us from the bonds of sin. A man remarked that if he should accept Christ's salvation, he would not be able to hold out. It is true that in ourselves we can't "hold out" but as we receive Christ, He gives us "power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Our strong Savior will be our strength.

Another purpose of Christ's visit is that we may be "saved from our enemies" . . . "delivered out of the hand of our enemies" (Luke 1:71, 74). Our threefold enemy is the Devil, the world, and our own flesh and Christ has provided victory for us over this awesome threesome. Deliverance belongs to us moment by moment as we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God (Romans 6:11).

Zacharias also announced that Christ's visit was to "perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant" (Luke 1:72). Jesus fulfilled the promise made to the people of Israel that the Messiah would come. God keeps His promises. He cannot lie. He will not lie to us as He gives us His promises in His Holy Word. We can trust Him completely to fully perform what He has promised. Praise His wonderful Name!

Christ came to redeem us—for a purpose! Zacharias declared that purpose: "that we might serve him without fear" (Luke 1:74). If you are truly redeemed this Christmas season, no matter what your age or circumstances, you have been given a commission to serve Jesus Christ. John Eliot, on the day of his death, in his eightieth year, was found teaching

the alphabet to an Indian child at his bedside. "Why not rest from your labors?" asked a friend. "Because," said Eliot, "I have prayed to God to make me useful to the close of my earthly pilgrimage, and He has heard my prayer. Now that I can no longer preach, He leaves me strength enough to teach this poor child his alphabet."

The nature of this service to Christ is "holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:75). Its freedom lies in our "being delivered out of the hand of our enemies" (Luke 1:74). We may serve the Lord without fear of man as we daily claim the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ came, Zacharias prophesied, "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79). He gave light on the nature of God (John 4:24), the consequences of sin (Romans 6:23), the way back to God (John 14:6), the value of a soul (Mark 8:36, 37), the beauty of a life of consecration to his service (Romans 10:15), and the certainty of future glory in Heaven (John 14:2).

Christ, the "dayspring from on high hath visited us" also to "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79). He is our Peace and provided peace for us by the blood of His cross. He has given the Word as our guide—"a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105). He has sent His blessed Holy Spirit to guide us in His truth, the Word, and lead us as His sons. Thanks be to the Lord!

PERSONS BEING VISITED

Our astronauts have encountered no one on their visits to the moon. Christ encountered a darkened and sinful humanity in His visit to this earth (Luke 1:79). We are living in a dark and sinful world this Christmas, 1972. But Christ the "dayspring from on high hath visited us" and if He has been permitted to visit your life by His saving power and is daily being allowed to abide as Master of your life, there is light, there is joy, there is peace in your heart this Christmas. If you are without the Savior, He desires to enter your life,

forgive you your sin, and take up His blessed abode as the light of your life. Will you permit Him?

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).



BRIGHTEST AND BEST

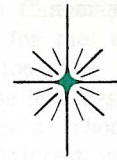
Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all.
Shall we not yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odors of Edom, and off'rings divine,
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would His favor secure;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber
(from *Concordia*, 1917)



"THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM"

It was the eve of Christmas,
The snow lay deep and white,
I sat beside my window
And looked into the night.

I heard the church bells ringing,
I saw the bright stars shine,
And childhood came again to me
With all its dreams divine.

Then, as I listened to the bells,
And watched the skies afar,
Out of the East majestic
There rose one radiant star.

And every other star grew pale
Before that heavenly glow:
It seemed to bid me follow,
And I could not choose but go.

From street to street it led me,
By many a mansion fair.
It shone through dingy casement
On many a garret bare.

From highway on to highway,
Through alleys dark and cold,
And where it shone the darkness
Was flooded all with gold.

Sad hearts forgot their sorrow,
Rough hearts grew soft and mild.
And weary little children
Turned in their sleep and smiled;

While many a homeless wanderer
Uplifted patient eyes,
Seeming to see a home at last
Beyond those starry skies.

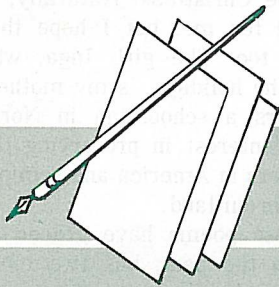
And then methought earth faded;
I rose as borne on wings
Beyond the waste of ruined lives,
The press of human things;

Above the toil and shadow,
Above the want and woe,
My old self and its darkness,
Seemed left on earth below.

And onward, upward shone the star,
Until, it seemed to me,
It flashed upon the golden gate
And o'er the crystal sea.

And then the gates rolled backward,
I stood where angels trod,
It was the star of Bethlehem
Had led me up to God!

—The Friend



EDITORIALS

CHRISTMAS IS NOT CHEAP

Once again we are privileged to celebrate Christmas. It is a glad and joyous season. The hymn writer has put it well in these words:

How glad I am each Christmas Eve!
The night of Jesus' birth;
Then like the sun the Star shone forth
And angels sang on earth.

The little Child of Bethlehem,
He was a King indeed;
He came from His high state in heaven,
Down to a world in need.

—Marie Wexelsen

As we think of our Christmas observance, we call to mind that Christmas is not cheap. It isn't cheap financially. Americans spend over eight and one-half billions of dollars for gifts, averaging \$173 per family. One hundred and fifty million is spent for gift wrapping, 100-150 million for trees, three and a half billion for greeting cards and two hundred million for postage to send those greetings. We have said nothing about the cost of entertaining friends. Christmas is costly financially and it also takes its toll in strength and emotions. If we get tired as shoppers, think of the poor clerks in our stores. Much work must be taken care of in making preparations in home and church and school, too.

Christmas was not cheap for God the Father. God gave His best, His own Son. Bruce Larson of Faith at Work says that for some years he had difficulty in comprehending the meaning of the sacrifice of a son by his father. But when he himself became a parent and sometimes had to stand by helplessly when his children were ridiculed or humiliated in some way he understood it a little better.

The same Mr. Larson tells of the time his five-year-old son Mark prayed in the family devotions during Advent, "Oh Lord, don't be afraid of us." Father and mother were puzzled about the petition at first. But then they realized the wisdom beyond his years that the little boy had evidenced. The small lad knew that God knew what kind of a world His Son would have to come into. He had prayed that God would not be afraid to send His Son.

Praise God that He did send Him. It was a costly

act for God the Father. The way for Jesus in this world wasn't easy either. It was the way of the cross, of self-sacrifice. He gave Himself for us.

Christmas is not cheap to the followers of Jesus. Jesus identified with us (His incarnation) at tremendous cost. If we commit our lives to Him we do so at a real cost, too. There is a death to the self-life. There is a cross to be carried in passing through a world that is at loggerheads with the purposes of God. Only a Christian can truly celebrate Christmas, but only he knows what may be involved with being counted a follower of the One born in Bethlehem.

Christmas is not cheap to the one who walks in the footprints of the Lamb, but it is a glorious way. The joys of fellowship outweigh the trials and tribulations here upon earth. The hope that reaches into all eternity is also the possession of Christ's disciple. In the meantime, while that future hope is yet to be realized in fulfillment there is a life to be lived here to God's glory. This is the life of purpose, which, if a person does not have, he misses what life is all about.

It is our hope and prayer that every reader of the Christmas **Ambassador** may know the reality of Jesus Christ, the Heaven-Sent Gift of the Father, in his life from this day forward.

REMEMBER CHARITY AT CHRISTMAS

Again this year, your **Ambassador** is arriving early, well before Christmas itself. This circumstance of scheduling does permit an encouragement to be given in advance of the day for remembering works of charity at this glad season of the year.

As the lead editorial suggests today, American (and Canadian) families spend a good deal of money to observe Christmas. It all makes for a very enjoyable time, but it takes a lot of money.

This is a plea that we remember the poor and the unfortunate of our two countries and of the world this Christmas season. We have made our offerings during the year to spread the Gospel, largely to middle-class America. Well and good. Now, if we haven't done so before, or in addition, let us give gifts of charity to those who know little of the real pleasures of life.

All of us know of reputable and reliable agencies which are therefore worthy of our aid. These we should support with our money gifts and gifts in kind, as the needs may require. Some of these agencies will be operated by Christians, others may have no Christian orientation, but are performing work of alleviating suffering and building up usefulness for life. These, too, we must help for they may offer the only way we can reach out to help bring relief in particular kinds of human tragedy.

Our own Christmases will be much better if in our celebrating Christmas we not only do good unto those nearest and dearest us in life, but also unto those whom Jesus referred to as "the least" and who may never really know that God cares about them unless they first realize in some way that other people want to share their needs.

OUR CHRISTMAS ISSUE

We are pleased to present this Christmas issue of **The Lutheran Ambassador** to you for your reading enjoyment.

Originally, it was our intention to have the major portion of this issue taken up with accounts of Christmases in various places in other lands and in our country. Not all of those whom we asked to write were able to comply, but the stories by Dr. Olson and Pastor Ose were two of the responses we did receive.

Mrs. William (Esther) Farrier, Minneapolis, whose name is not strange to most of us, has written the Christmas fiction for us this year and Pastor Francis Monseth, on sabbatical leave from our Schools, has prepared the Christmas sermon.

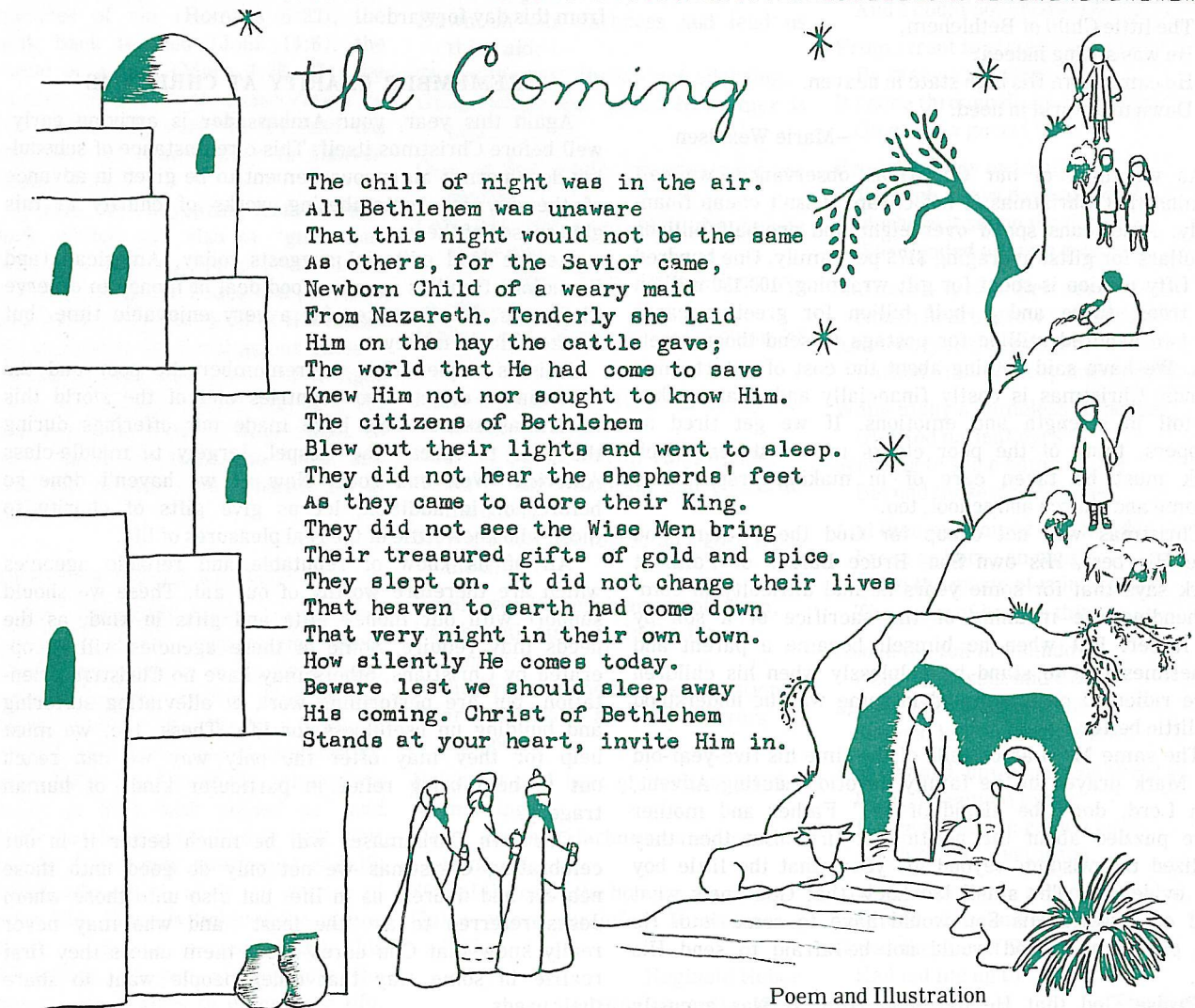
We've borrowed two of our major articles from other sources. There is an article on Christmas carols from the former **This Day** magazine. Out of Wilhelm Pettersen's book on Hans Nielsen Hauge, we have lifted the deeply moving account of a Christmas which Hauge spent in jail for the cause of Jesus Christ.

This year I asked an uncle of mine, A. O. Lee, to

write the story of an old-time Christmas. Naturally, it has special personal meaning for me, but I hope that you will find it of interest, too. The girl, Inga, who comes home from school for the holidays, is my mother. Uncle Adolph, for many years a schoolman in North Dakota, has always taken an interest in preserving the history of the Norwegian pioneers in America and reminding of the culture of that people in our land.

Mrs. Marlene Moline, whose poems have graced so many of the **Ambassadors** in the past, has two more for us now, as well as a short story about the lovely poinsettia. Our church president, Pastor Strand, gives us his annual greeting; Pastor Howard Kjos has written the devotional message on page two, and others have contributed in verse and prose. There are two photos for your visual pleasure besides the happy front cover one.

All of this for your enjoyment at Christmas. May our Lord grant you all a very joyous and blessed Christmas-tide. With sincere Christian love this **Ambassador** goes out to add something to the observance of this happy season by some of the finest people on earth, our readers.



The chill of night was in the air.
All Bethlehem was unaware
That this night would not be the same
As others, for the Savior came,
Newborn Child of a weary maid
From Nazareth. Tenderly she laid
Him on the hay the cattle gave;
The world that He had come to save
Knew Him not nor sought to know Him.
The citizens of Bethlehem
Blew out their lights and went to sleep.
They did not hear the shepherds' feet
As they came to adore their King.
They did not see the Wise Men bring
Their treasured gifts of gold and spice.
They slept on. It did not change their lives
That heaven to earth had come down
That very night in their own town.
How silently He comes today.
Beware lest we should sleep away
His coming. Christ of Bethlehem
Stands at your heart, invite Him in.

Poem and Illustration
by Marlene Moline



THE CHRISTMAS WE SPENT IN NORWAY

by Dr. Iver Olson

To an American the days are unbelievably short in Norway at Christmas. Dawn comes at 9 o'clock in the morning and at 3 in the afternoon the stars can be seen again on cloudless days. Even on a clear day it is scarcely full daylight at any time of the day. At noon the sun appears to be about an hour's time above the horizon; at 1 o'clock it starts setting. At night one has to look almost straight up to see the North Star.

There is little of pre-Christmas celebrations in Norway before Christmas Eve. The spirit of commercialism is there all right, and attempts are made at decorating the streets and buildings in the downtown sections of the cities; they seem, however, to lack the colors we have. Most of the lights are white or pale yellow. Only occasionally is a red, blue or green bulb to be seen. At Fjellhaug Schools (in Oslo) the Christmas dinner was served to the students, faculty and staff at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of December 17. This was the last day of classes before Christmas. At the dinner the first stanza of "Beautiful Savior" was sung. This was as close as we came to singing a Christmas song before the day had actually arrived. In the Norwegian version, this is scarcely a Christmas song at all.

We were to spend Christmas with Mrs. Olson's relatives at Indreøya, an island in the Trondheim Fjord, north of the city. Relatives temporarily living in Oslo were going home for the holidays and we had the opportunity of riding along with them. The trip up and back was a memorable one. We had opportunity to experience many variations in weather and road conditions. We saw sheep grazing in green pastures on the mountain sides, much as they must have done on the plains of Bethlehem that first Christmas, and we experienced genuine Dakota blizzards in the mountain passes.

We left Oslo at dusk, shortly before 3 o'clock, and arrived at our destination an hour past midnight. We had summer roads to begin with, but soon rain and sleet made them treacherously slippery. These condi-



Dr. and Mrs. Iver Olson

tions gave way to snowstorms which reduced visibility to near zero. It is not particularly pleasant to ride at night over narrow, curving, mountain roads under such conditions. Perhaps it helped a bit that we could not see the precipitous mountain side a car's breadth away, or the creek a thousand feet below.

A couple of night sights etched themselves into our memories. The first was the churches in the towns and countryside. In the darkest part of the winter the people there have the practice of floodlighting the churches at night. Sometimes we could see a pocket of light in the distance and in the middle of nowhere. Upon coming nearer we could see clearly a white or red church in the bubble of light. We remembered particularly the Kvikne Church, of which the father of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was the pastor about 1840. We thought of the lines of this poet: "In the eyes of the peasant the Church lies in a high place, and slightly apart."

The second sight was a vehicle of transportation, the likes of which we had never seen before. It was called a "spark"—which means "to kick"—and was something like a cross between skis and skates. The runners were about eight feet long and looked like long skates. The two runners were fastened together from the front to about half ways back, to form a kind of sled. Over the front half was a seat for an additional passenger, if such there should be. Directly behind the seat, and fastened to it at the proper height, was a pair of handlebars like the handles of a lawn mower. The driver has a place to stand on the blades a couple of feet from the rear end of the runners. He steers

with the handlebars and can control the speed, or stop, with the use of hand brakes. Downhill, a person can attain breakneck speed with this vehicle. On the level he propels himself forward by using one foot to kick and push himself ahead. Up hill he walks between the runners. It is an ingenious device to steady oneself while walking on icy streets or roads. We saw ladies of about 70 years of age come whizzing into town on a spark. But to see a spark coming down towards him on icy mountain roads does not make an American motorist feel comfortable at all.

Christmas comes on December 24 and we had a couple of days to visit people within walking distance and by the use of a spark while preparations were being made in every home. The season officially opened on Christmas Eve with a family service in the church at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Sakshaug Church lay out in the country about a half a mile from the old church which was built in 1184 and is still used occasionally in the summer. The new church was built in 1871 and has a seating capacity of 1200. It was filled to capacity on Christmas Eve. A choir of about a dozen girls sang enchantingly from the choir loft in the rear of the church.

The service was simple and dignified, intimate and homey. The same can be said of the sermon. Everyone seemed filled with a glowing expectancy. Christmas was coming; it was already here! The gifts were in place at home under the tree. A processional offering was received for "ungdomssaniteten." We wondered what this might be: youth sanity, youth sanitation or an antipollution endeavor sponsored by young people? We learned later that it was something like our Lutheran Social Service. But have you seen 1200 people participate in a processional offering in a country church and no ushers to direct the movement of the people? It was just like that. Yet everybody was happy. Now to get home for the Christmas dinner and the family festival with presents and goodies.

Now Christmas had really come. Christmas gifts and delicacies heightened the sentiments of the season.

(Continued on page 19)

God with us

God had been silent toward Israel for several hundred years. Faith was at a low ebb. There were more memories of a great past than a confident present. But there was this promise. A virgin would give birth to a child. His name would be Immanuel, meaning, God with us. But God did not seem to be near. There was more human cruelty and subjugation than divine comfort and help. Would Immanuel really come?

Immanuel came. He came as it was prophesied. He was born of a virgin. He came as a root out of dry ground. There was no reason because of the way He came that men should desire Him. But He was and is God. God came to be with His own. This is the reality of Christmas today.

Jesus came to redeem us. Christ came to give us righteousness. He came to sanctify us, and give us wisdom. He came to save us from our sins. He came to be with His own always, even unto the end of the world.

We are in days of godlessness and suffering. Truth is scorned and human power is worshipped. God's people often know loneliness and frustration. Things appear so hopeless. Is it in vain we have believed and obeyed?

This Christmas again the message comes. God is with us. He is with us through His Son, the Word become flesh. He is with us to love us, to forgive us, to guide us, to empower us. We are not alone. The Lord of Lords and King of Kings, whose Kingdom knows no end, is with us here and now. This makes victory possible in every circumstance, even

in cross bearing.

Friend, are you conscious of Christ, the very God, being with you with His love and understanding? Or do you believe yourself to be alone? If you have turned to Jesus in repentance and faith, He is with you with grace greater than your sin. "Come to me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is His promise.

While we recognize the depth of sin and ungodliness today, let us also believe Christ is with us, and will be with us to the end. So we do not despair.


We know God is with us because of His Word. We look not for further signs or experiences but know He is ours because of the Word. Feelings and experiences change. His Word is eternal.

It has been apparent this year, too, that God is with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. How good God is. How we rejoice in Him. He is constantly opening doors of service, more than we can enter. We are confident that as He has opened doors, in His good time, He will also provide the means to enter them.

God is with us through His faithful people. What a rich fellowship and heritage of faithful people is ours in the Association. Thank you for your part in this fellowship.

May we, each of us, be overwhelmed by the realization that God is with us this Christmas. Then our Christmas will be truly blessed. This is our prayer for each other.

In Immanuel's name,
Pastor John P. Strand



WOMEN *for Christ*

KEEPING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS

by Mrs. Julius Olson
Grand Forks, N. Dak.

Many Christians are becoming discouraged over the increasing materialistic emphasis put on Christmas. A few are even voicing the opinion that they would like to pick another date to celebrate Christ's birth and abandon December 25th to the world. If, as Christians, the eternal has displaced the temporal in our attention and interests, we will be asking how we can honor Christ the most in celebrating His birth.

It's traditional in many families to go caroling, read the Christmas story on Christmas Eve, and have family devotions around the advent wreath. However, let's consider just a few unique ways in which we can help keep Christmas holy. Our Christmas card list can be a great potential for sharing our faith with others. There are now available a number of thought-provoking tracts which would be appropriate to be used with our Christmas cards. One family with whom I spoke shares their greatest spiritual blessings in their annual Christmas letter. Last year one of our friends used the words from Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." This was printed on the Christmas card under the family picture. It was a good reminder of Psalm 107:2, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Prayer is one of the greatest gifts we can give. With this in mind, another couple has prayed for one person on their Christmas card list each day

throughout the year and sends them a post card on that day telling them of this.

Has "exchanging gifts" taken the place of giving? One newly engaged couple thought so. This led them to use the money they would have spent on gifts for each other and to give it as a birthday gift to Jesus to be used for the work of His kingdom. Even now they testify to their great joy in doing this. Perhaps our joy has been diminished not only by exchanging gifts but also by exchanging holiday entertaining. Jesus tells us, in Luke 14:12-14, to invite to dinner those who cannot repay us. If we do it "as unto Him," what better way to glorify Christ during the Christmas season?

When told as a child that Santa Claus wasn't real, I assumed that Jesus wasn't real either. Because of this experience, Santa and "The Night Before Christmas" have been told to our children as the fairy tales they really are. I was recently told of a family who celebrates Christmas Day with a birthday cake for Jesus. One thoughtful young mother of a two-year-old chose an inexpensive paper nativity scene for their home to present the child from thinking that Jesus is a "no-no." They filled their home with joyful Christmas music throughout the season. Soon Handel's "Messiah" became a favorite and even the small child was found singing "Hallelujah, Hallelujah."

A mother of six emphasized her great need to have daily devotions even during the busy Christmas season. She constantly found herself too

busy not to pray, and said it was vital to her maintaining the proper priorities. One of her greatest blessings last year was when she invited the Lord to be with her and guide her Christmas shopping. Her prayer was graciously answered and she found exactly the right things in record time and came home praising the Lord that He had been with her in a busy, crowded, department store. Some feel a wide variety of Christian records and books for adults as well as children may help answer the question, "How can I glorify God in my gift giving?"

Old traditions are a big part of our Christmas celebration. Yet perhaps it would be well if in addition to this we asked the One whose birth we celebrate to show us new ways to keep this day holy. I've found it encouraging when Christians share with each other meaningful ways they have found to avoid the commercialism of Christmas. May this season serve to edify our lives and glorify our Lord.

CHRISTMAS IN THE PINES

The sky was clear all yesterday,
From dawn until the sunset's flame;
But when the red had grown to gray,
Out of the west the snow clouds came.

At midnight by the dying fire,
Watching the spruce boughs glow and pale,

I heard outside a tumult dire,
And the fierce roaring of the gale.

Now with the morning comes a lull;
The sun shines boldly in the east
Upon a world made beautiful
In vesture for the Christmas feast.

Into the pathless waste I go,
With muffled step among the pines
That, robed in sunlight and soft snow,
Stand like a thousand radiant shrines.

Save for a lad's song, far and faint,
There is no sound in all the wood;
The murmuring pines are still; their
plaint

At last was heard and understood.

Here floats no chime of Christmas
bell,

There is no voice to give me cheer;
But through the pine wood all is well,
For God and love and peace are here.

—Meredith Nicholson

The Poinsetta— A Legend of Mexico

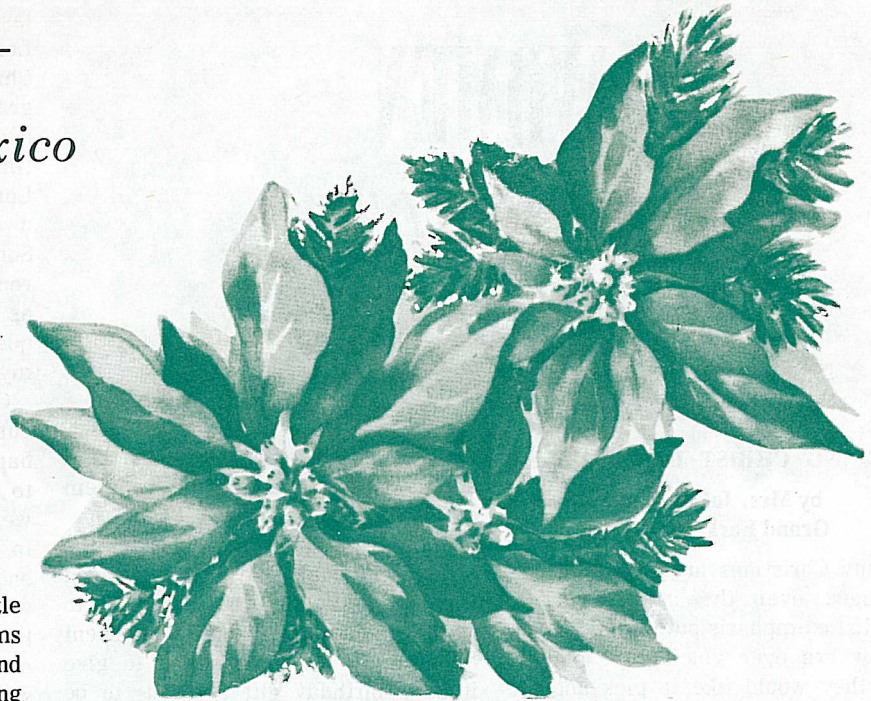
by Marline Moline
Lansing, Iowa

All that Christmas Eve the little girl had watched the people. Arms filled to overflowing with roses and lilies, they were cheerfully climbing the broad steps of the village church. There they would decorate the altar with a veritable mountain of flowers in honor of the birth of God's Son upon the earth.

How she wanted to join the procession that passed by her. But she had no flower to give to the Baby Jesus, not even one tiny blossom to lay upon the altar. She loved the Baby Jesus with all her heart. What could she give to Him, she who was so poor? She who had never known a day without hunger or a winter without cold. She who had never owned a new dress or even a cast-off pair of shoes. What could she give to the Child who was born in a stable so long ago?

Evening came, dark and chill. The few people hurrying along the street now were homeward bound. The little girl drew her thin shawl a little tighter around her shoulders and began walking toward the church. "If I can give nothing," she thought sadly, "at least I can pray. God will understand why I bring no flowers in honor of His Son. Was not Jesus born a poor one like I?"

Inside the great church all was quiet. From their places upon the wall the centuries old wooden statues of saints looked down upon a small child kneeling in earnest prayer before a



flower emblazoned altar. And, if their painted eyes had been true eyes indeed, they would have beheld a sight the like of which they had never seen before. For as the little girl poured forth her heart in prayer, a deep and profound peace seemed to envelope the old church like a soft mantle. The altar glowed with a radiance not of this earth, and the sweetness of flowers and incense filled the air as if the doors of Heaven itself had opened wide.

The little girl raised her eyes. The altar and flowers had all but disappeared in the dazzling light and there, standing just before her, with arms outstretched, was an angel more radiant and beautiful than even the most expensive statues sold in the market.

"Why are you crying, child?" asked the angel softly. "It is Christmas, a time when peace and good will to all men should reign upon the earth. Why do you weep when all the world is filled with happiness?"

Suddenly the little girl found herself telling the angel the deep wish of her heart—to give a flower in honor of the Christ Child.

"If you do not have a flower," replied the angel, "why do you not

gather some weeds from the roadside and put them on the altar. Are they not God's creation also?"

The little girl looked at the angel in amazement. Put weeds upon the altar of God! Would that not be a greater sin than no offering at all?

"Do not fear, child," the angel said, smiling. "Do not be afraid to make your small offering. God does not only see the gift, but the heart of the giver also."

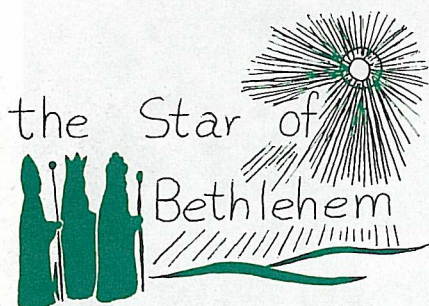
Thus saying, the angel disappeared. The little girl remained kneeling before the altar, gazing in wonderment at the spot where that heavenly being had stood. Had it all been just a dream? But it had been no dream; the angel had been real, the angel had spoken to her!

Along the roadside weeds grew in great profusion. It took her but a few moments to gather an armful and hurry back to the church. There she placed her poor gift amid all the beautiful tropical flowers, directly in front of the image of the Holy Child. Then she knelt once more and, bowing her head, whispered a prayer of thanks to God. But when she again raised her eyes to the place where she had laid her offering, the scrawny weeds were gone. She rubbed her

OH HOLY NIGHT

(Continued from page 15)

eyes in wonderment, for there, in place of the green weeds, were flowers which shone like a scarlet crown, brighter by far than all the others. And to the little girl who knelt there, the flowers of Christmas seemed as bright and as beautiful as the star that so many years ago had led the wise men to the Christ Child in Bethlehem.



Three tall men stood in kingly dress
Of velvet gold and amethyst
And borders rich with gems.
A million stars held fast the night,
A million glowing points of light
In nature's diadem.

There was one brighter than the rest,
The herald of the travelers' quest,
One spoken of in ancient word,
The symbol of the new born Lord,
The star of Bethlehem.

Within the desert's awful waste
The others faded without trace
As if they ne'er had been.
Yet one star still shone from the sky;
One star still held that God was nigh,
And never once grew dim.
Their eyes on it the Wise Men went,
Their hearts and minds in God content.

They sought their Savior not in vain;
They found Him where the star remained,
The star of Bethlehem.

We go, who wander in life's night,
In ceaseless search for heaven's light
And freedom from our sins.
The distant stars we fail to find
But crush the soul and sap the mind
And warp the hearts of men.
Yet one light still beams ever on
When all the other hopes are gone.
The Savior still waits us today;
His star still leads the way,
The star of Bethlehem.

Poem and Illustration by
Marlene Moline

Dark was the night and cold
When Joseph and Mary arrived
In the little town of Bethlehem,
At the Inn was no room inside.

No one knew of the coming
Of the little Babe that night
Who was cradled in Bethlehem's manger
While the stars shone, oh so bright!

The town was dark and very still
But the shepherds kept watch o'er
their sheep,

And God sent the angel to tell them
This message they did repeat.

While the angel said "Oh fear not:
Blessed tidings of joy I bring,
To you this night, in Bethlehem
Is born Jesus Christ the King."

The angelic host in rapture said
"Glory to God on high,
On earth, peace good will to men"
Rang out from the starry sky.

As the shepherds gazed in wonder
Now gone was the fear and dread,
"We must go quickly to Bethlehem
Find the Babe in the manger bed."

The days had been dark, for sin did
abound,

When God sent His Son to save,
Give peace and joy to all who will
come

And accept this salvation so great.

Again a sad and sin-darkened world
Is torn by war and strife,

Our boys are leaving loved ones and
home,

And many must give their lives.

The world is dark but Christ is the
light,

Peace we seek must be found in Him,
He came to save and give life anew
To all who will come to Him.

Oh that our nation will return to God
And accept the love of His Son,

Time hastens on, Christ will return,
Oh come ere the day of grace is gone.

In Christ you will find both peace and
joy,

'Tho the world may be filled with
strife,

Make sure of salvation, our greatest
need,

For He came to give Eternal Life.

"Whosoever shall call upon the name
of the Lord shall be saved." Romans

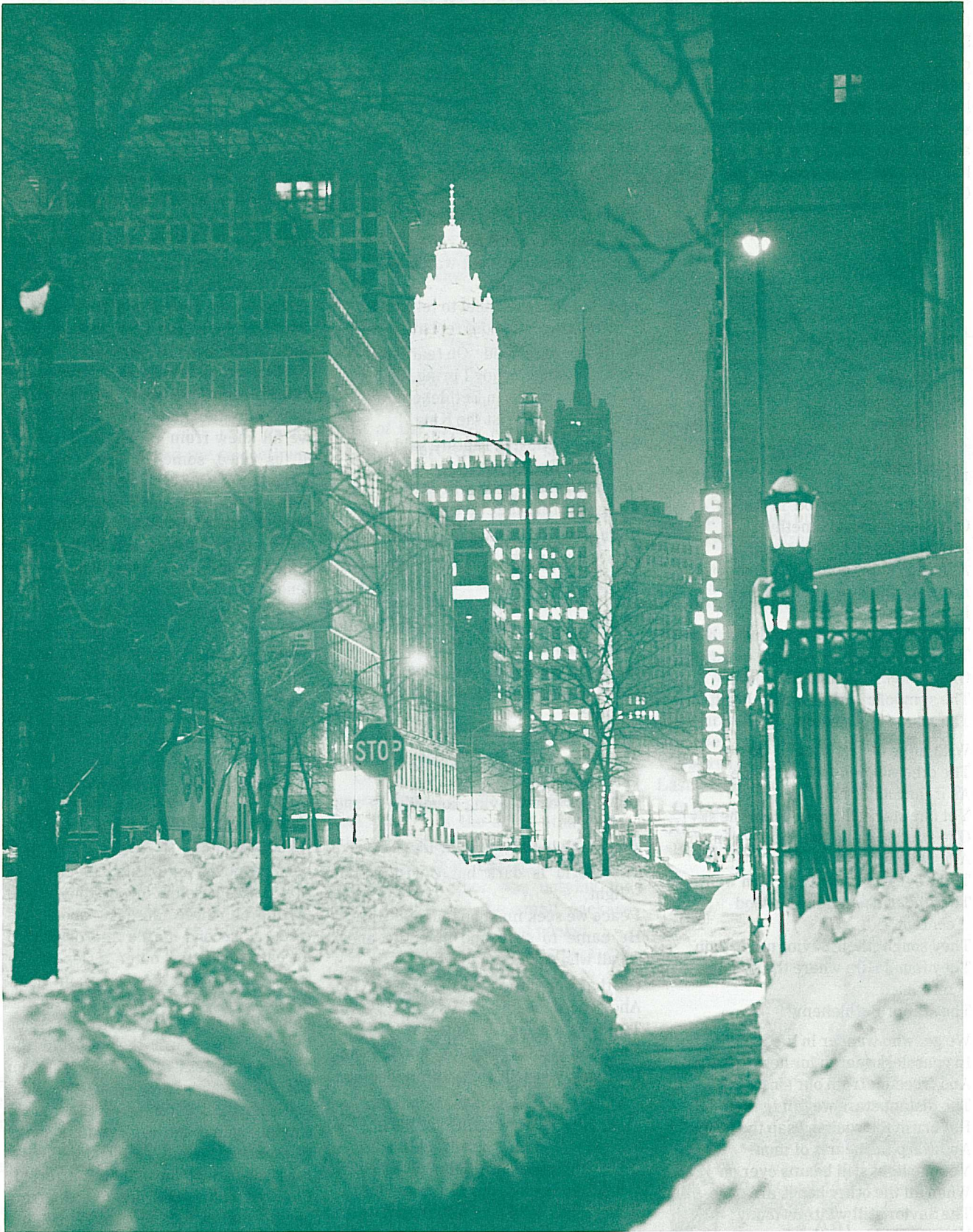
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Olga M. Peterson

—The Warren (Minn.) Sheaf

Now Christmas songs were in the air and on the air every day, and Christmas traditions were carried out assiduously. Singing and marching around the tree was a welcome variation in the routine of Christmas. But how to do it in small homes with many people present? An unforgettable evening was spent by the two of us with many relatives in the childhood home of Mrs. Olson's mother. The Christmas tree was moved into the center of the living room, and the doors to all the other rooms were thrown wide open. Holding hands, we marched from the kitchen to the dining room—to the living room—to the hallway—and back into the kitchen, singing songs we all knew from childhood. A couple of us tried some of our American songs like "O Little Town of Bethlehem." The rest stared unbelievably! Can anyone really understand that?

Christmas is supposed to last until January 6th in Norway, but we attended our last Christmas festivity in Misjonsalen—the place in which our Bible School Choir from America gave its final concert in Oslo—on Saturday night, January 8th. We saw another one scheduled for January 13, but we did not attend that one. The Saturday night one had as its most delightful feature the march about the Christmas tree. But how can 600 people do so at the same time? The tree was placed near the center of the auditorium. Here the chairs had been removed or pushed together so that it was possible for an inner circle to march three abreast about the tree. A second circle marched two abreast along the outer aisles at the front and back of the main auditorium. A third circle formed in the gallery to the front, down the steps to the front, down the steps to the platform, across to the other side, up the stairs and back along the side, and so on. All 600 were on the march, singing withal the old familiar songs remembered from childhood. Christmas songs just have to be different. Children and adults are like pilgrims on the march to a new land—singing as they go. They are going home for Christmas—to their real home for a real Christmas.



Snow banks on a city street
Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.



Our Christmas in Paris



by Roger Ose
Missionary to Madagascar

Christmas in Paris brings concerts, shopping trips, operas, Sunday school programs, special church services, gifts, and generous servings of good French cooking. This was our first Christmas in Paris and we celebrated it much as the French do.

Christmas in Paris is concerts. Many of the churches put on special concerts just before Christmas and we attended Handel's "Messiah" at the Church of Saint Roch. We were thrilled by the music and the words:

"Every valley shall be lifted up—
Comfort ye my people—
Speak ye tenderly to Jerusalem—
For the mouth of the Lord has
spoken it—and
I know that my Redeemer liveth."

The large church in downtown Paris was packed. We sat near the back in a section reserved for students and elderly people who paid half price for the tickets. To our right was a little Frenchman, 94 years old, who sat on the aisle chair because he was too short to see over the heads of the people. He told us in French how much he enjoyed the music. To our left were two American students from St. John's University near St. Cloud, Minnesota. We visited after the concert and shared our new experiences in Paris.

Christmas is beautifully decorated stores. One evening we went downtown to window-shop and spent some time viewing the puppets in the windows of a large department store. The windows portrayed French fairy tales such as "The Kingdom of Neptune" and "The Kingdom of the Musicians." It reminded us of Dayton's in Minneapolis.

Christmas is presents and a tree. Nearly all stores put out their most elaborate displays about two weeks before Christmas. In the windows we saw sets of French casseroles, the new clothing styles for men and wom-

en, toy models of French cars and trucks, plus gifts from around the world. Little Christmas trees are sold for only 65 cents (U.S.) and are practical because most homes and apartments are very small. Even though many French families are poor, they are generous with gifts for children at Christmas.

Christmas is an opera. We attended two operas at the height of the opera season just before Christmas. We ordered tickets weeks in advance through our school and paid only \$3.00 for tickets that normally cost \$9.00. We particularly enjoyed Rossini's opera, "The Barber of Seville," the story of an Italian barber who was a match-maker. He got things in a terrible mess because of misunderstandings, but in the end the right man married the pretty daughter of a town businessman and they lived happily ever after. Between acts we walked through the elegant marble halls and viewed statues, ceiling paintings and inlaid hardwood and marble floors.

Christmas is a children's program. Just before Christmas the children of the Lutheran Church of Bezons put on a pageant complete with shepherds, kings, angels, Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus. It was a candlelight service and each child had a part to speak. For our Sunday School children this was probably the highlight of the year. I particularly liked the way one French boy spoke his lines so loud and clear. He was pleased to tell the good news that Jesus is born. Afterward each child received a small book or New Testament.

Christmas Eve is two services. The first service was at 7 p.m. for the five American children in our church. They heard the Christmas story in English, sang carols and had a birthday party for Jesus complete with cake and candles. After the service they each got a piece of Jesus' birthday cake. The service for the

adults was at 11 p.m. Nearly all churches in France have big services on Christmas Eve because it's a tradition to attend that night. The churches have special decorations—pine boughs, candles, manger scenes, pretty lights, and beautiful art work. The services include many carols in French, the Christmas story, and the Christmas sermon.

Christmas is French cooking. The Christmas Eve dinner traditionally includes turkey and the trimmings, potatoes and gravy, French beans, fresh lettuce and tomatoes, baskets full of French bread, and cheese. The meal would not be complete without cheese—they have 365 different varieties. For dessert the "French Yule Log Cake" is a tradition, a long, narrow cake covered with chocolate and decorated with winter scenes.

Christmas is the birth of Jesus. When dinner is over they all help clear the table and wash the dishes. Then the father or mother reads the Christmas Story from Luke 2, and leads the family in singing "Silent Night," "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," and "Away in a Manger." They are reminded that tonight Christians around the world celebrate the greatest gift that was ever given. When the family service is over one of the children distributes the gifts, and though the father may have a very small income, each child receives a toy. This is Christmas!



Of all the Holidays and Holy Days of the years, Christmas is preeminently a day of joy and gladness. In the life of the child it is the culmination of many hopes and desires; in the home it is the means of fostering affection and love; and in the church it unites God's people in worshipful praise and song.

—Theo. F. Bode

(Continued from page 4)

peace and happiness filled his soul. It was as if he heard the bells of heaven ring peace down to a sinful world.

God had answered him. He was no longer alone. "A joyful Christmas," was said in a thousand homes. "A joyful Christmas" was whispered into the lonely heart of Hauge.

He folded his hands and sang with his wonderfully rich, sweet voice: "Jesus, I long for Thy blessed communion,

Yearning for Thee fills my heart
and my mind;

Draw me from all that would hinder
our union,

May I to Thee, my beginning, be
joined!

Show me more clearly my hopeless
condition,

Show me the depth of corruption
in me,

So that my nature may die in contri-
tion,

And that my spirit may live unto
Thee!"

The prisoners in the other cells lifted their heads and listened wonderingly. The prison-watchmen stopped their going to and fro.

But outside, right under the window, stood two silent men. They listened eagerly. It was his voice. They would have recognized it among a thousand voices, the voice that had opened to them an understanding of the best which man could possess. Like little children far from home they held each other's hands till the song died away.

Meantime, comforted by prayer and singing, Hauge rose from his knees and resumed his seat on the hard wooden bench.

"What was that?" Two were singing outside, beneath his prison window! It was a prayer for those who suffer, a cry of anguish to God for souls in need of salvation.

The song floated upwards, like a little bird barely able to fly. There were his two faithful friends who had come all the way from the coast to comfort him. They had not been permitted to see him, or say a few words to him—it was against the law.

But, surely, a little song wouldn't hurt! Everybody was singing. Little children with their parents and friends in happy homes all over the city were singing songs in praise of

Him who had come to make men happy and good. It wouldn't disturb anyone if two simple-hearted men, who had footed it across the mountains from Bergen to Christiania, sang a little song for the comfort of him who "for the sake of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" sat behind the bars this blessed Christmas Eve!

Hauge felt as if he were bleeding inwardly. He sat helpless, could not see them, could not send a single word of comfort or help to the thousands—far west by the beautiful fjords, far north in the fishing districts, high up among the ice-covered mountains, and in the wonderful valleys where Christmas bells were chiming—the thousands in the little cottages that were waiting for him, wondering why he did not come!

There was a pause. The song ceased. The two men, faithful Samson Traae and Ole Roersveen, stood looking up to the little window, high up there in the gray wall.

All at once a light shone in the window.

"Look," one of the men cried, as he seized the arm of his friend.

A candle with a long, blackened "thief" was lifted high and threw a warm, blood-red light out into the darkness.

"Look," cried the other, as he burst into tears.

It was Hans Nielsen Hauge, who, from his lonely prison cell, preached the victory of light over darkness.

"God be praised," Samson Traae said. He stood there as if transfigured and with folded hands.

Now the light disappeared. The darkness of night became gloomier around. But still the two men stood there, gratefully happy for what they had heard and seen. They had received a message from Hauge, a message of unquenchable faith in God, an assurance that the light would conquer.

This message they would bring from farm to farm, from cottage to cottage, all through the land, as far as the brethren were found.

But again the light shone in the window, again it was taken down, and then a hand holding the snuffers. The candle was "trimmed," and the little flame burned clear and steady.

The two men swallowed a gulp. They had understood. The great task was to cleanse the church of God on earth, so that the light might shine before men to the end that they might see the good works of Christ's disciples, and learn to praise the Father in heaven.

"Did you understand what he meant?" Samson Traae asked the other man. "Yes, yes," answered Ole Roersveen—he could with difficulty keep back his tears.

And then again a hymn came victoriously from the prison cell.

While Hauge stood holding the candle, he sang the Battle Hymn of the Reformation:

"A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty shield and weapon,
Our help is He in all our need,
Our stay, whate'er doth happen;
For still our ancient foe

Doth seek to work us woe,
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;

On earth is not his equal.
"Stood we alone in our own might,
Our striving would be losing;
For us the one true Man doth fight,

The Man of God's own choosing.
Who is this Chosen One?
'Tis Jesus Christ, the Son,
The Lord of hosts, 'tis He
Who wins the victory
In every field of battle."

When the hymn was finished the light disappeared again, and it was again dark.

For a long time the two men stood there, silently pressing each other's hands.

Then the crook-backed one said, "A joyful Christmas to you, Hans Hauge! God give you a joyful Christmas!"

Slowly the two men moved away, Samson Traae—and Ole Roersveen, who had once footed it from Bergen to Trondhjem just to meet Hauge, and who later on had carried heavy loads of Hauge's books on his back hundreds and hundreds of miles across mountains and far up into the distant valleys all over Norway.

It was by such men that Christianity became a living power in the land.

Meanwhile the chief of police, Wulfsberg, and the assistant judge, Collett, heard songs of Christmas

sung in their bright, comfortable homes, and on Christmas Day they attended divine service in the church and heard the Gospel of salvation preached, while he, to whom the Word of God was everything, sat in his lonely cell, yearning for those whom he had won to God by his simple preaching.

—From *The Light in the Prison Window*, by Wilhelm Pettersen

(Continued from page 8)

Christmas carols but one of the 10 best-loved hymns in the English language. It is interesting to know that for 100 years the words were sung to the same tune as Wesley's Easter hymn, "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." In 1840 "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" was set to an adaptation of the cantata *Gott ist Licht (God Is Light)* by Felix Mendelssohn. It is a coincidence that the words of so many English hymnists were set to music by German composers, but Mendelssohn's story is of special interest. He was the son of a wealthy banker and the grandson of a Jewish philosopher. The family was converted to Christianity, and later Felix composed many religious masterpieces which are beloved in our churches today.

Early in the 19th century, in a tiny town in the Austrain Alps, lived a young priest, Joseph Mohr. On Christmas Eve 1818 Mohr sat meditating on the still beauty of the snowy mountains outside his church study. Suddenly some words came to him as in a vision of that first Christmas night, hundreds of years before—"Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!" Quickly Mohr wrote down the words to an entire poem. Next morning he took the poem to his friend Franz Gruber, village schoolmaster and church organist. Gruber thrilled to the words and started composing a melody for them at once. Later that day the completed hymn was sung before the village people at their Christmas service. In November of the following year the church organ needed repairs. The organ builder, after completing the repairs, asked Gruber to play something to test the instrument. Gruber played "Stille Nacht."

Charmed with the melody, the organ builder took it home across the mountains to Germany, where a quartet of sisters learned it and sang it at the cathedral in Leipzig. The hymn was passed rapidly among music lovers after that, but for years it was known simply as "The Tyrolese Song," because it had come from the Tyrolese Alps. In 1854 the choir of the Imperial Church in Berlin sang it before King Frederick William IV, who ordered it given first place from then on in all Christmas religious programs. Not long afterwards the hymn traveled across the ocean and, known as "Silent Night," has been dearly loved by English-speaking people ever since.

Because strict Puritan laws forbade any celebration of Christmas, carols were not sung by the Pilgrims in early New England. However, the traditional songs were carried by other nationalities and religious sects into various parts of the New World. The Dutch in New Amsterdam, the French in New Orleans, Episcopalians in Virginia, and Moravians in Pennsylvania all brought their own traditional Christmas music with them as they settled in America. Though much of the lovely Christmas music we sing each year originated in Germany and England, America has actually contributed two of the most famous carols of all.

In 1857 the Rev. John Henry Hopkins, Jr., Episcopal rector of Christ Church in Williamsport, Pa., wrote and composed the stately "We Three Kings." Only a few years later another Pennsylvania clergyman, Phillips Brooks, young rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia, was traveling abroad. In December 1865 he was in the Holy Land, and on Christmas Eve he traveled with friends from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Looking down from the hills along the way, he saw the dark streets of the little town where Jesus was born, and at midnight he attended services at the Church of the Nativity, built on the supposed site of Christ's birth. This experience moved Brooks deeply, and he wrote a beautiful letter home about it to his Sunday school children in America, describing how the children of Bethlehem lay soft moss on the hearth for a bed

for the Christ Child.

The memory of this journey stayed in Brooks's mind after he returned home, and 3 years later he put his thoughts into words. Late in 1868 he wrote a poem and took it to his organist and Sunday school superintendent, Lewis H. Redner, asking him to set it to music. In the middle of the night, on Christmas Eve, Redner was awakened by "angel strains" and rose from bed to write them down. The resulting carol, which he called "a gift from heaven," first sung by children that Christmas morning in 1868 and sung all over the world for a century since, is the one we know as "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Other famous Christmas carols have come to us from other nations. The majestic "Adeste Fideles" is from an ancient Latin hymn, first seen in manuscript in 1759, but composed and sung many years before that date. Some authorities believe it may have been used by St. Francis of Assisi, who put many sacred songs into the people's language. This beloved hymn has been translated into at least 120 languages and dialects, and was anglicized as "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful" by Frederick Oakeley in 1841. "The First Noel" dates back to 1500 and is based on a French folk melody. "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella" also originated in France, and was translated into English by E. Cuthbert Nunn.

In the library, in musical encyclopedias, and in hymnals one can trace the authorship and history of other favorite Christmas music. The origins of some songs are so ancient that they are obscured in the midst of antiquity and belong to the ages. Others are quite modern, relatively speaking, and it is surprising to discover how quickly they have been absorbed into immortal tradition.

In these times, when nations are struggling as never before in history to understand, to sympathize, and to live in peace with each other, it is good to learn how much of the true spirit of other lands comes through to us in the form of these beautiful Christmas songs we all love and have adopted as our own.

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GLORIOUS YULETIDE

Glorious Yuletide, glad bells proclaim
it,
Children extol its joys in jubilant
throng.
Come, all ye people, join in our glad-
ness,
Loud ring our praises in sacred song.
Onward to Bethlehem, follow the
shepherds,
Gather around the lowly manger and
stall.
Join with the angels, welcome the
Saviour
Born in the flesh to be Lord of all.
Onward to Bethlehem, follow the wise
men,
Come from afar their gifts and homage
to bring.

Sweeter than incense, prized more
than jewels,
Hearts true and loyal unto our King!
Ernst William Olson
(from *The Hymnal*)



Nations have their red-letter days
and festivals, but once in the year,
and only once, the whole world stands
still to celebrate the advent of a life.
Only Jesus of Nazareth claims this
worldwide undying remembrance.

—Theo F. Bode

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