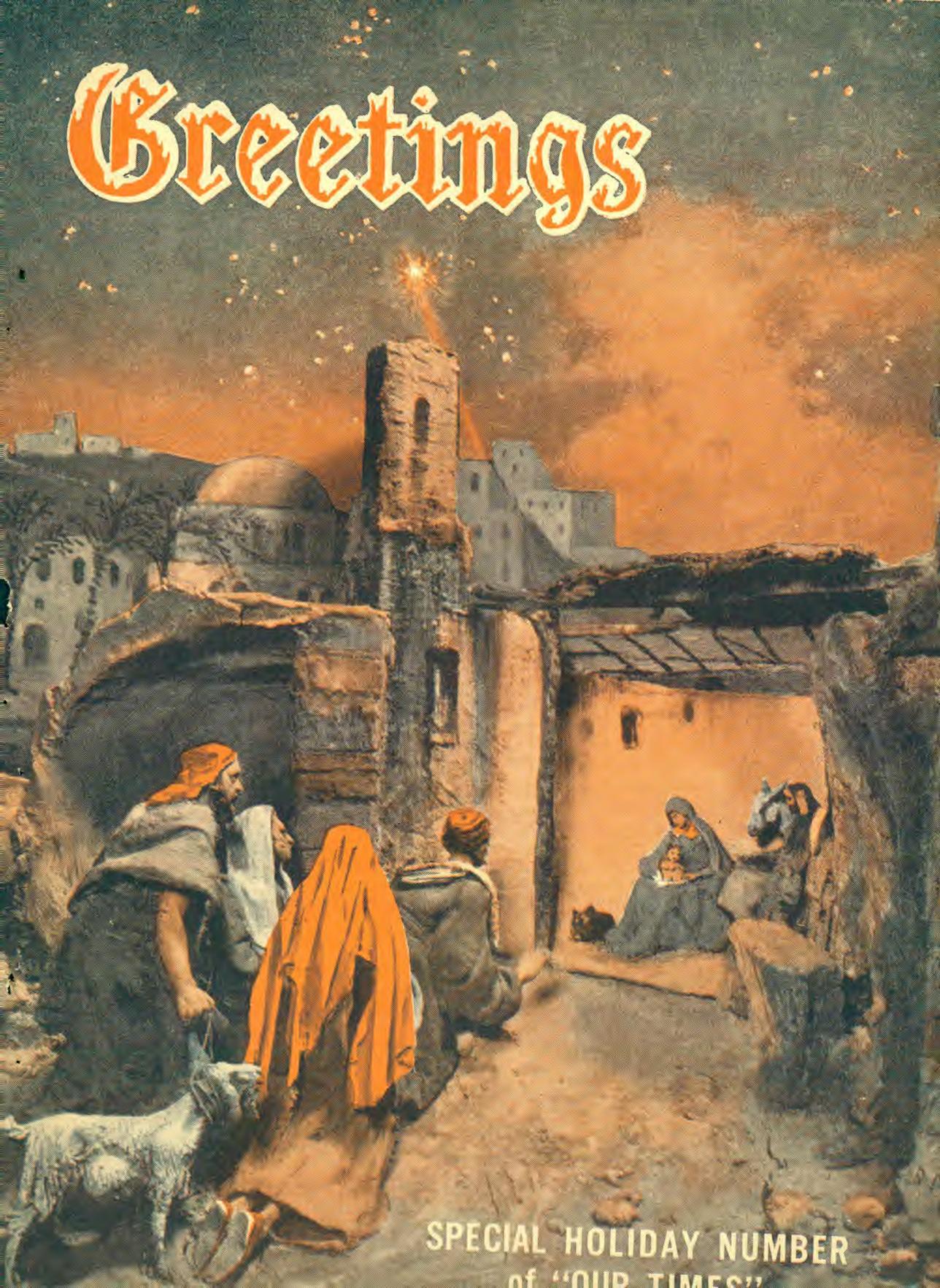


Greetings



SPECIAL HOLIDAY NUMBER
of "OUR TIMES"



THE GUIDING STAR

By R. D. Vine

all this; but their reading of the Hebrew Scriptures gave them hope. The Bible always gives us hope.

Messianic Prophecies

Here they read of the Messiah who would be sent of God, the holy King of Israel who would subdue the cause of tyranny and darkness, and bring spiritual deliverance to His people. Great was their joy, when they discovered that His benevolent and powerful ministry would extend far beyond the narrow confines of Judah—for Gentiles, too, would be lightened by His truth and saved by His power. (Luke 2:32.) Prophecies, they discovered, were replete with heartening references to Jesus Christ. Why, even the very time of His ministry had been foretold by Prime Minister Daniel over five hundred years before. (Dan. 9:25.)

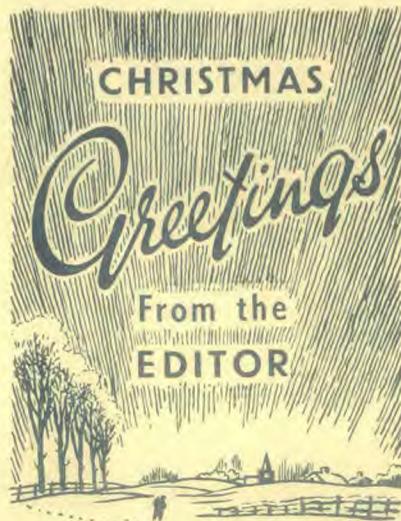
Keen students that they were, they must have known that if the Messiah's ministry was to begin at the appointed time, then the time of His birth must be at hand. They were hopeful and expectant when they saw the most beautiful sign of all that the first Christmas had come. This was the scintillating star, spoken of so long before by Balaam the prophet: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob," he said, "and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel." Num. 24:17.

We believe that heavenly sign, that star, to have been none other than a group of angelic beings—companions of the herald angels who sang to those humble shepherds on the Judean hills, "Glory to God

★ ONE of the most familiar pictures of the New Testament is that of the wise men, journeying by camel from distant Media, to the little Judean town of Bethlehem. A long and perilous journey it was, over desert roads and rocky trails, yet one which those Magi cheerfully made. We can readily picture this small company, helped as we are in imagination by the colourful Christmas cards which never fail each year to portray those famous, yet unnamed and little-known, heroes of that first Christmas two thousand years ago.

Perils and discomforts there surely were, but these mattered little, for the wise men were on a royal visit. They were off to visit the infant Jesus, Israel's newborn King. And, as the sacred record tells us, and as the Christmas cards so brightly portray, they were mysteriously led along their way by a star of unusual brilliance.

Devotees of a strange religion though they were, those Magi studied the prophecies of the Bible. Their sincere, yet misguided devotion to the elements of earth, air, fire, and water, provided no real satisfaction, no inward joy, no positive hope, no certain relief from the dark oppression of sin and guilt. Their fire temples were spiritually as barren as the desert; their religious ritual equally lifeless and uninspiring. They were aware of





in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It was certainly no normal star or planet which led the Magi on, for it moved from place to place guiding them first to Jerusalem, and at last, to the little town of Bethlehem.

Ignorance and Unconcern

The wise men thought that in Jerusalem all would be agog with eager expectation—that the one topic of conversation would surely be that of the Messiah. Shouted loud from every tower and housetop, to the accompaniment of ringing bells, would surely be the welcome news: "He's come! He's come! The Prince of Peace has come at last! Hallelujah!"

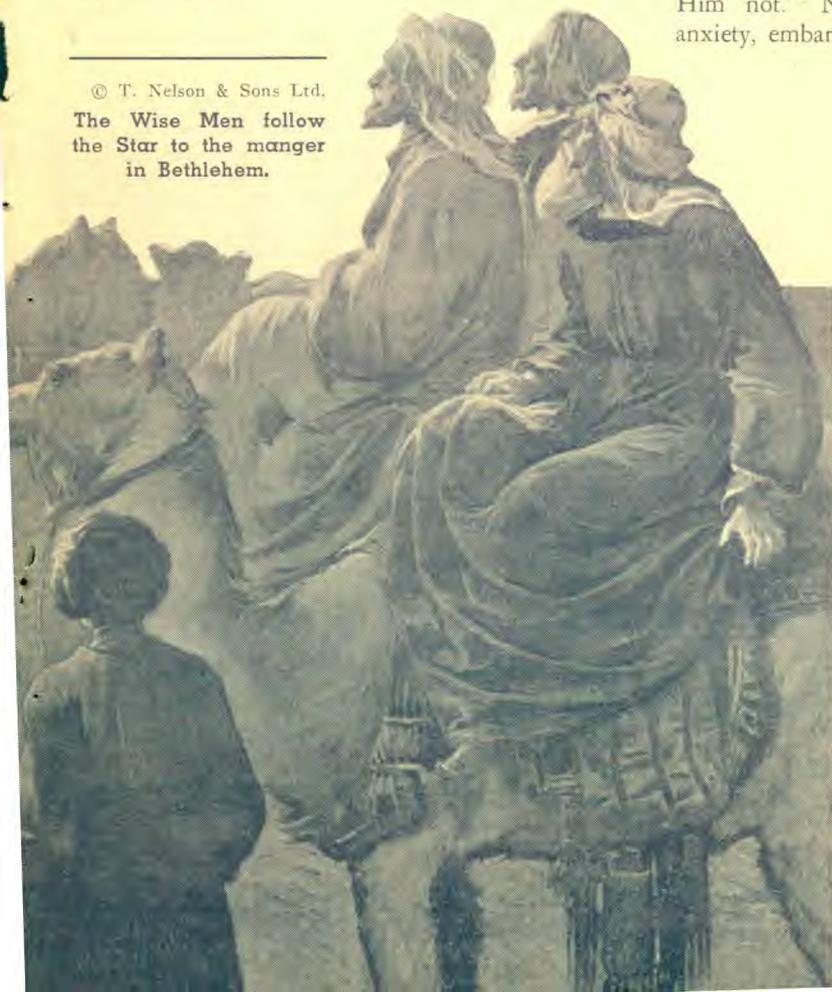
But they heard no such thing. Each anxious inquiry as to Christ's whereabouts was made in vain. They found no expectancy, no knowledge whatever of Christ's advent. Even among the appointed guardians of the Scriptures, the Magi's

eager questionings touched no chord of sympathy or interest. Yet the unusual mission of these wise men soon reached the ears of King Herod the Great, who sent for them. Their interview with the wily Edomite was soon to be fraught with frightful consequences. But the King simulated an attitude of keen and reverent interest as they asked: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him." Herod, of course, didn't know. No-one knew.

Such was the result of failure to study the prophecies of God's Word. The Bible was clear enough, yet ignorance prevailed, simply because it was not studied. And when the most beautiful and significant event of all history happened, there were but few who were prepared to welcome it. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Not pleasure, nor jubilation, but anxiety, embarrassment, even resentment, was the general reaction to the Magi's inquiry.



© T. Nelson & Sons Ltd.
The Wise Men follow
the Star to the manger
in Bethlehem.



The Star Leads to Bethlehem

Disappointed and astonished, those wise men departed. But their hopes revived as once more that Christmas star miraculously appeared. Matthew records: "The star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child lay." Matt. 2:9. Here in Bethlehem were no royal guards, no honoured men. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, was cradled in a manger. Of humble, uneducated parents, and sheltered in a stable, was the One who should bring "salvation unto the end of the earth." Isa. 49:6.

With holy joy those eastern Magi presented their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and bowed low in reverent adoration and worship. They had

(Continued on page 13.)

MITHRAS

or Christ?

★ UNQUESTIONABLY the finding of a temple of Mithras in the heart of the city of London has captured the imagination of thousands. Buried for centuries, undisturbed by the events of the passing years, untouched by previous building operations and two world wars, these relics now discovered have awakened interest in the customs and worship of the ancient past.

Although the temple is said to be about 1,700 years old, the worship of Mithras antedates this building by over half a millennium.

North and east of Nebuchadnezzar's proud capital of Babylon was the land of the Medes, where about the year 570 B.C. was born one named Zoroaster. As he grew up, he, in common with many others, became dissatisfied with the old pagan religions with their multiplicity of gods. Searching the lives and experiences of others of his race, he attempted to find a new religion that would meet their needs. Observing the great struggle in human lives and experiences he held that there were two opposing forces fighting for supremacy. The forces of good he said were headed by a divine person whom he named Mazda, borrowed from an old god Ahuramazda or Lord of Wisdom. He envisioned Mazda surrounded by a group of helpers, of whom one of the chief was Mithras or Light. Opposed to these good forces was an evil group led by a great spirit of evil named Ahriman. So far little of this was new or different. Where Zoroaster went further than earlier philosophers, was in his insistence that every man had to join forces with one side or the other—either to be filled with light or with darkness, and whatever course a man pursued, he must expect a judgment at the end of his life.

In his pictorial thinking he associated his forces of good and light with the old Aryan



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The sculptured head of Mithras discovered in the ruins of the temple near the Mansion House, London.

eneration of fire. This symbol of fire became inseparably linked with Mazda and later more directly with Mithras.

Sun Faith Spreads

Despite his efforts to promulgate his teachings among his own countrymen he met with little success. He therefore turned his attention to their kinsfolk the Persians—soon to gain ascendancy in the dual kingdom of Medo-Persia. Here, after a slow start, the new religion took a firm hold and was spread wherever the Persian armies travelled and fought. Although containing many things inconsistent with the Hebrew Scriptures this new philosophy did hold quite a high standard of moral conduct as is evidenced by an inscription on the Behistun Rock where Darius the Great

By K. Gammon

stated: "On this account Ahuramazda brought me help—because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a tyrant, neither I nor any of my line. I have ruled according to righteousness."

Later the religion spread across to Asia Minor. Here in Asia Minor it underwent a change in structure. Whereas Mithras was originally supposed to be a helper of Mazda, Zoroaster's first concept was changed and Mithras became regarded as a hero of light and then finally as a sun-god. With his popularity outshining, Ahuramazda's place and position waned. Henceforth Mithras, the sun god, became the favourite deity.

As the years passed and kingdoms ruled and fell, the worship of Mithras spread right over Europe. He was a popular god of the Roman legionaires and Breasted, the historian, states: "Mithras . . . was a great favourite, and many a legion had its underground chapel where its members celebrated his triumph." It seems certain that the temple unearthed in London was the Londinium chapel of the Roman legion stationed there.

In many ways the worship of Mithras was similar to the Christian faith. It is in fact quite possible that it may have absorbed some biblical features as a result of Israelite contacts with the East, and so it was inevitable that competition between the two should arise.

Mithraism was particularly strong at the close of the first century when John,



the last of the apostles, died. Yet while Christianity gained ground and became the world-wide faith, the worship of Mithras, in spite of Imperial sponsorship, declined and was so completely forgotten that the discovery of one of its temples now evokes the question, Who was Mithras?

John the Baptist when speaking of his own obscurity and the growing popularity of Christ said: "He *must* increase, but I must decrease." How much more was it inevitable that Christianity should increase at the expense of Mithraism in the ancient world. For the Christian faith is not a man-made religion, but a God-created force that reaches down and lifts man higher than any of his own efforts could raise him. The saving faith of Christianity is built upon the Rock of certainty, upon Jesus "Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), and as long as the supremacy of Christ is upheld we have His promise of protection over His church, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18.

Today the busy world pauses for a moment to stare down at the broken ruins of a temple of Mithras. We look up to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us and who will, if we will let Him, make us pillars in the temple of God to live and reign with Him for all eternity.



© Keystone
The ancient altar of
the newly discovered
Mithras temple in
London.

Which Is The True Church?

the walls of partition may become transparent and finally disappear altogether."

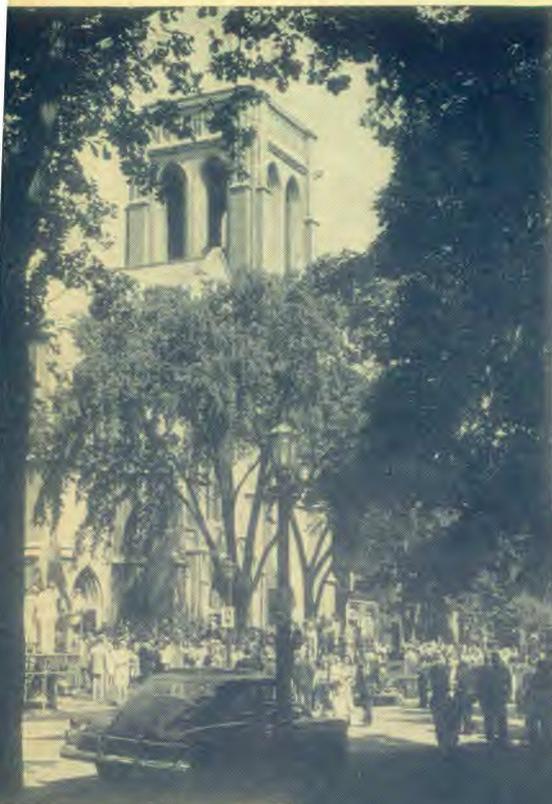
When, however, the main speakers on this vital theme of unity addressed an early plenary session of the Assembly it was evident, as in the exposition of the nature of the Christian hope, that there was a seemingly unbridgeable gulf between two diametrically opposed concepts of the nature of the church, one of which we believe to be truly biblical and the other, though widespread, contrary to the authoritative Word of God.

It is to the credit of the organizers of the Evanston Assembly that no attempt was made to conceal this divergence of conviction on the

nature of the church in order to give a false impression of present unity. Rather was every facility given for the frank expression of the churches' views.

In the first main address on this theme, therefore, Professor Georges Florovsky, of the Greek Catholic Church in North America, stated quite clearly that the Orthodox churches are committed to the "High" or "Catholic" conception of the church which means, in brief, that the church is a visible community founded by Christ and committed to the care of the apostles and their successors in true apostolic succession and which finds its supreme expression in the administration

By W. L. Emmerson



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Above.—The First Methodist Church, Evanston.

Right. — Professor Georges Florovsky addresses the Assembly.



★ THE World Council of Churches which met in its Second Assembly at Evanston, Illinois, was not merely a gathering of the churches of non-Roman Christendom for the purpose of seeking to proclaim collectively the Christian message of hope in a well-nigh hopeless world. The member churches of the World Council are definitely committed to an earnest striving for reunion with each other, and it is the profound hope of many that there may be reunion even with the Church of Rome, resulting in one world Christian church.

"Co-operation or friendly relations are not enough," declared Dr. Visser't Hooft in his report to the Second Assembly. "The Council stands for *manifest* unity, unity which is not merely visible, but tangible and concrete." And its purpose is "to create conditions in which the churches come to know each other and learn from each other so that



of divine grace through the sacraments of the church.

According to this "high" doctrine of the church, the Reformation churches which had "separated" themselves from the one historic church and the "historic episcopate," could not be regarded as "churches" in the full or true sense of the word, that is "living parts" of the church universal.

In his view, therefore, before reunion could take place, the non-episcopal churches in the World Council would have to recognize that they had separated themselves from the one church and would have to return from their "schism" to the true fold, while the separated but still "Catholic" churches—that is those who had not lost the true apostolic succession in the Reformation movement—would merely have to bring their doctrinal position into harmony with the historic teaching of the "Catholic" church, which Professor Florovsky believed found its most perfect expression in the teaching of the Orthodox communions.

On this basis, too, reunion with Rome would also be possible if the Roman Catholic church were prepared to eliminate certain errors, such as that of the papal primacy, from its teachings.

Baptist Throws Down the Gauntlet

At the opposite pole in his exposition of the nature of the church and the basis of reunion was the Rev. V. E. Devadutt, Dean of Theology of Serampore College, West Bengal, and president of the Baptist Union of India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon.

He took the position, with which we must at once confess our agreement, that "the objective ground for my being a Christian . . . is God's gracious act of redemption in Christ. This objective ground alone and none other makes it possible for anyone to be a Christian believer. This is the one foundation of the

church and no man can lay another. . . . It is based on an historic and intractable fact—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are indeed one for we are all delivered and saved by one objective fact. This is our objective unity."



From this basic affirmation, he went on to draw the conclusion that "if . . . some feel that the Christ whom they worship and whose sacrifice for their redemption they commemorate in the Eucharist, bids them exclude other believers in Christ from participation at the same celebration, then the Christ they worship and the Christ others worship is by positive implication not the same Christ."

This was throwing the gauntlet with a vengeance, but we believe it was right and proper to do so, for there is no more vital issue upon which every Christian should be clear than this one: Is the church of Christ the so-called "Catholic" church, which, whether Roman, or Orthodox, High Anglican, or any other, claims to trace its ancestry by direct "apostolic succession" from the apostles of Christ, or does it consist of those who have claimed the merits of Christ's sacrifice and are walking by faith in obedience with His will as they apprehend it?

Is the church already "one" in its "Catholic" form and to which the non-Catholic churches must return if the unity of the church is to be manifest in the earth? That is the position of Rome, the

(Continued on page 10.)



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One of the study groups during the World Council of Churches Assembly at Evanston.



women the way of salvation from all their griefs and sorrows.

That was the night of nights for which all heaven had waited since the entrance of sin; the night toward which the saints of God had looked from the dawn of history; the night when hopes innumerable were realized and prophecies without number were fulfilled.

No wonder "a multitude of the heavenly host" burst into radiant song, crying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:13, 14.

But that was long, long ago. And if the angels are prone to feelings like our own, they might well be discouraged as they look down upon the



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While the Ninth Assembly of the United Nations convenes in New York, atomic guns are being tested out in Western Europe.

★ It was not yesterday the angels sang of peace on earth and good will toward men. Nor was it ten years ago, nor a hundred. More than nineteen centuries have passed since that wondrous night when heaven drew near to earth and the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds and lit up the whole countryside near Bethlehem.

That was the night, the ever-memorable night, when God wrapped Himself up in a little bundle of human flesh and came down to dwell among men; when the Creator entered His world as a Babe in a stable that He might reveal to men and



world today. For still there is no real peace among the nations, and so little good will that it must make the heavenly watchers weep.

As Christmas comes again it finds mankind more filled with dread forebodings than ever before. Great gulfs of misunderstanding, envy, and hatred yawn between the nations, the races and

WIL

religions of mankind. Beneath a surface calm the ancient feuds boil and fret and rage with ever-increasing fury.

Time and again down the long, long years, the song of the angels has been drowned by the screaming flight of arrows, the sharp report of rifles, the rattle of machine guns, the roar of canon, the explosion of blockbuster bombs. But today it is drowned by the shock waves of jet-powered planes piercing the sound barrier, and the blast of atom bombs and hydrogen bombs as they shatter and sear the earth.

It is drowned also by the roar of blast furnaces, the clang of steel presses, the deafening clatter of riveters, as feverishly the nations remodel and modernize their armaments for the next global conflict they all feel sure is coming.

And all this after nineteen centuries of Christianity! What a picture of seeming failure! What must the angels think who sang so gladly, so hopefully, that night in the long ago?

"PEACE on EARTH" EVER COME?

Will their vision of peace and good will among men ever be realized? Will the day ever dawn when men will have discovered the secret of living together in harmony and brotherhood?

Peace On Earth Is Coming

Yes, indeed. God's purpose in coming to this earth as a Babe in Bethlehem will some day be fully realized. He did not live among men, nor die for them, in vain. That peace and good will should one day reign upon the earth was not only the theme of the angels' song. It was the dream of God Himself—the settled intention of the Most High. To achieve this end He has set His heart and hand. To bring it to pass He has paid a price beyond all computation, and made a sacrifice beyond all human understanding.

The establishment of righteousness and peace upon this strife-torn, blood-soaked earth is His supreme purpose, and He will not fail nor be discouraged until it is accomplished. (Isa. 42:4.) Not all the powers of evil can prevent its final realization. (Matt. 16:18.)

Some day, in God's good time, the sun will rise upon an earth from which all wickedness and cruelty have been banished. Some day all strife and turmoil, all war and bloodshed, all jealousy and bitterness, all greed and malice, will have disappeared, never to be known again. Some day all men will love one another, revealing in every word and action the beauty, the purity, the graciousness of Jesus Christ. In that day "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord." Isa. 65:25. "And there shall be no

more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:4.

When will this happen? Not today, nor tomorrow, but when Jesus comes again. That is why His second ad-

vent is the "blessed hope" of the church. (Titus 2:13.) Only His return in glory can bring the day of total victory for which all God's people have longed since time began. Only thus can the era of universal peace and brotherhood ever be ushered in.

Those who are expecting the gradual spread of the Gospel to bring about the ultimate conversion of the world to Christ are cherishing a mirage which will never be realized. Such a dream is without biblical support and will never come true.

Equally fragile, and as certainly doomed to disappointment, is the belief that the United

By A. S. Maxwell

Nations or the World Court will somehow, some day, bring about the establishment of durable, universal peace. Peace will never come by human planning, however worthy the enterprise. Man's one sure hope lies in the personal, glorious return of the Saviour who came long ago to Bethlehem and is soon to come back crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. In that day He will complete His blessed work of redemption by creating "new heavens and a new earth," and establishing His people for ever in their promised inheritance.

To many people such a solution of the world's troubles seems fantastic and impossible: yet it is the only solution the Bible offers. There is no other. And let every Christian remember that "I will come again" was one of the most definite pledges Christ ever made.

So at this Christmas-time let us lift our hearts heavenward in faith again. God alone knows the way out. And it is linked to Bethlehem, Calvary, and Olivet. The manger is part of it. So is the cross—and the crown.

When the Angels Sing Again!

If Jesus came as a Babe to Bethlehem; if He died on Golgotha's cross; if He rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then most surely He will come again some day in kingly glory to bring the gracious purposes of God to glorious consummation.

In that glad day, not now far distant, the angels will sing again. They will sing of peace and good will; of righteousness and brotherhood. Not in hope and expectation as they sang in the long ago, but in glorious ecstasy of realization. With fullness of joy they will rejoice that at long last all the good that God had planned for man has come to pass. To the farthest limits of His infinite realm their song of triumph will resound: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. . . . Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Rev. 5:12, 13.

Which is the True Church?

(Continued from page 7.)

Orthodox church, the High Anglican, and some other lesser claimants to the true apostolic succession.



Or should the unity of the church be conceived of as the process of bringing together those who have accepted the salvation of God in Christ into perfect fellowship by the attainment of a full apprehension of the truth of God?

Assembly Discusses Basis of Unity

Since the inception of the Faith and Order movement at Lausanne in 1927, this discussion has been going on in ecumenical gatherings as well as in the conferences of the various churches, and the opening addresses at the Evanston Assembly on unity revealed the protagonists of the two viewpoints to be as vocal as ever and unanimity as far away as ever. Nor were they much nearer when after the Section discussions, a report was brought back to plenary session during the second week of the Assembly.

After an entirely biblical exposition of Christ's purpose of unity for the church, the drafting committee summarized the causes of the church's present disunity and then went on to pose the question: Which churches were going to rethink their position in order to bring about the desired unity?

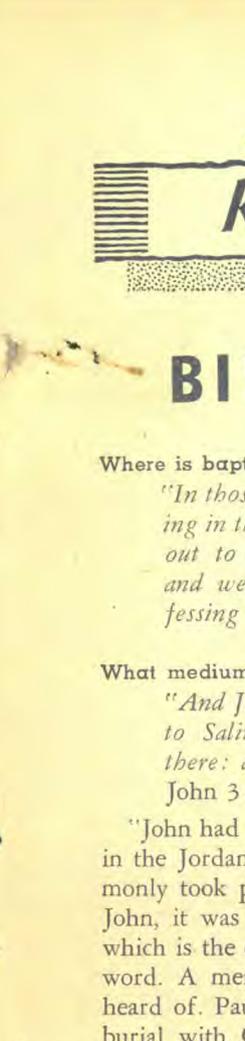
"Concretely," the report went on, "this means that when churches, in their actual historical situations, reach a point of readiness and a time of decision, then their witnessing may require an *obedience unto death*. They may then have to be prepared to offer up some of their accustomed, inherited forms of life in uniting with other churches without complete certainty as to all that will emerge from the steps of faith."

Orthodox Reaffirm Their Position

The Orthodox church forestalled any possible suggestion that it would consider "dying" by stating, through Archbishop Michael, its position quite categorically. In a separate document presented by him as representative of the Orthodox delegation, he declared that the essential features of the true church were:

1. "The totality of the teaching of the early undivided church . . . without either subtraction or alteration," and not only the teaching of the Bible, but also of "apostolic tradition, in which we possess the authentic interpretation and explanation of the Word of God."

2. The "episcopal succession from
(Continued on page 12.)



Know Your Bible

BIBLE BAPTISM

Where is baptism first mentioned in Scripture?

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, . . . then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, . . . and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Matt. 3:1, 5, 6.

What medium did John use in baptism?

"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized." John 3:23.

"John had first introduced the rite of immersion in the Jordan. . . . At first Christian baptism commonly took place in the Jordan. . . . Like that of John, it was by immersion of the whole person, which is the only meaning of the New Testament word. A mere pouring or sprinkling was never heard of. Paul made this immersion a symbol of burial with Christ, and the emerging a sign of resurrection with Him to a new life: baptism is a 'bath.'"—*First Age of Christianity*, by Von Dollinger, Vol. 2, page 160.

Where did our Lord place the ordinance of baptism?

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28:19.

"In the apostolic age, and in the three centuries which followed, it is evident that, as a general rule, those who came to baptism, came in full age, of their own deliberate choice."—Dean Stanley in *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, October, 1879, page 39.

What should precede baptism?

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16.

Here are plain requirements before baptism can



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be conferred according to biblical usage. There must be the instruction of the Christian disciple on the one hand, and there must be faith on the part of the convert on the other, before initiation into the Christian church is valid.

Of what is baptism a symbol?

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Rom. 6:3-5.

"Here, as in Colossians 2:12, St. Paul thinks of baptism not as washing us from our sins, but as burying us to our sins. Baptism (which then suggested the idea of total immersion) mystically

By J. A. McMillan

identifies us with our Lord's passage through the tomb (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:2)."—Footnote in Romans 6. *The New Testament* by Ronald A. Knox (R.C.).

How many modes of baptism are enjoined?

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Eph. 4:5.

"Immersion, which is generally acknowledged to have been the original mode, is universally followed in the East, and was practised in the

west far down in the Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas preferred it as the safer mode. Luther also preferred it; and Calvin accepted it as the original mode, but regarded the form as of secondary importance."—*Our Father's Faith and Ours*, by David Schaff, page 316.

What does baptism signify?

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Eph. 4:22.

The significance of baptism is that the individual renounces his former life of sin and publicly buries the old man.

Does sprinkling fulfil the symbolic meaning of baptism?

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:2.

Sprinkling is nowhere referred to in the New Testament as applying to children by way of substitution for baptism. It is mentioned only three times in the New Testament and refers to the cleansing effects of Christ's atoning blood.

What great example do we follow in baptism?

"Then cometh Jesus...to be baptized." Matt. 3:13. *"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."* 1 John 2:6.

Which is the True Church?

(Continued from page 10.)

the apostles" which in their view constitutes the "historical reality in the life of the church."

The Orthodox Church, therefore, could not "envisage" the problem of "church unity... in any other way than as the complete restoration of the total faith and the total episcopal structure of the church," which it believed had been preserved in full and intact by it alone.

This was indeed completely uncompromising, and the issue thus became whether the churches of the "centre" and "left" would reconsider their position and begin to move toward the so-called "historic church."

Are Reformation Churches Slipping?

A hint as to the answer to this question was

contained in the list of specific recommendations for "action" toward unity in the closing section of the report. For in one of them, after stating, "We must all listen together in the midst of our disunity to our one Lord speaking to us through Holy Scripture," it goes on: "In this connection we need also to study together the significance of Christian Tradition."

Now that is precisely what Professor Florovsky had asked for in his address earlier in the Assembly. If the churches would submit their Christian convictions, he urged, "to the test of *paradosis*, of Tradition, it is precisely in the process of a common return to the glorious Tradition which is continuing in the midst of all conflicts and dissensions... that we, the divided Christians, will meet on a safer ground than ever before."

To what extent this suggestion will be taken up by the churches, it is, of course, at this stage quite impossible for any to predict, but it is the straw which shows the direction of the wind.

That this "straw" had been carefully noted by some of the representatives of the churches in the World Council was evident when the final paragraph of the report was discussed.

A Baptist spokesman, for example, opposed the categorical final words, "We intend to grow together," on the grounds that "intend" means that they had made up their minds. Speaking for Baptists, he was not convinced that his church was prepared to give up all that they would have to give up, or accept all the alteration they would have to accept, in order to bring about the organic union suggested by the term "grow together."

A compromise phrase was eventually decided upon which read: "We dedicate ourselves to God anew that He may enable us to grow together." But this discussion on the very last words of the document clearly indicates that while there are many groups who are ready to go forward to unity without knowing what the end result may be, there are others who would not countenance a union which would lead them back into the apostasy from which they believed they have come.

How long the world churches can continue to affirm their intention collectively to seek the road to unity and at the same time show such little evidence of movement toward one another, no-one can say. But right here the fate of the World Council of Churches will ultimately be decided.

If by their gathering together for study in an atmosphere of fellowship and charity the churches come to recognize that the church of Christ is primarily a fellowship of those who have accepted the proffered salvation of Christ and who are growing in grace and knowledge "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," then the World Council could be an instrument in the hands of God for the finishing of His work in the earth and the hastening of His kingdom.

But if, on the other hand, it is used by the so-called "Catholic" churches for the persuasion of the non-Catholic churches to re-enter the "Catholic" fold, it could be an instrument for the reversal of the Reformation with dire consequences to the World Church!

(Next time: "The Church's Task.")

The Guiding Star

(Continued from page 3.)

seen, and been inspired by, the star of Bethlehem. More important, they had followed the star; and

in doing so, they were led by that star to Jesus.

Our Guiding Star

Thank God, that we, too, have a guiding star just like those wise men. That Christmas star of long ago, just like a shining symbol, hovered over the royal city of David, who once testified concerning the Holy Scriptures: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psa. 119:105. God's Word, the Bible, is our star of hope, appointed by Him to guide us through the spiritual desert and uncharted wastes of this present life. Happy are we if, like those eastern Magi of long ago, we follow the light which a merciful Saviour has provided.

From the darkness of doubt, it will lead to a living hope; from uncertainty, to an abiding confidence in God; from the guilt and power of sin, it will lead us to the gracious Redeemer—to the cross of Him who loves sinners and died that they might be forgiven; best of all, the light of God's Word will prepare us to meet Jesus when He returns to this earth at His second advent.



ARE YOU PERPLEXED

about world events and the future as planned by God?

Often you've wondered if there is anything sure . . . anything you can confidently look to for hope and courage.

THERE IS ONLY ONE COMPLETE ANSWER

to questions vital to each one of us such as ● Why does God permit sin and suffering? ● Will Christ come in our day? ● Is there life beyond the grave? ● Will there ever be lasting peace? etc., etc.

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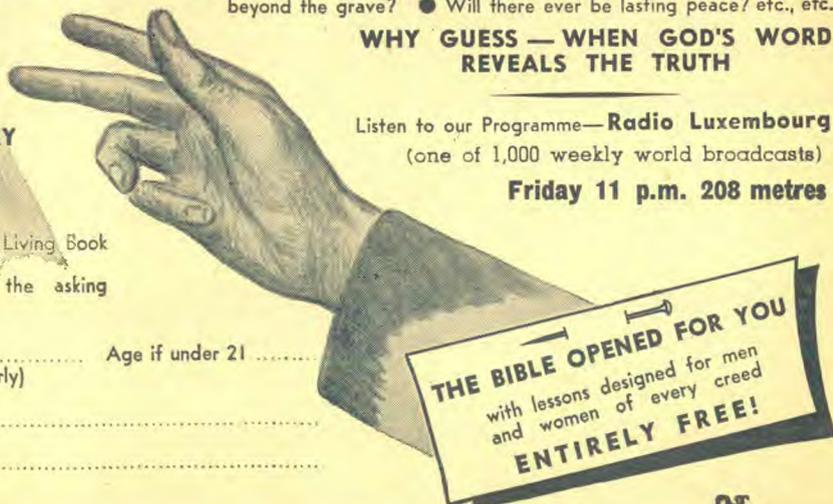
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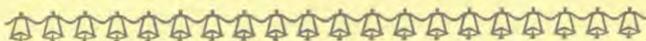
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Children's Pages



No Room at the Inn

By Pamela M. Jones

It was Christmas Eve, and Mother had just been up to tuck Susan and Jennifer safely into bed. She knew that they would not go to sleep very quickly that night, for they were both so excited.

When Mother had switched the light off, and gone downstairs, Susan and Jennifer sat straight up in bed.

"Oh, I'm so excited," said Susan; "I wonder what Father Christmas will bring us."

"I don't know," said Jennifer, "but Mummy told me that if he peeped in the window and saw us awake, he would just pass us by and not leave any toys."

"Oh!" said Susan. "Well, in that case perhaps we had better go to sleep."

So they snuggled down in bed again, and before you could say "Jack Robinson," they were fast asleep.

When the morning came, Jennifer was the first to wake up. She opened her eyes slowly at first, and then she realized that it was Christmas Day. She took a flying leap out of the bed, waking Susan up as she did so.

"Oh! what a lovely lot of presents I've got," said Jennifer, who was the first to open her pillow case. "Me, too!" said Susan.

Just then Mother and Dad came into the room, and when the children had shown them their presents, Daddy said: "Hurry up and get dressed, and when we have had our breakfast we will go to church. I am sure you have a lot to thank God for this morning."

"Oh!" said Susan and Jennifer both together. "Must we? We want to stay home and play with our toys."

Like the Candle

Like the candle, may I shine,
Bright, and pure, and clear;
Like the bells, may I ring out
A message of good cheer.

Like the carols may I sing,
A jolly song and gay;
Like Christmas, may I carry joy
To all this Christmas day.

—Anon.

"There will be plenty of time for that afterward," said Daddy. "Now hurry up and get dressed."

After breakfast they were all ready to go to church, with Susan and Jennifer feeling very miserable. When they arrived, there were so many people going in, that at first they began to wonder if there would be room for them inside the little church. Fortunately there was, but they had to sit at the back.

The minister climbed the pulpit steps, and when he had said a prayer, he announced the first hymn. It was, "Come, all ye thankful," but Susan and Jennifer didn't feel very thankful, and were secretly longing for the service to end so that they could get back to their toys. When it came to the time for the sermon, they both thought they would be terribly bored, but as soon as the minister began to speak they began to get interested.

He started off by saying that he was going to speak to the children first, and leave the grown-ups until last.

He told them that lovely story of the first Christmas, of how the Baby Jesus had to be born in a stable because there was no room at the inn.

And then he said a strange thing. He told them that in this world, there was still no room for Jesus. People didn't want Him, and they had hung big notices up at the door of their hearts saying: "No Room!"

"And yet," he went on, "Jesus loves us so much that He wants to come into our hearts so that He can make them beautiful again." He said that if

they would let Jesus in, that would be the best Christmas present they would ever receive.

When he announced the closing hymn, Susan and Jennifer both knew that they wanted to invite Jesus in, and they sang with all the happiness in the world:

*Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee.*

Walking back home with Mother and Daddy, Susan said: "I'm so glad I went to church this morning, for although I have got so many presents waiting for me at home, I have now been given the loveliest present of all." Jennifer agreed with her.

As they walked on through the trees, it began to snow, making a silvery carpet for their feet. Susan and Jennifer knew that as long as they lived, they would always remember this

Christmas as the one that had meant so much to them; because although in Bethlehem's inn there was found no room

for His holy nativity, they had invited Jesus into their hearts, where, from henceforth, He would reign alone.

Your Letter

My Dear Sunbeams,

As Christmas draws near lots of you will be buying those last-minute presents for your family and friends, or maybe putting finishing touches to the gifts which you have made. I just wish that I could take a peep at you, as you help to hang the paper chains and holly, or give a big stir to the Christmas pudding!

Now is the time for those exciting parties, and, Sunbeams, when you are writing the invitations, why not include one or two boys and girls who wouldn't normally have the fun of a party because their mummies and daddies can't afford to give them one? I know that you will be much happier if you do, and Jesus will be pleased, for He has told us that any kind action of ours done in His name is just the same as if we did something for Him person-

ally. And after all, it is His birthday that we are celebrating at this time, isn't it?

Now I must say good-bye, Sunbeams; but before I finish this letter I want to wish every one of you lots of fun and happy days, and the best Christmas you have ever had!

Yours affectionately,
AUNTIE PAM.

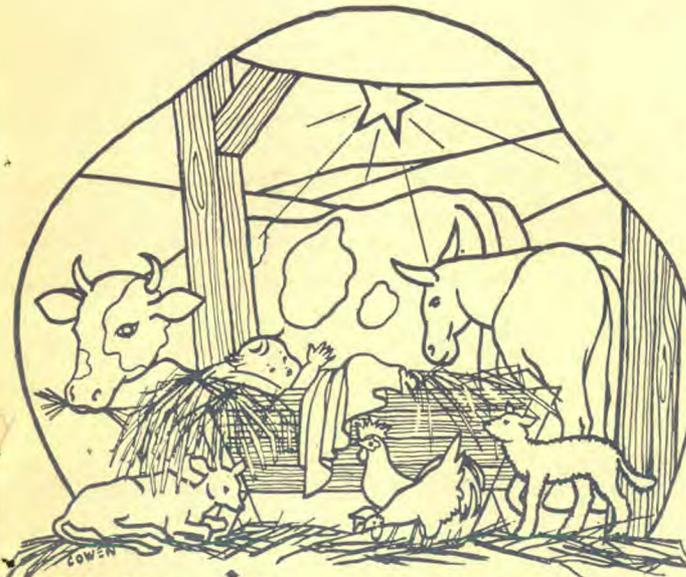
Results of Competition No. 20

Price-winners.—Trevor Goddard, 34 Barnfield, Iver, Bucks. Age 11. Stuart Payne, Langton Leys, Butts Lane, Woodmancote, Cheltenham. Age 6.

Honourable Mention.—Heather Payne (Woodmancote); Janet Dennis (Esrick); Eileen Maunder (Bodmin); Pearl Rich (Marshgate); Marion Paget (Wokingham); Pauline Cox (Langley); Ronald Chapman (Brinklow); Rachael Bowerman (Southampton); Veronica Davies (Bolton); Jonathan Davis (Stickney); Susan Barker (Huntingdon); Siegfried Baron (Accrington); Lucille Hamblin (Watford); Antony Peart (Cheltenham); Brenda Jones (Aberdare); Linda Bunker (Tavistock).

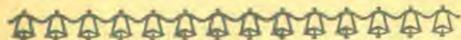
Those who tried hard.—Ruth Campion (Torquay); Janet Sedge (Maidstone); Esther Johnston (Aberdeen); Rodney Nicholls (Bodmin); Norman Walker (Manchester); Irena Mazar (Holloway); David Davies (Denbigh); Janet Dutton (Birmingham); Nigel Payne (Woodmancote); Lorena Greenard (Woodbridge); Jacqueline Johnson (Mansfield); Bruce Wayman (Clacton-on-Sea); Graham Hardy (Derby); Anne Browning (Enfield); Janet Marr (Norwich); Richard Payne (Woodmancote); John Kent (Hull); Ruth Balderstone (Garston); Terry Townsend (Norfolk); Rosemary Dymond (Bodmin); Michael Stevens (Ely); Derek Newbold (Sheffield); Margaret Peart (Livorno); Bogue Campell (Freetown); Patricia Weavers (Woodbridge); Paul Culley (Mangotsfield); Jane Davidson (Aberdeen); Lesley Hardy (Derby); Roy Clarkson (Denton); Patricia Nicholson (Lowden Road); Pamela Jones (Barnes); David Yates; (Penwortham); Amy Randlesome (Suffolk); Alison Hardy (Derby).

See how nicely you can paint this picture and send it with your name, age, and address to Auntie Pam, The Stanborough Press Ltd., Watford, Herts., not later than December 23rd. In case OUR TIMES arrives late, still send your entry. All attempts will be considered.



Always in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.

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The MESSAGE of the ANGELS

Angels from the heights of glory,
Hov'ring over Bethlehem,
Sang a message sweet and holy,
Of the Babe born meek and lowly—
"Peace on earth! good will to men!"

Angel messages of mercy
Echo still that message clear;
Tell the heirs of God's salvation,
Them assure in ev'ry nation—
"Your redemption draweth near."

Angels bear a final message
To a world that longs for peace—
"Fear ye God and give Him glory,
"List the everlasting story,
"War shall end and sorrow cease."

Angel hosts escort the Saviour,
Yea! ten thousand, thousand then,
When He comes with clouds all-glorious,
Wrong to vanquish—right victorious;
Peace for aye! good will to men.



By Blashfield
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By Mrs. M. H. Cooper

