

The Bible and
OUR TIMES





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Good tidings of peace.

★ My first Christmas card was a cheerful missive, expressing as it did, a hope that must be quite unquenchable, that this Christmas God would grant humanity permanent peace on earth with good will among men. How we need such peace!

The senders of this pretty card, which came as plans for German re-armament were being discussed, were a kindly Berlin couple of advancing years who had once given us hospitality. They

Is Christmas Wishful Thinking?

had shown so little interest in life as to suggest that even the arrival of Death as a guest would not find them unwilling to welcome him, and their thwarted lives were empty, not because a family had been denied them, but because, looking daily at three black-bordered photographs on the wall, they were sadly reminded of what the war had cost them. Their Christmas greeting of peace toward men was pathetic to say the least.

And in English and American homes similar wistful eyes are turned to the photographs of those whose chairs are now empty. Emphatically, in these days when men's hearts are "failing them for fear," when "distress of nations" is so acute, when "creation groaneth," every heart must long for permanent peace to come upon the earth.

Since this ever-springing longing has been repeatedly frustrated ever since Cain slew Abel, one could be forgiven for asking: Is Christmas and its talk of peace but wishful thinking, a hollow mockery, void of any hope of fulfilment?

Conditions of Peace

Remember, before answering the question, that as long as sin dominates humanity, there can be no peace. "There is no peace . . . to the wicked." And all the peace treaties signed have been as so much dead wood, to be destroyed like dead branches thrown on the Christmas fires. In fact, had the wickedness of man been unrestrained, civilization would long ago have destroyed itself. The amazing thing is that the search for peace has persisted in the face of so many failures. An old man of ninety, the apostle John, once declared, by divine revelation, that he saw, "Four angels . . . holding the four winds . . . that they should not . . . hurt the earth." Rev. 7. These angels

are those spiritual agencies ever at work, especially today, restraining and checking man's warlike propensities. Thus God holds the reins of the nations.

Every war has torn, and every treaty has patched the fabric of the earth which "waxeth old as a garment," and the perpetual patching has done for the earth what it does for a garment; it has prolonged its life. Celebrate Christmas then! Why? For heavenly restraint in the highly inflammable relationships between east and west. Christmas is never a mockery while we can do this.

There Is Hope!

But let us take a step further. Christmas connects us with the coming of a completely warless world! Peace will be permanent! Why? Because prophets who accurately foretold the birth, life, and death of our Lord, also foretell, as reliably, the second coming of our Lord, at which coming He will set up His kingdom, and make "wars to cease unto the end of the earth."

Without mistake, Christmas is a promise that the Prince of peace is going to reign, and that the "government shall be upon His shoulder." No act of human diplomacy will bring unending peace but the deliberate act of God, at Christ's return will bring peace for evermore. To the

By J. R. Lewis

glorious return of Jesus, then, we turn our longing eyes this Christmas.

Only When Jesus Returns

Some months ago, a popular magazine related the adventures of a Dutchman in his search for happiness. He fitted out a yacht and sailed from Holland with the purpose of finding a country that would meet his requirements for peace and happiness. The voyage ended in despair after thirty countries had failed to satisfy the traveller. He declared in his disappointment that only Greece met his ideals and needs, but war broke out there before he could settle down. Well, there can be no permanent satisfaction in the world as we know it, but when the Son of God returns, "Peace shall flow as a river;" it will be assured.



Passing the Peace

By A. S. Maxwell

★ OF all the cherished memories of the Evanston meeting of the World Council of Churches, a simple ceremony of exquisite beauty will probably linger longer than the rest.

It was the second Sunday of the assembly, and the communion service was being conducted in the First Methodist Church by a minister of the United Church of South India. The opening hymn had been sung, the Scriptures read, the sermon preached, the prayers said. Then, just before the break-

peac-
Placing both of his hands about the right hand of his assistant, the minister said, "The peace of God be with you." The two men then approached the waiting deacons and, taking their right hands one by one, repeated, "The peace of God be with you."

The deacons now moved slowly down the aisles carrying the peace of God, as it were, throughout the church. At each pew one of them paused and, taking the hand of the nearest member, whispered, "The peace of God be with you."

This member now took the hand of the person next to him and passed on the same beautiful message.

I watched the moving scene from the gallery. The reverence of it all was something to marvel at. Not a sound could be heard in the church but the occasional whispering of the lovely words, "The peace of God be with you."

By and by I noticed that the deacons had come upstairs. Soon there was a slight rustling in the pew in which I was seated. I looked to my left and there was a hand outstretched—the hand of a complete stranger—waiting to take mine in friendly greeting. A moment later I heard the gracious words spoken to me, personally, "The peace of God be with you."

(Continued on page 11.)

WISE MEN ALL!

*Three kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Balthasar;
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they travelled by night, and they slept by
day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.*

★ THAT we think of them as three in number is perhaps because of the threefold nature of their gifts, the gold—their tribute to a King, the frankincense, with its odour sweet, that for the Priest, the Paraclete, and the myrrh for the body's burying. They may have been three wise men; they may have been more than three. It

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By E. A. F.
Prynne

The Wise Men
present their
gifts to the
infant Jesus.

doesn't matter. We only wish that we too could have been in attendance in that courtly stable when "kings sat still with awful eye, as if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by." How far would we too not have travelled! What would we not have given! Nothing, we feel, would we have withheld.

But we were born too late—well-nigh two thousand years too late. Not ours the beckoning star, the eager search, the holy pilgrimage, nor yet, as with the shepherds, the angels to direct. And yet, I don't know. The good prophet Isaiah didn't write his beautiful pæan of joy just for three Orient kings and a handful of shepherds. He didn't write it just for God's chosen nation either. He wrote it for you and me as well.

"For unto *us* a Child is born, unto *us* a Son is given . . . and [for us as well as them] His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Unto *us*!

How shall we find Him then this Christmas-time?

Did you ever read, "The Story of the Other Wise Man," that lovely phantasy of Henry Van Dyke's? Artaban sold his house and his possessions and, with the proceeds, bought three matchless gems, three transcendent jewels, a sapphire, "blue as a fragment of the night sky," a ruby, "redder than a ray of sunrise," and a pearl, "as pure as the peak of a snow mountain at twilight," and with these within the inmost fold of his girdle for a tribute to the promised King when he should find Him, he set out on his incomparable Vasda to meet his fellow Magi. But he didn't meet them. He found instead a dying Jew, and because of his kindness and pity and mercy he was so hindered as to miss his brethren. "We can delay no longer," the message read. "We go to find the King. Follow us." And so he had to sell his

sapphire, his beautiful sapphire, to buy a train of camels and provision for his journey across the desert. "Only God the merciful knows whether I shall not lose sight of the King because I tarried to show mercy," he cried within himself.

Similarly he lost his ruby. Right by the Bethlehem stable, deserted now, it became the purchase price for the life of a child from Herod's blood-thirsty soldiery. "Now two of my gifts are gone," he said. "I have spent for man that which was meant for God. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?" But the voice of a woman weeping for joy brought comfort and encouragement.

Sometimes, during the thirty-three years that followed, it almost seemed that Artaban had forgotten his quest. Moving always among the poor and lowly, for only among such did he hope to find the One whom he sought, he fed the hungry, he clothed the naked, he healed the sick. If, during the long years, he found none to worship, he found innumerable to help, so that indeed the years seemed passing short to him. And the pearl,

By Mary J. Vine

the last of his treasures, as he sometimes looked at it, seemed to have taken on a mellower lustre, as though by some subtle magic, it had absorbed some reflections of the colours of the lost sapphire and ruby. It would still make a noble gift.

But he lost it.

Worn and weary and ready to die, but still seeking, he came for the last time to Jerusalem. Often before he had searched through its lanes and crowded hovels but had found no trace of the family he sought. Today, though, it seemed as though he must succeed. Something told him so.

It was the feast of the Passover, and Jerusalem was full of strangers. On this day, however, there seemed a singular agitation among the great throngs, and the sky was heavy with a portentous gloom. Moreover some secret tide was sweeping the people all in one direction. Artaban joined company with a group from his own country.

"Where are you going?" he inquired.

"We are going to a place called Golgotha," they replied, "outside the city walls. Have you not

heard? They are going to crucify a Man called Jesus of Nazareth, who has done many wonderful works among the people so that they love Him greatly. But the priests and elders have said that He must die because He gave Himself out to be the Son of God. And Pilate has sent Him to the cross because He said that He was the King of the Jews."

"The King of the Jews!"

How strangely those familiar words fell upon the tired heart of Artaban.

So the King had arisen and had been denied and cast out and was about to perish. Artaban followed the multitude. How strange were God's ways. That he should find the King only when He was in the hands of His enemies. "It may be I shall come in time to offer my pearl for His ransom before He dies," he said within himself.

But he didn't.

A troop of Macedonian soldiers came down the street dragging a young girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair. Artaban paused to look at her in compassion. So went his pearl. To save her from slavery and worse than death. Never had it seemed so luminous, so radiant, so full of tender, living lustre, as now when he laid it in her hand. "This is thy ransom, my daughter, the last of my treasures which I kept for the King."

And even as he spoke the houses reeled and rocked to and fro, stones were loosened and crashed in the streets. The soldiers fled in terror. Another lingering pulsation and a heavy tile, shaken from some roof, fell and struck the old man on the temple. It was the end, both of his life and of his seeking. As the ransomed girl bent over him she heard him say,

"Not so, my Lord. For when saw I Thee an hungered and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee

(Continued on page 13.)





By H. Lerolle

The holy family at Bethlehem.

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Christmas in the Christian Home

By Ernest Cox

★ THE eagerly-anticipated festival of Christmas is ideally the holiday at home. Indeed, Christmas, in this respect, may be said to be unique. For most people tend, increasingly, to spend other holiday periods *away* from home. But when the Christmas season comes around, with its short days and lengthy nights, its chilly winds and biting frosts, then the lamps are lit, the curtains drawn, the fires built up, and the members of the family find a new delight in the simple, but substantial, joys of home.

What kind of a place was the first Christian home at Christmas?

We are all familiar with the record of how Jesus was born in the out-house of an inn, a place probably partly used as a cattle manger. A more "unhomelike" situation it is difficult to imagine.

Then, apparently shortly after that, came a period spent in strange Egyptian exile, because of the imminent danger to the Child's life from

the designs of the unscrupulous Herod. It was not until after Herod's death that Joseph felt it safe to return with his little family to his native town of Nazareth.

And so Jesus, growing up as a radiant Boy, and later blossoming into a noble manhood, would spend the anniversaries of His birth—those times roughly corresponding to our Christmastide—at home. What was His home like?

Mother—The Home-Maker

There is a trite question which used to be quite commonly asked, "What is home without a mother?" The inference being that home is nothing without a mother. There can be no home, in the best and highest sense, without the kindly, constant, and self-effacing ministrations of the loving wife and mother.

The best that most men can do is to provide the upkeep of a house and be mainly responsible

for its furnishing. But even a fine house, full of costly furniture, is not necessarily a home. Mostly it needs a woman's touch and a woman's care and a woman's tender intuition to transform a house into a home. A home is far more than a shelter from the weather or a lodging at night. It is a restful retreat from a harrassing world, a citadel of happiness, the special and peculiar province of the devoted wife and mother.

So that if we think of that little family at Nazareth as forming the first Christian home (and perhaps it is not altogether a misuse of the term, to do that) then we can probably glean something concerning the character of that home from what we know of Mary, the mother of Jesus. For every home largely reflects the tastes and disposition of the mother. When we know something of the mother, it is not difficult to surmise a good deal about the home.

With regard to Mary herself, as became the virgin mother of our Lord, there is no question but that she was a pure and noble woman. It is evident that she possessed a degree of culture, intelligence, and refinement as would probably render her unique in provincial Nazareth. Indeed, no-one with an unbiased mind could read that exalted passage, commonly called the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-53), wherein Mary returns thanks for the signal honour bestowed upon her, without realizing that here was a woman rich in inspired poetic power.

In Luke's first chapter, Mary is spoken of in terms of the highest esteem. Yet it should be noted, in passing, that in no instance is any word of commendation applied to her which is not also equally applied to other deserving saints in other parts of Scripture. (Compare Luke 1:28, 48; Ephesians 1:6; Judges 5:24; Matthew 5:3-10.)

The Home of Jesus

But Mary's claim to fame is not in that she composed the Magnificat, but that she made a home for Jesus. It must have been a home where the Scriptures were prized, where the study of the sacred law was a daily delight. For Jesus gave abundant evidence, in later life, of a very careful and thorough early training. He was intimately acquainted with all the Scriptures. During His public ministry He quoted, with an apt facility born of deep knowledge, from thirty-three of the thirty-nine Old Testament books.

Therefore we may well believe, especially as each anniversary of the Boy's miraculous birth

came round, that Mary, Joseph, and He would ponder together those many wonderful messianic passages. They, too, would delight in those inspiring prophecies which have meant so much to Christians since, and the increasing appreciation of which, year by year, really makes up a great part of the blessing which Christmas invariably brings. The predictions of Daniel which speak of "Messiah the Prince" (Dan. 9:25) were always a favourite study with God's people in Old Testament times; and surely in no synagogue in all the land would they be more carefully and prayerfully perused than in the humble home at Nazareth, probably, as with us, most especially as the anniversary of Jesus' birth approached.

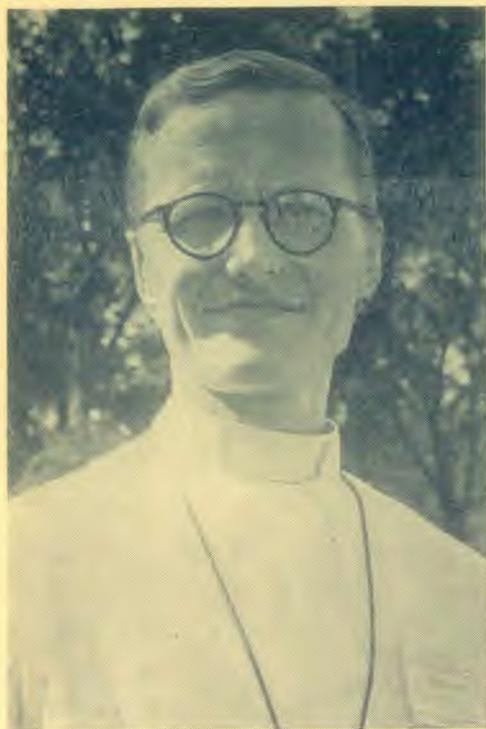
What of Your Home?

We are nearing again the season when we remember the Saviour's birth and we ponder once more His selfless mission for mankind. But Christmas, even in Christian homes, is often a time when family worship and individual Bible study tend to be neglected. Christmas, strangely enough, can be a season when pleasure crowds out prayer, when extended "banquets" leave little time for Bible reading.

Of course, there is no harm, but often great and needed benefit, in innocent social enjoyment and relaxation. Even Jesus found time to attend the Cana wedding, and doubtless enjoyed pleasant association there. But even the Cana wedding festivity served, so John declares, to manifest "forth His glory" so that "His disciples believed on Him." John 2:11.

Can it not be, in our Christian homes this year, that our Christmas programme of events may have the general effect of "manifesting forth His glory"? We can easily make it so, without any sanctimonious smugness, and certainly without any lessening of Christmas joys either for ourselves or for others. Indeed, our enjoyment of this Christmas will be considerably enhanced if we keep fresh in our minds the picture of that first Christian home—the godly Mary, with so much hidden in her heart, and standing at her knee, the clear-eyed, earnest, yet happy Boy, the Light of His mother's eyes, and destined to be the Light of the world.

Christmas can only be really fully enjoyed in the Christian home. May our seasonable joys this year serve in some way to prepare us, and our loved ones with us, for the greater bliss of that eternal Christian home.



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Bishop Leslie Newbiggin of the Church of South India.

★ It was appropriate that the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, having set forth Christ as the only Hope of the world, and the church as the instrument of His manifestation to mankind, should give a large place in its discussions to the primacy and fundamental task of the church—evangelism. And very properly, one of the sections into which the work of the Assembly was divided was devoted to this theme.

In the very first address to the Assembly on the Christian Hope, Dr. Edmund Schlink of Heidelberg University, Germany, had truly said:

"The first act of hope is the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world. . . . Because God redeems through the Gospel alone, those who hope are bound by the command of the Redeemer to preach that Gospel . . . in truth and purity," which he summarized as "the message of God's judgment of the world and of salvation in Jesus Christ alone."

The Hope of the World.—5

THE CHUR

Moreover, he added, "the command of God the Redeemer requires of us the greatest speed. We do not know how much time we have left."

These striking affirmations on the task of the church and the content of its Evangel were enlarged upon in a number of addresses at subsequent sessions of the Assembly.

In a forceful address on "World-Wide Evangelism in This Generation," Dr. Charles W. Ranson, General Secretary of the International Missionary Council, declared:

"The one great task which has been given to the church is to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. . . . Between the birth of our Christian hope in the first coming of Christ and its final consummation when He shall come again with glory to judge both the 'quick and the dead,' there lies the unfinished task of world evangelism." Which work, he urged, is the pressing responsibility of "this generation."

"In this generation," Dr. Ranson declared, "we have seen the fantastic development of modern

An Indian bishop conducts



CH'S TASK

scientific invention. . . . We have witnessed the swift contraction of human society, . . . the heightening of age-long tensions, and the awakening of new conflicts of nations and races and classes. . . . We look back upon a rapid succession of catastrophic events, the full meaning of which we cannot understand. We are confronted with possibilities which we cannot measure and certainly cannot control. We know that in this generation we are at one of the turning points of history.

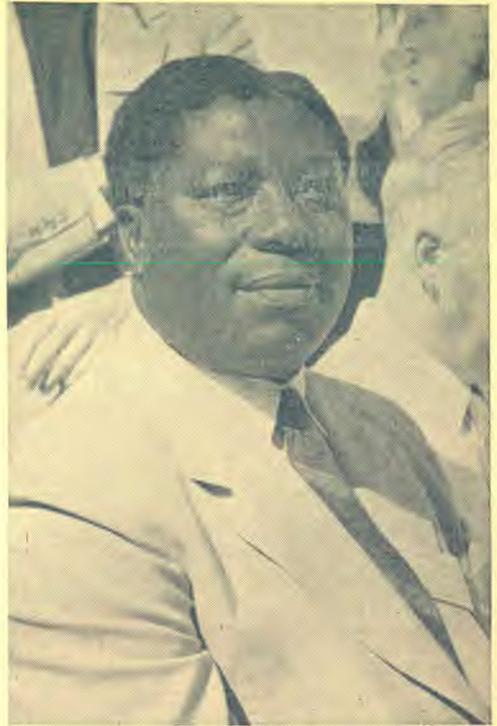
"It is not our business here to speculate upon the course and limits of human history," he continued. But "to the question: What is the meaning of the present time? there is only one certain answer. It is that this is the time given to the church for the prosecution of its apostolic mission to the world."

This challenge to the church to arise was taken up strongly by Canon T. O. Wedel of Washington Episcopal Cathedral.

"The church is an evangelizing army on the march," he asserted, "and a haven of rest only

worship period at Evanston.

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The Rev. P. K. Dagadu is a prominent Christian leader in West Africa.

between campaigns when it returns to home base to renew its strength and to receive fresh orders. We have no right to our Sabbath ease and our promised end before the Gospel will have been preached throughout the world."

"The coming of the kingdom awaits the preaching of the Gospel to every creature," he concluded, and "there can be no urgency, even that of hydrogen bombs, equal to this."

A Significant Reversal of Priorities

Stimulated by these fine appeals we awaited with keen anticipation the report of the section of the Assembly devoted to "Evangelism." When it was presented, however, it brought new disappointment to many. For when after an excellent introduction which very properly stressed the fact that "evangelism is no specialized or separable or periodic activity . . . but the total activity of the church," it asked, "What are the concerns of evangelism?" the answer was given:

By W. L. Emmerson

"One surely is so to proclaim the Gospel that it will transform the groupings and patterns of society in which men and women are involved to the end that human institutions and structures may more nearly conform to the divine intention."

"Still another aspect of evangelism," it went on, "is the attempt to bring people into the full life of the church," and finally:

"Underlying these concerns is the bringing of persons to Christ as Saviour and Lord that they may share in His eternal life. . . . For on his relationship to God in Christ depends the eternal destiny of every man."

Now in Dr. Schlink's address to which we have referred a number of times, he said:

"*The first act of hope* is the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world" and "*the second action born of hope* is accepting responsibility for the ordering of society . . . for the maintenance of life and freedom . . . for justice and peace on earth, among men, classes, races, peoples, and nations . . . in order that they may make a responsible decision for Him."

In the report on evangelism, however, we find a significant reversal of these priorities, the ordering of the pattern of society being placed first and the reconciling of the individual to God last.

Once again we see the work of the so-called "activists" who, professing themselves wiser than their Lord, are not prepared to await the "new order" which Christ has promised to bring with Him when He comes, but believe themselves able to bring the kingdom into existence here and now.

Misdirected "Action"

This doctrine of Christian "activism" or the "social gospel" on the face of it looks most laudable and its protagonists loudly proclaim that, unlike the "transcendental eschatologists," they are not leaving the world to its doom but are reaching out a helping hand to set it on its feet. But this popular teaching overlooks certain vital considerations which clearly reveal its claims to be specious.

Let it be said at once that we stand with Dr. Schlink in asserting that the church should manifest in every practical way its "concern for the enslaved, the hungry, and the forgotten."

We believe the world-wide relief programme organized by the World Council of Churches which was the subject of a moving and dramatic

documentary programme at Evanston, is highly commendable. And many of the pronouncements of the Sections on "The Responsible Society," "International Affairs," and "Inter-Group Relations" are entirely within the church's province.

But we also believe that as soon as the church takes it upon itself to provide spiritual backing to particular social and political systems and programmes, it invariably alienates as many as it supports and reduces the Gospel from a universal message to a partisan programme.

The church is in the world to witness to the world of God's righteousness, and it is recreant to its divine mission if it identifies even the best of human institutions with the kingdom of God.

God's Last Message of Mercy

A second indictment of the programme of "Christian activism" in the social, political, and international spheres was indicated by Dr. Schlink when he pointed out that in His prophetic Word, God has clearly outlined the course of this world, and has warned of its inevitable "end."

By many signs He has foretold its deterioration to a condition "as it was in the days of Noah," and has declared His divine intention to wrest this world from those who have shown themselves utterly undeserving of its benefits and of remaking it as the eternal abode of a responsive remnant.

The conditions of our chaotic world today correspond exactly to the death throes which, in His omniscience, He depicted, and today His last message of mercy is to go forth to gather out the final "election of grace."

This world is, in fact, a sinking vessel and the divine Captain has sent forth the order to "abandon ship." Now it may seem very laudable to some Christians to go on heedless with their eleventh-hour endeavours to save the vessel but this is, in fact, to question the orders of the divine Captain and, by their neglect of His command, to leave the helpless passengers to be engulfed in the wreck.

Surely in face of the imminent doom of our world it is as never before the church's duty to obey orders and concentrate their efforts upon the saving of all who will be saved. In other words, the first and foremost task of the church is the carrying to "all the world" in "this generation" the "message of God's judgment of the world and of salvation through faith in Christ alone."

As Dr. Schlink admitted, "the spreading of this message seems difficult indeed, for the world does not want to hear about its end," but this is as surely the church's task today as was the preaching of Noah in his day, and sad indeed will be the reckoning of the servants that claim to be wiser than their Lord!

(Final Article: "Was Rome at Evanston?")

Passing the Peace

(Continued from page 3.)

It was a touching moment. I could not think what to say. I believe I said, "Thank you; God bless you." Then it dawned on me that it was now my turn to pass the peace to somebody else, but, alas, I was the last person in the pew.

I looked around, but there was nobody for me to pass it to. The ceremony had ended with me. Or had it? Could such a lovely thing ever end? Was it not the duty of every participant to keep on passing the peace of God for the rest of his life? And then I thought, could it be that this is what the world is waiting for?

We have all been thinking of Christmas lately, and the message of the angels at Bethlehem. What was it? "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Had the angels come a little closer they might have clasped each shepherd by the hand and said, "The peace of God be with you." For both messages are identical in meaning. Both emphasize peace within and peace without—peace within one's own heart and in all one's dealings with one's fellow men.

How great is the need for this peace today! Christians need it to still the nerve strain of their too-busy lives. The church needs it that it may reveal a more Christlike serenity in its witnessing; society needs it that it may be delivered from the consequences of its maddening follies; the nations need it that they may find escape from their ruinous contentions.

But how shall the peace of God be brought to those who know it not? There is but one way. Angels cannot bring it, even at Christmas time. It must be passed from hand to hand, and heart to heart.

Let us pass the peace to somebody today!



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.

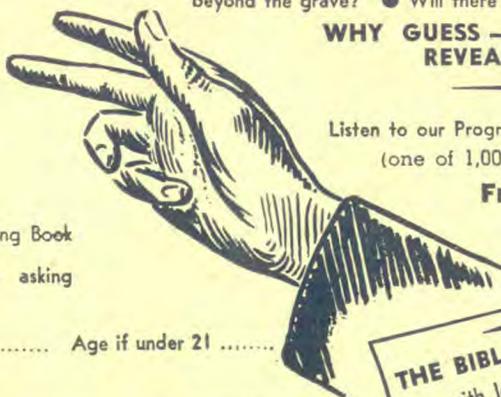
THERE IS ONLY ONE COMPLETE ANSWER

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.

WHY GUESS — WHEN GOD'S WORD REVEALS THE TRUTH

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THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS



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What has God prepared for His people?

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11:16.

Where is this better country reserved?

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." 1 Peter 1:4 (margin).

"The heritage that God has promised to His peoples is not in this world. Abraham had no possession in the earth, 'no, not so much as to set his foot on.' . . . His sole possession in the land of promise was that rock-hewn tomb in the cave of Machpelah."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 169.

Why has the promised inheritance been seemingly delayed?

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Heb. 11:39, 40.

How much was embraced in the promise to Abraham?

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Rom. 4:13.

"God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings. The Lord 'formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited.' Isa. 45:18. That purpose will be fulfilled, when, renewed by the power of God, and freed from sin and sorrow,

it shall become the eternal abode of the redeemed."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 67.

What then are we led to expect?

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

Is the present earth a true picture of that better land?

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Cor. 2:9.

"As your senses delight in the attractive loveliness of the earth, think of the world that is to come, that shall never know the blight of sin and death; where the face of nature will no more wear the shadow of the curse. Let your imagination picture the home of the saved, and remember that it will be more glorious than your brightest imagination can portray. In the varied gifts of God in nature we see but the faintest gleaming of His glory."—*Steps to Christ*, page 65.

Can we know nothing then of the future life?

"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." 1 Cor. 2:10.

Will there be a housing shortage in the better land?

"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2.

Will there be pleasant occupations there?

"And they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. . . . They shall not plant,

and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, . . . for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." Isa. 65:21-23.

"A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home."—*Great Controversy*, pages 674, 675.

Will the redeemed enjoy abounding health?

"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isa. 33:24.

Will war rear its ugly head in that better land?

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. 11:7.

Will there be any funerals or cemeteries there?

"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.

By J. A. McMillan

"Pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven. There will be no more tears, no funeral trains, no badges of mourning."—*Great Controversy*, page 676.

Who will be excluded?

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. 6:9.

Who will be there?

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." Rev. 21:24.

What gracious invitation will Jesus give to the saved?

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25:34.

"Better than all the friendship of the world

is the friendship of Christ's redeemed. Better than a title to the noblest palace on earth is a title to the mansions our Lord has gone to prepare. And better than all the words of earthly praise, will be the Saviour's words to His faithful servants, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 374.

What united appeal should we heed?

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17.

Wise Men All!

(Continued from page 5.)

drink? When saw I Thee a stranger and took Thee in? Or naked and clothed Thee? When saw I Thee sick or in prison, and came unto Thee? Three and thirty years have I looked for Thee; but I have never seen Thy face nor ministered to Thee, my King."

And the girl, watching with wonder the radiance and joy that filled his old, pale face, heard faintly, as though from far away,

"Verily I say unto thee, Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, thou hast done it unto Me."

Just as surely as his brothers had found the King thirty-three years before in Bethlehem, so had Artaban found Him too at last.

We shall find Him, I am sure, in exactly the same way, by bringing cheer to those who are not so greatly blessed as we; by lifting, if we can, and it is amazing how often we can if we will, another's burden; and by spreading, by all the means we can, beginning at home first maybe, the gospel of peace and kindness.

How far is it to Bethlehem?
Not very far,

says the old song. No, it isn't very far for the kind and generous-hearted, it's just the merest step, but it's a weary, endless journey to the selfish and the mean. Let's take care that we are among the former this Christmas-time.



Children's Pages

The Christmas Gift

By Lilian G. Heard

It was Christmas morning. In the nursery there was great excitement as Jean and Peggy opened the interesting parcels they had found in their stockings, and on the table that stood beside each little cot.

"I've got a box of chocolates, a ball, some crayons, a watch, a picture book, and lots of nuts and sweets."

"Oh! and I've got a teddy bear, Jean," shouted five-year-old Peggy, breathlessly.

"Just look in this box," said Jean. "I've got a baby doll."

"Isn't she lovely! But,"—there was a quick change of tone.

"What's the matter, Peg?" asked Jean as her small sister buried her curly head in her arms, and actually began to cry.

"I don't want this nasty old teddy bear," she sobbed pushing it away. "I want a baby doll like yours."

Jean's happy face clouded over.

"I'm so sorry Peg, dear," she said. "I wish you had a doll, too, but I'll let you nurse mine whenever you wish."

"I don't want that; I want a doll of my very own," sobbed Peggy.

Jean looked worried. A great struggle was going on in her heart.

"You shall have the doll, and I will have the teddy bear," she said at last. "Don't cry any more, Peggy. Here's the doll—she's your very own now. Let me have Teddy."

"But are you sure you will like him, Jean?" the little girl asked anxiously, as she dried her tears.

"Of course I am," replied Jean stoutly. But the small sister engaged in hugging the doll didn't see the tears that fell on Teddy's shaggy head. Just then the door opened and Mummy entered.

"Why, the doll was for Jean, and the teddy bear for Peggy," she exclaimed in surprise. "You've got them mixed up somehow, chicks."

"No, Mummy, we've changed, that's all," said Jean quietly.

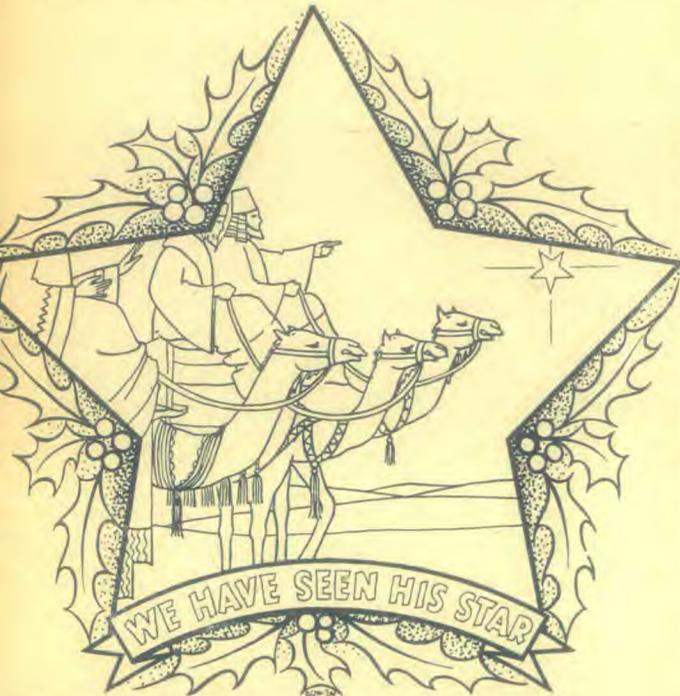
But Mummy's keen eyes were quick to see the trace of tears on the little girl's face. She said no more just then, but when the children were going to bed that night, she called Jean back.

"Just a moment, darling. Why did you change presents, dear?" she asked, when Peggy was out of hearing.

The little girl hung her head. "Well, Mummy, Peggy wanted the doll so badly," she said.

"And didn't you want it, Jean?"

"Of course I did, Mummy, I never wanted anything so much before, but I couldn't let Peggy cry on Christmas day."



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 January 6, 1955. In case OUR TIMES arrives late, still send your entry. All attempts will be considered.

Gifts

They came to Him, the wise men, on dromedaries fleet,
They lay their store of precious gifts with praises at His feet:
Jewels and gold and incense, gladly to Him they gave;
Nothing withholding from their Lord, the Son whose blood should save.

Dear Lord, I am but simple, and yet I come to Thee,
Returning all the living gifts that Thou hast given me;
My heart, my life, my talents— Oh Master, take each one
And let me use them in Thy name alone, till life be done.
Florence Crane.

"You're a brave, unselfish girl, and I'm proud of you," said her mother giving her a warm kiss. "And what is more, Jesus must also be happy because

of what you have done today."
"Then I don't mind a bit," said the little girl, with a sigh of contentment, "because I do love Him so."

The Sunbeams' Corner

Your Letter

My Dear Sunbeams,
WHEN you got up this morning did you stop to wonder how you were going to put on your clothes? Did you first of all wonder how you were going to get out of bed, or, once downstairs, which chair you would use at the breakfast table?
No, I'm sure you didn't. Why? Because you had done all these things so many times before that they had become habits—you did them without thinking what you were doing. Then you will agree with me that habits can be good things. How much time they save us! We do not have to stop, think, and decide every time, but we do hundreds of actions every day—just because we have made them into habits.

So often when we speak of habits we think of something bad or unpleasant, but I am sure you will now see how useful good habits can be.

This is the time when we begin to think of New Year resolutions, and perhaps as you recall those you made last year, you will sadly admit that you forgot all about most of them; perhaps—let's whisper this—perhaps even before the end of January!

Now can you see why we broke those resolutions? We didn't make them into habits.

Why not resolve this year, by the help of Jesus to keep all of those resolutions at least until

January is over! Think of it, just one month, and they would then have developed into habits, and be easy ever after!

But of course while we try to form good habits, we must also try to avoid the bad ones. It's so easy to tell a "small" untruth, to copy an answer just *once*, or to be late for school *once*, but before we know where we are, a habit is fixed and then we find it so difficult to break away from it.

Many years ago, on a rocky island off the west coast of Scotland, many sea-birds lived and built their nests every spring. Each day, summer and winter, they fished in the surrounding sea, and the fishermen who lived on a nearby island used to watch them going out in the morning to get their food, and returning to their home for the night.

One winter the cold was intense; even the sea froze over, and after a few days the fishermen realized that they had not seen any of the sea-birds since the cold spell began.

At last the weather became milder, and the curious fishermen set out in their boats to see what had happened to their feathered friends.

When they reached the island they found the rocks covered with the birds—all dead.

Apparently the birds had returned to their rocky home as usual on that terribly cold evening, and with wet feet had settled down for the night as they had

done so many times before. The morning came, they were hungry for their breakfast, they stretched their wings to fly away—but their feet were frozen to the rock.

So just remember this about bad habits, Sunbeams. The day will come when you want to break free—but then it may be too late!

Why not, then, by the help of Jesus, determine to avoid those bad habits, and cultivate the good ones?

Yours affectionately,
AUNTIE PAM.

Results of Competition No. 21

Prize-winners.—Jennifer Grady, 9 Craddock Road, Enfield, Middx. Age 14; Heather Camp, 5 Walters Road, St. Budeaux, Plymouth, Devon. Age 9.
Honourable Mention.—Paula Chatfield (Eastbourne); Roger Redworth (Hayes); Antony Peart (Bishop's Cleeve); Heather Payne (Woodmancote); Ruth Balderstone (Garston); Eileen Maunder (Bodmin); Rosemary Dymond (Bodmin); Nigel Payne (Woodmancote); Olive Deacon (Hayes); Siegfried Baron (Accrington); Richard Payne (Woodmancote); Margaret Waddington (Watford); Delia Frost (Northampton); Trevor Goddard (Iver).

Those who tried hard.—Amy Randlesome (Beccles); Margaret Peart (Cheltenham); Alan Oakley (Norwich); John Gunthorpe (Northampton); John Kent (Hull); Bert Stanford (Worlingworth); John Colesby (Hall Green); Stuart Payne (Woodmancote); Anthony Rees (Swansea); Sylvia Tunnicliff (Gloucester); Brenda Morrish (Grange-town); David Davies (Denbigh); Marion Paget (Wokingham); Rodney Nicholls (Bodmin); Joan Cooke (Rhyl); William Milson (Bristol); Jeanette Piper (Smethwick); Rita Moss (Southampton).

Results of Competition No. 22

Prize-winner.—Rosemary Richardson, 22 Abbey Street, St. James End, Northampton. Age 13.

Honourable Mention.—Antony Peart (Cheltenham); Gordon Billington (Derby); John Stoner (Downend); Graham Hardy (Derby); John Colesby (Birmingham).

Those who tried hard.—Rosaline Sunderland (Tadmorden); Florence Howard (Norwich); John Kent (Hull); Margaret Peart (Cheltenham); Susan Batten (Erdington); Lesley Hardy (Derby); Beryl Dublinley (Smethwick); Maureen Blande (Woodberry Down).

The Bible and OUR TIMES

(Formerly "Present Truth")

Vol. 70. No. 26 Price 3d.
Printed and published in Great Britain fortnightly on Thursday by

**THE STANBOROUGH PRESS LTD.,
WATFORD, HERTS.**

EDITOR: W. L. EMMERSON
Twelve months 9/9 post free
Six months 5/- post free

STRAWS IN THE WIND

Climax to Mariolatry

⊕ In a brilliant ceremony in St. Peters, Rome, to conclude the "Marian Year," the Pope affixed a glittering crown of diamonds, topazes, sapphires, and other precious stones to a painting of Mary and instituted a new feast of the "Queenship of Our Lady."

Arctic Frontier

⊕ That the Arctic would be of vital and perhaps even decisive importance in a future war is now clear to the Western powers who are putting forth prodigious efforts to establish Arctic air bases, to solve the problems of Arctic travel, to open up an Arctic sea way for supplies, and to develop a network of radar warning against possible attack across the Pole.

One Town's Religion

⊕ In a recent survey of the life of the people of Derby, a typical town of the Midlands, it was found that ninety per cent claimed religious affiliation but only twenty-five per cent went regularly to church. The majority of churchgoers were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four and over fifty years.

Menace of the Superman

⊕ "Man has become a superman," declared Dr. Albert Schweitzer, in acknowledging his Nobel Prize for Peace in Oslo. "Not only has he innate physical forces at his command but, thanks to science and to technical

advancement, he controls the latent forces of Nature. But this superman suffers from a fatal imperfection. He has not raised himself to that superhuman level of reason which should correspond to the possession of superhuman strength. Yet, without

Their Guiding Star

From the realms of ancients
Flow thou sweet refrain;
Through the years of sorrow
Come, O come again;
Bring to us the vision
Ages could not mar;
How the Orient sages
Found their Guiding Star.

Faithfully they followed
Through the shades of night;
Where the Star did lead them
To the Prince of Light;
Eager, watching, longing,
Perils could not bar;
For above them shining
Bright their Guiding Star.

Speeding with assurance
Through the deserts wild;
Ever with the vision
Of the princely Child;
Till they reached the city,
Pilgrims from afar;
Joyful in the leading
Of their Guiding Star.
John P. Heffner.

this, he can never put his gigantic strength to ends which are useful and rational, rather than destructive and murderous, and accordingly the advance of science will prove a disaster rather than an advantage."

A Giant Risen From Its Knees

⊕ Commenting on his recent visit to China with the Labour Party delegation, Mr. Sam Watson says of that great country: "My overwhelming impression is of a potential giant which has just risen from its knees. China has arrived. And I am wondering where China will go from here. . . . The sheer weight of China's manpower, in peace and war, struck me as a force which the industrial-conscious West may be likely to underestimate."

Western European Union

⊕ The newly formed Western European Union, comprising Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, and Italy, has been described by the German Chancellor, Herr Adenauer, as "the greatest constellation of power in Europe for a thousand years."

Drink Addicts

⊕ According to statistics of the World Health Organization, France has 1½ million alcoholics. The United Kingdom has 86,000 drink addicts and 344,000 approaching that sorry state.

U.S. Population

⊕ The Census Bureau of the United States reports an increase in population of eleven million in the past four years, making a total of 162,414,000. At this rate the population will approach the 200 million mark within a decade.

